

GURPS[®]

ALIENS

Nonhuman Races for Science Fiction Roleplaying

By Chris W. McCubbin



STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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ALIENS

Nonhuman Races for Interstellar Roleplaying

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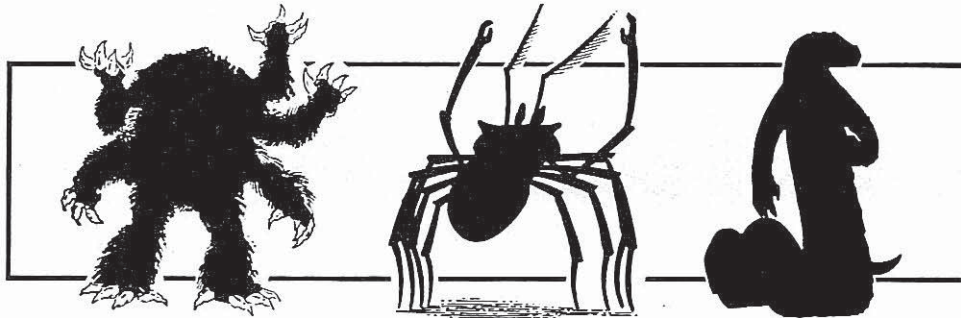
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Nothing in GURPS Aliens is drawn from the 20th Century-Fox films Alien or Aliens — our title is a generic one.

*Our thanks go to Leading Edge Games, publishers of the licensed Aliens games, for taking the position
that there is no conflict of names between the two products!*

For those looking for another truly frightening NPC race, we're happy to recommend Leading Edge's RPG treatment of Aliens.



As this is the first of a hopefully long string of projects as SJG's on-staff writer, some thanks are in order: To Sharon Kingsford, for tipping me off, and to Kim Thompson, for letting me go gracefully. A special thanks to my wife, Lynette, for being brave and strong and keeping me the same way. A final special thanks to Loyd Blankenship, first for giving me my chance, but mostly for laying an invaluable groundwork for this book's Racial Generation rules in *GURPS Supers*.

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ISBN 1-55634-089-3

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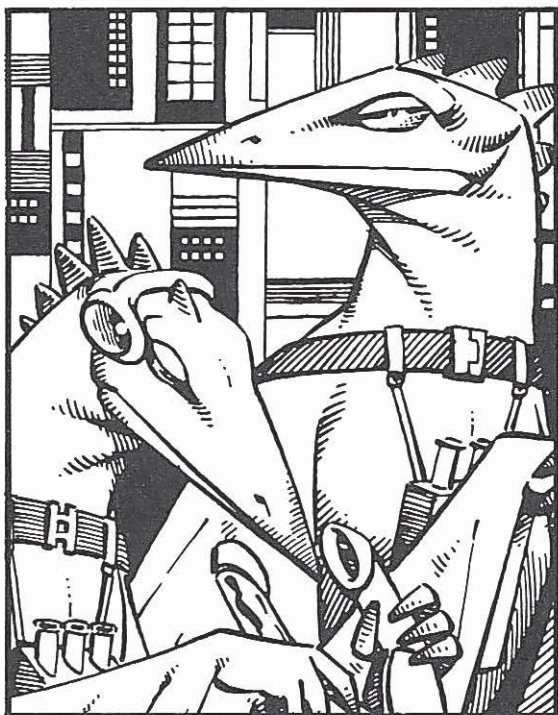


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INTRODUCTION

Science fiction is the literature of discovery. And man, perhaps more than anything else, wants to discover others like himself. Imaginative fiction has always included the idea of *others* out there somewhere, either watching man or waiting for him to come to them. The civilization from another world has been a part of the science fiction repertoire since the time of Verne and Wells. It is a ongoing theme of the genre second only to space travel itself.

H.G. Wells' *Martians in War of the Worlds* set a convention: aliens were ravaging, inhuman conquerors. During the Golden Age of science fiction, writers like Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein and E.E. "Doc" Smith expanded the aliens' characters; perhaps they would be Man's friends, or his teachers. Perhaps they would be — as Ray Bradbury poignantly demonstrated in *The Martian Chronicles* — Man's victims. Perhaps, finally, aliens will be truly alien, with nothing at all to give or take from humanity.



This book is designed to allow the *GURPS* Game Master to bring any alien race — from books, movies, comics or his own imagination — into his campaign. In addition to complete rules for creating your own alien races, we've included 28 different races of our own, designed to provide a large assortment of types for use both as non-player and player characters.

The possibilities for non-human intelligence are as infinite as the universe itself. For one little book we had to draw the line somewhere, so this volume concentrates on the sort of races man would be most likely to seek out and deal with during his expansion to

the stars . . . races enough like us to be valuable allies or dangerous enemies. Most of these are suitable for use as PCs in a normal *GURPS Space* campaign. The rest are a mix of the implacably hostile, the superhumanly powerful, and the simply enigmatic.

Credit and Thanks

Many of the alien races that appear here were originally created by Creede and Sharleen Lambard and by Steve Jackson. The Markann were created by W.G. Armintrout. The Crystal Computers were created by William A. Barton.

Inspiration for the races I created for this book came from the aforementioned Wells, Smith, Asimov, Heinlein and Bradbury, plus a host of other talented dreamers encountered over almost a quarter century of science fiction reading. A few more worthy of special note: John W. Campbell, Arthur C. Clarke, Larry Niven, H. Beam Piper, Gene Roddenberry, George Lucas, and Paul Levitz.

About *GURPS*

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources now available include:

Roleplayer. This bimonthly newsletter includes new rules, variants, new races, beasts, news on upcoming releases, scenario ideas and more. Ask your game retailer, or write SJ Games for subscription information.

New supplements and adventures. We're always working on new material, and we'll be happy to let you know what's available. A current catalog is available for an SASE.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us — but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are always available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE with your request.

Q&A. We do our best to answer any game question accompanied by an SASE.

Gamer input. We value your comments. We will consider them, not only for new products, but also when we update this book on later printings!

BBS. For those of you who have computers, SJ Games operates a BBS with discussion areas for several games, including *GURPS*. Much of the playtest feedback for new products comes from the BBS. It's up 24 hours a day at 512-447-4449, at 300, 1200 or 2400 baud. Give us a call!

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set*, Third Edition. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to a page in the *Basic Set* — e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *Basic Set*, Third Edition.

About the Author

Chris McCubbin is a non-graduate of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in English. He spent six months as assistant editor of Fantagraphics Books' *The Comics Journal*, and a year and a half as managing editor of Fantagraphics' *Amazing Heroes*, where he still occasionally reviews comics. He is now a staff writer for Steve Jackson Games, making him one of the lucky so-and-sos who get to do this for a living.

Chris and his wife, Lynette Alcorn-McCubbin, live in Austin, Texas.

1

THE ALIEN CAMPAIGN

The War

Of all the alien themes in science fiction, perhaps the single most prevalent is The War, where mankind is involved in an all-out fracas with slimies from the next planet/system/galaxy. Outstanding examples of The War include Robert A. Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* and the *Aliens* films. The central conflict of *Star Trek*, essentially, is the Federation's two-front, ongoing police action against the Klingons and the Romulans.

The classic form for this scenario sees the noble, peace-loving, virtuous Terrans suffer an unprovoked attack from slimy, man-eating, implacable vermin from another planet. The chitinous fiends soon discover they've sliced off more protein than they can process when Our Heroes rise up in righteous rage to defend their homes and families. Often there are several races involved as allies of both sides.

There's no reason why a cynical GM couldn't reverse this whole schtick. The peaceful moss farmers of Planet Beta wake up one day to discover that rapacious real estate developers from Terra have landed and are busily turning their beloved slime swamps into condos. The Betans, naturally, decide direct action is called for.

Since the Vietnam era, the usual war-story formula has changed. In contemporary science fiction, the reasons for The War are usually political and arcane. Neither side particularly hates the other, they're just ordinary folks (human and not), who are interested in 1) staying alive, and 2) staying out of trouble with their superiors, in that order.



The Alien Campaign

One of the *Space GM's* most important decisions, as he creates his campaign universe, is if, when and how many alien races will be included. There can be no random table to generate non-human cultures; the GM must carefully evaluate the needs of his campaign, and select or design extraterrestrials that fit his universe.

Aliens vs. Monsters

The GM must keep in mind the difference between alien races and space monsters. A space monster is a plot convenience . . . it could be vicious or friendly, smart or stupid, single or a horde . . . but it exists primarily as an obstacle the PCs must get through to complete their mission. Once they encounter the space monster and kill it, ask it the right question, or take the item they need, the monster's usefulness in the session is over, and it generally ceases to exist.

An alien race, on the other hand, should be an ongoing part of the campaign. Aliens are not monsters, they're characters. It's important for the GM to know, in detail, the cultures, tendencies and abilities of his non-human races. It's also important to remember that each alien in the campaign is an individual — a person — with its own motivations and goals (even a true hive mentality is an individual personality which happens to inhabit many bodies).

Campaign Style

Once the GM decides to include extraterrestrial races in his campaign, the question that follows immediately is "how many?" If man is not alone, how many neighbors does he have, and what does he know about them? The answer to this question will determine the whole direction of the campaign.

First Contact

The theme of countless science fiction stories, this is the ideal jumping-off point for an alien campaign. Do we find them? Perhaps the PCs are an exploratory team or colonist party, unconcerned with anything but the new planet's mineral content and the nearest trade route, when suddenly they're confronted with evidence of . . . others.

Perhaps *they find us*, and the characters are selected to find out who's in the huge glowing object parked over Omaha. Where are the visitors from and what do they want — our friendship? Our mineral wealth? Our brains? Our women? Will our first encounter involve imperialists looking for a new world to conquer, xenophobic nihilists looking for a new world to fry, or superhuman philanthropists delivering the secrets of the universe?

And just because they happened to get here first, they're not necessarily the official envoys of an outer-space civilization. They could be distressed travelers, or fugitives from interstellar tyranny . . . or interstellar justice. Maybe they're space con-beings, looking to make a killing selling cosmic snake oil to the terrestrial rubes.

Rare Extraterrestrials

Man has encountered other civilizations in the universe, but first contacts are rare. Perhaps we have only met one or two or three other races in years or centuries of exploration. This is ideal for the GM who likes a tight, orderly campaign, or for those who want to probe the cultural and psychological similarities and differences between humanity and the others.

If only a few alien races are in the campaign, they must be selected with special care. Perhaps humanity has found one deadly enemy. Maybe he's also found one steadfast friend to stand with him. Perhaps the two or three interstellar civilizations have formed an alliance to seek for others like themselves. On the other hand, the aliens could be so *very* alien that cooperation or even communication seems an impossible challenge — and exciting roleplaying thrives on impossible challenges.

They're Everywhere!

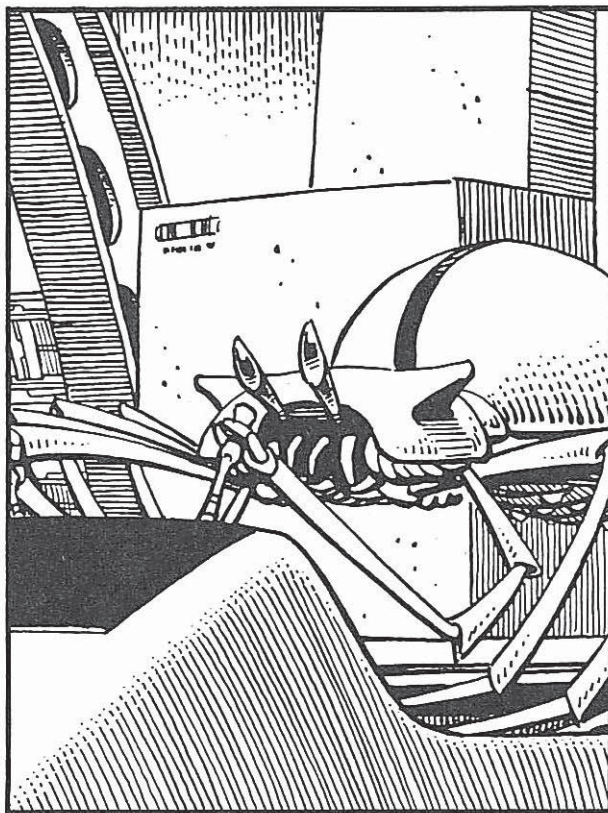
The universe is fecund, and humanity can barely set foot on some barren, drifting space rock without meeting some new intelligent life form. The novels of E.E. "Doc" Smith are outstanding examples of how to make a plethora of alien races work in a fictional universe. The various incarnations of *Star Trek* also include a host of "new life and new civilizations."

This background is suited to "thrill a minute" GMs who like to keep new surprises coming fast and furious. A cinematic "space opera" campaign cries out for dozens of non-human civilizations.

Humans? What Humans?

Finally, GMs looking for a really different roleplaying challenge can decree that the character party is made up entirely of members of one or many nonhuman races. This can make a neat variation on the "First Contact" scenario, as the PCs stumble on mankind for the first time somewhere in the interstellar sticks, or are sent to Earth to invite mankind to join the galactic civilization — an invitation humanity might not take in the spirit it was intended.

Finally, who says humans are necessary for good roleplaying? An even more daring GM might set his campaign so long ago that Earthmen are still in the trees, or in a galaxy so far, far away that humanity will never find it. The GM defines one or several PC races, and the party boards the good ship *Gloork* and blasts off as agents of the Interspecies Confederation of Braapdrool. This last alternative is particularly attractive to GMs who may be interested in running a scenario or campaign with very high point-value characters.



GURPS Crossovers

There's no reason to confine extraterrestrials to the *GURPS Space* campaign. The races and race creation rules in this supplement can be used with many other *GURPS* worldbooks.

The most obvious use for this supplement, next to the *Space* campaign, is in *GURPS Supers*, where the meta-heroes are constantly fighting off alien invasions — when the heroes aren't "strange visitors from another planet" themselves.

Another use for extraterrestrials is with *GURPS Special Ops*. "The Martians are invading! Send in the Marines!" Even more unfortunate, perhaps, are the would-be alien conquerors who have the misfortune to invade the near-future America of *GURPS Autoduel*, where everyone on the roads is and armed for bear.

GURPS Horror and space creatures go surprisingly well together. Most of the great monsters of H.P. Lovecraft were actually very powerful, very unhuman space races. We also have the example of such classic horror films as *The Thing*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, and *Alien*. Old-fashioned, lustful Bug-Eyed Monsters were a staple of the pulp magazines and movie serials that inspired *GURPS Cliffhangers*.

Space aliens can really spice up a historical campaign like that offered by *GURPS Cliffhangers* and *GURPS Swashbucklers* (for an excellent use of aliens in an Old West setting, see the graphic novel *The Secret of San Saba* by Jack Jackson, published by Kitchen Sink Press).

And of course the primitives of *GURPS Ice Age* can expect at any time to encounter big, black, singing rocks from space. Alternately, the PCs could be the space gods, sent to sow the seeds of sentience across primitive Earth.

Finally, mention should be made of the several licensed *GURPS* worldbooks based on science fiction and science fantasy, including (so far) *GURPS Humanx*, *GURPS Riverworld*, *GURPS Witch World*, *GURPS Horseclans* and *GURPS Wild Cards*.

2

CREATING ALIEN RACES

They Look Like They Look

In establishing racial advantages and disadvantages, every effort has been made to avoid assigning point values to cosmetic alterations in the race's anatomy, and instead to concentrate on those abilities which affect play. The GM will not find in this chapter a Tall or Short advantage, or a point value for a race that slithers around on a snake's tail instead of legs. The GM must look deeper than that, and determine the actual game effects of such outward changes. The giant humanoid PC, for instance, would certainly have great ST, and perhaps a better Move. Very large races often also have the Increased Life Support disadvantage, representing the difficulty in accommodating such characters in the cramped quarters of a starship. The snake man need be no different than humans, unless the GM decides to give him a different Move or a special attack with his tail.

Perhaps the single most important thing to keep in mind when designing alien races is that outward appearance is only a "special effect"! The race only pays for the significant consequences (positive and negative) that result from its bodily structure. Nothing can unbalance the alien campaign as thoroughly as assigning point values to racial characteristics unnecessarily.

This does not mean that the race must be treated exactly like humans just because they have a racial value of 0. There will be real game differences between the aliens and the humans — giants can reach the top shelf without a stool, snake men will take a long time going through doors. However, such differences are, in game terms, trivial, and therefore worth no points.

It is ultimately up to the GM, as always, to determine which racial abilities cross the line dividing special effects from advantages and disadvantages.

Although this supplement contains 28 ready-made alien races, these should not be the be-all and end-all of a campaign involving non-human intelligence. Far from it! This chapter will let the GM to create (or recreate) an infinity of extraterrestrial character races. Of course, it is impossible to describe in a few pages every possibility for life in the universe — the GM is encouraged to use his imagination and design and implement any new advantages he can conceive.

If these rules have a bias, it's toward races that can freely interact with humanity — neither so strange as to be incomprehensible, or so powerful as to overwhelm the poor little Terrans. Nonetheless, the imaginative GM can use these rules as a foundation for building some truly bizarre sentients.

Types of Aliens

Extraterrestrials in fiction fall into several general categories. They are listed below in increasing order of "real alien-ness."

Space Men

These are humans who just happened to evolve on another planet. Examples are found in countless science fiction movies, from the excellent *The Day the Earth Stood Still* to the execrable *Plan 9 from Outer Space*. Such characters can be generated just like a normal human, although a few subtle racial advantages, powers and disadvantages can add lots of color.

Guys in Suits

This is just a human whose looks are somewhat off-beat. His psychology is thoroughly human, and his special powers, if present at all, are generally low-key. Few special alien characteristics need be used; most of the difference between these races and humanity will be cosmetic. Many players with alien PCs will end up playing "guys in suits," whether that was the GM's intention or not.

Beast Men

Beast Man races share many characteristics with Earth animals. Examples include the ape-like Wookies and bear-like Ewoks of *Star Wars*, and Larry Niven's feline warriors, the Kzin. Many Beast Men are just Guys in Furry Suits, but these creatures can also provide opportunities for truly innovative roleplaying. Just how would a hawk or a cockroach react if it had a human mind? On the other hand, would an extraterrestrial necessarily act like a earthly frog or cow, just because it happened to look like one?

A common variant on the Beast Man is the Half Man. This is a basically humanoid race with animal body parts. Often these creatures resemble figures from myth or legend. Winged humanoids are common, as are centaur-like races.

Super Men

These aliens look human on the outside, but that surface conceals strange and wondrous powers (often psionic in nature). A staple of the comics, four-color extraterrestrial heroes include most of DC's Legion of Super-Heroes and of course the original Superman himself. A quite different conception of the alien as Super Man can be found in the film *The Man Who Fell to Earth*.

Creepy-Crawlies

Any number of the great science fiction monsters were designed by their creators to stimulate our common cultural fears — of insects, or rats, or snakes, or spiders, or slime, or sex. Examples include the “Bugs” of *Starship Troopers* or film’s *The Blob*.

Many of these creatures are just intelligent space monsters, but with a little thought they can become fully rounded, if dangerous, characters.

A common variant on the Creepy-Crawly idea is the parasite — evil creatures that take over human bodies, minds, even lifestyles. The ultimate menace-from-within, we can never be sure if our next door neighbor is our good old friend, or one of Them. Among many examples are Heinlein’s seminal *Puppet Masters* and the titular villains of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

Evolved Mentalities

Super-intelligent creatures which have evolved beyond the limitations of base physical matter, these advanced civilizations may exist as disembodied brains, personalities imprinted on advanced computer programs, or simply free-floating conglomerations of psychic energy. Arthur C. Clarke’s *Childhood’s End* is the story of a race (ours) making the final step in evolution to raw mentality.

Although physically embodied (and how!), sentient worlds and godstars are often portrayed as having similarly advanced powers and psyches. John Varley’s *Titan* trilogy is a superb portrayal of a sentient world.

Exotics

The trick here is to get your alien race as far from earthly biology and psychology as possible. Since the writer (or GM) who creates such a race is literally trying to conceive the inconceivable, it’s logically impossible to ever create a really alien alien. That doesn’t mean it isn’t fun to try, though. Successful examples include H.P. Lovecraft’s evilly whispering fungoid Mi-Go, and the mind-bendingly ugly Medusans of *Star Trek*.

The Racial Generation Process

In game terms, the meat and bones of creating extraterrestrials lies in selecting an assortment of characteristic modifiers, advantages, disadvantages, and skills which will, under normal circumstances, apply to every member of the race. Just as in character creation, each of these advantages and disadvantages has a positive or negative point value. All of these are totalled to find a final point value, positive or negative, which each member of the race either pays or takes as a bonus.

Racial-characteristic bonuses are paid for according to the table on p. B13, with a -1 to IQ costing -10, a +3 to ST costing +30, and a +4 to HT costing 45. When raising or lowering characteristics, the character pays based on his attribute score before the racial bonus is applied. For example, a character who’s paid to be a member of a race with +3 ST wants a final ST of 16. He would first pay 30 points to buy up his strength to 13, then add the racial bonus of +3. If he later wanted to use accumulated character points to increase his strength still further, he would pay 30 more points (twice the difference between 13 — his ST without the racial modifier — and 14) to increase his ST to 17. See p. B81.

Most (though not all) of the character advantages, disadvantages and skills can be taken racially. The point value generally remains the same, though there are several exceptions.

Racial disadvantages and quirks are never applied against a character’s normal limit of -40 points of disadvantages and -5 points of quirks.

Individual vs. Racial Strengths

Part of the fun of playing alien characters is dealing with “people” that are not only different from humans, but more than human. Many GMs will want to create at least a few PC and NPC races with physical and mental powers far beyond normal humans. In game terms, this means characters with a high racial point cost.

This creates an apparent contradiction in the campaign, however. The question arises, “If these guys are so great, why don’t they control the galaxy?”

The most obvious answer is to say, “they do.” There’s no reason why humanity has to be the dominant race of the campaign. Mankind could be an insignificant cog or an audacious upstart in the galactic community.

But even if the GM prefers an anthropocentric campaign like that set forth in the *GURPS Space Atlas* series, he needn’t forsake superhuman aliens. The factors that allow an individual to excel are quite different than those that allow one race to dominate another. A humanocentric story or campaign usually assumes that humanity has several advantage, relative to other races, that would never show up on an individual character sheet.

First, humans are *prolific*. A woman can easily bear six to 12 children in her lifetime. A single male can father children on a huge number of women. Other races might be strictly monogamous, or tied to a complex fertility cycle, or simply generally infertile, allowing humanity to dominate them through sheer numbers.

Second, humans are *aggressive*. They tend to want money, property and power for its own sake. A pragmatic race might let the humans move in and assume the burden of running things. The race might insist on a few basic rights, but would not necessarily want political power.

Finally, humans are *organized*. A super-race might never need to band together for protection from nature as humanity’s ancestors did. Such a race might be quite at a loss to withstand an organized human military campaign or political program. And such a race might find real economic and technological benefit in accepting organization by humanity.

Beating Humanity At Its Own Game

It’s always possible to imagine a race that can out-compete humanity at one or all of these attributes, though. One excellent fictional example is the Moties, from *The Mote in God’s Eye*, by Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle. They were far more prolific than humanity, and as for aggressiveness and organization . . . read the book!

Faced with rivals like this, how can the human race expect to dominate the galaxy, or even to survive? That’s a good question, and the stuff of which adventures are made.

Racial Advantages

This section discusses the adaptation of *character* advantages from the Basic Set rules to *racial* advantages. If a specific character advantage is not listed below, that advantage can be used racially with no change in point value or description.

Some advantages are culturally relative. Advantages like Attractiveness, Reputation, Status and Voice cannot be expected to apply equally to every sentient race in the galaxy. Generally the GM should allow these to be taken if they apply to the majority of races in the campaign (this will often mean humanoids). In some campaigns it may be better to apply these advantages as they relate to the dominant race of the campaign (if the galactic overlords of Alpha think you're Attractive, it doesn't much matter what the street-sweeping race of Gamma thinks of you). Note that if applied racially, these advantages will carry *no* weight with other members of the same race (you're no more Attractive than everybody else at home).

The Rule of 12

If evolution provides a certain advantage, that advantage generally works. Consequently, racial advantages which require an attribute roll will not fail regularly, just because that attribute is low! In game terms, this means that where an attribute roll is required to use an advantage, members of races with an average of less than 12 in that characteristic will roll at 12 or the individual's actual characteristic, whichever is higher.

Example: The Chromedomes and the Mudheads both have the Danger Sense advantage, which calls for an IQ roll. Average IQ for a Mudhead is 9, but the average for a Chromedome is 14. A Mudhead of average IQ would roll for Danger Sense at 12 or less, whereas an average Chromedome could use his actual IQ of 14. Likewise a genius Mudhead with an IQ of 15 could use his actual IQ for rolls. However, a retarded Chromedome of IQ 11 would be stuck at that roll — his race lost their instinctive proficiency when racial IQ rose above 12.

Allies

This advantage should not be used to indicate a political alliance. In game terms such alliances merely mean "this race is not our enemy" and carry no special game benefits.

A more proper racial use of this advantage would be a race, every adult member of which is "bonded" to a member of another race, sentient or animal.

Ambidexterity

Bilaterally symmetrical vertebrate races are assumed to have an "on side" and an "off side," just as humans tend to be right- or left-handed, unless the Ambidexterity advantage is bought. GMs may ignore this advantage as meaningless as regards non-bilaterally symmetrical races (e.g. octopi, where many limbs radiate out from a central hub).

Animal Empathy

GM may rule that this will only work on creatures with some degree of biological similarity to the race in question. This advantage might not work on 5-dimensional creatures, for instance, or silicon-based creatures when the race with the advantage is carbon-based.

Charisma

The force of personality which makes an individual or a race Charismatic is considered to be universal. Charisma always works, no matter how different from each other the user and the

usee. Racial Charisma even works against members of the same race (Charismatic races tend to be harmonious, with everybody reacting to each other at whatever the bonus is).

Clerical Investment

In a multi-racial theocratic government, it is possible that a certain race would be officially designated a priest race, in which case this advantage would be suitable as a 5-point racial advantage. If the campaign tends toward science fantasy, the GM could even declare a certain race a "holy people," with various genuine divinely-granted special powers. In such a case, this advantage would be appropriate at higher point values.

Empathy

See *Animal Empathy*, above.

Legal Enforcement Powers

It is possible that in a multi-racial interstellar empire all members of the dominant race would have this advantage to some degree. It is also possible that an interstellar government would place one entire race in charge of security, as police or enforcers. Note that in such cases Legal Enforcement Powers would likely be somewhat curtailed when dealing with one's own race.

Magical Aptitude/Magic Resistance

Although this is outside the scope of a conventional "hard" science fiction campaign, a GM who decides to allow magic can certainly allow magical races. Note: nothing would shake up a complacent, hitherto "normal" *Space* campaign more than introducing a race of true, natural mages.

Military Rank

Since Military Rank is usually relative to one's unit, this is not normally suited for use as a racial advantage. Even if the entire race makes up a feared and respected crack military organization, that should probably be represented as racial Status and Reputation. With regards to their own unit, most members of that race would still have Rank 0.

Patron

There are a couple of ways in which a whole race could have a Patron. Suppose, for instance, that the race is powerful and tight-knit. Telepathy or hive nature would help communicate problems, but isn't necessary. If there is a *significant* chance that *any* member of the race will receive help from other members of the race when he's in trouble, the race is its own Patron!

Or a super-powerful individual, or group of individuals, might "play God" to a species, coming to the rescue in times of need. That would also qualify as a true racial Patron.

In any case, the important thing for a Patron to qualify as racial is that he or it would have a chance of coming to help in *any* case of difficulty to *any* individual. Being willing to help out the home planet in case of invasion isn't enough.

Psionics

All the psionic alien races in this book are built with the psi rules in the *Basic Set*. A GM desiring more detailed psionic powers can find them in *GURPS Supers*. See sidebar, p. 22.

Reputation

Some racial disadvantages can actually lead to a race develop-

ing a good reputation in the galactic community. These include Code of Honor, Honesty, Truthfulness and Sense of Duty.

Toughness

Note that additional DR can be purchased more economically as the new racial advantage Damage Resistance (below).

Racial Disadvantages

As with advantages, many racial disadvantages will make sense only if the GM defines some arbitrary norm. For a disadvantage to qualify as *racial*, it must represent a handicap with respect either to the majority of races in the galaxy, or the dominant race in the campaign.

Many physical disadvantages are handicaps only by comparison to “normal” members of the same race. Physical disadvantages unsuitable for racial use include Age, Lameness, One Arm, One Eye, One Hand, One Leg, Overweight, Skinny and Youth.

Disadvantages like Dwarfism, Gigantism and Fat should only be allowed in *extreme* cases, where the race is so far off the galactic “norm” that it causes real problems. The Cidi, in this book, are an example of a race so tiny that they have Dwarfism.

Finally, the GM should think carefully before making a race genuinely insane. Races which are seriously out of touch with reality are probably headed for extinction, or at least subjugation. Disadvantages which would seriously reduce a race’s prospects for survival include Major or Severe Delusions, Megalomania, Paranoia and Severe Phobias. Overconfidence, Minor Delusions and Phobias (and Quirks) are not as dangerous.

Addiction/Alcoholism

For racial applications, the GM should normally use Dependency (see below).

Combat Paralysis

Note that many real-world species are neurologically programmed to freeze when attacked.

Dependents

As with Allies (see above). To qualify as a dependent, the bonded race would have to be rather weak and vulnerable.

Enemies

Racial enemies will seldom appear at frequencies of 15 or less, or even 12 or less (an exception might be a primitive race with a formidable natural predator). For civilized races, consider the enemy group or race appears on a 9 or less if the groups are actively at war (declared or not) and 6 or less if the groups are technically at peace, or if the race is normally well defended.

Eunuch

For reasons that should be obvious, Eunuch is not suitable as a racial disadvantage. Certain sub-races, however (see sidebar, p. 21) may be racially sterile. Likewise, crosses between two subraces might be racially sterile, like the terrestrial mule.

Illiteracy

It is possible for a race to be neurologically incapable of comprehending written symbols. The GM might be tempted to increase the value of such a handicap in a high-tech-level campaign, but consider that in such a campaign, audio tapes or similar translations will be readily available for most data and communications.

Unusual Background

This advantage is not suitable for racial use.



Kleptomania

This tendency is found in such earthly species as the jackdaw and the pack rat.

Lecherousness

There are several ways to interpret this as a racial disadvantage. 1) The race spends so much time interpreting that individuals have little time for other pursuits. 2) Members of the race suffer severe mental or physical harm when deprived of the opposite sex (this is probably better bought as a Dependency; see below). 3) This race is strongly attracted to members of another race, which does not normally reciprocate their attraction. This last would almost certainly qualify the race for some sort of Odious Racial Habit as well.

Mute

This is not suitable as a racial disadvantage unless the species can really find *no* way to communicate with other races. For a race which merely requires alternatives to the normal Galactic mode of communication, treat the disadvantage as Stuttering (below). Note also that a race of telepaths will be able to communicate easily, even if they had no voices, so this would not be a real disadvantage for them.

Paranoia

See the caution against racial insanity (above), but remember, you’re not paranoid when everybody really is out to get you! Races from exceptionally dangerous planets may well need to be paranoid. It only becomes an inconvenience when members of that race visit safer climes.

Phobias

Like Paranoia, a racial phobia may actually be a survival trait in certain environments. For example, a race from a planet riddled with poisonous insects might need to become Severely Entomophobic. But what happens when that race’s delegation is seated next to the Fly People’s at the Galactic Assembly?

Reputation

Perhaps the most common racial disadvantage of all. Consider, while it may be possible to conceal a personal tendency towards Kleptomania or Bad Temper, when such tendencies are species-wide it will rapidly become known that wise travelers keep their wallet in hand when on Planet X, and don’t insult the natives of Planet Y. Disadvantages that lend themselves to Reputations include Odious Racial Habit, Bad Temper, Berserk, Bloodlust, Bully, Compulsive Behavior, Compulsive Lying, Cowardice, Delusions, Fanaticism, Gluttony, Greed, Gullibility, Impulsiveness, Intolerance, Jealousy, Kleptomania, Laziness, Lecherousness, Megalomania, Miserliness, Overconfidence, Paranoia, Phobia, Pyromania, Sadism, Shyness, Stubbornness, Unluckiness and Weak Will.

Normally, no race would have a reputation upon first contact. However, if there is a galactic community of races, the “first

contact” between members of two individual races might still be affected by reputations . . . each might have heard stories about the other!

Skinny

If the GM wants to create a race emaciated to the point of fragility, he should simply take a negative modifier to racial HT and ST, with perhaps a Vulnerability (see below) to crushing attacks. The skinniness is a special effect!

Split Personality

It would mean a great deal of extra work for the GM to design a race where every individual has two distinct personalities.

Racial Skills

A distinction must be drawn between *racial skill bonuses* and *racially learned skills*.

Racial Skill Bonus

A *racial skill bonus* is a natural talent toward a certain skill. It is expressed as, for instance, “+1 Forgery” or “+3 Bard.” Not every member of the race has the skill. Individuals get the benefit of the bonus only after they pay at least a half-point to actually learn the skill.

For Physical skills, the cost for a +1 racial bonus is equivalent to the cost (from the table on p. B44) to learn the skill at DX level. The cost for a 2-point racial bonus is equal to the cost for DX+1, and so on.

For Mental skills, the cost for a +1 racial bonus is equal to the cost to learn the skill at IQ level. A 2-point racial bonus costs the same as learning it at IQ+1, and so on.

Racial skill bonuses apply to all of that skill’s specializations, even those which normally *require* specialization, such as Survival, Electronics Operation and Engineer.

Racially Learned Skills

A *racially learned skill* is an actual *automatic* level of proficiency which every member of the race acquires. In most cases, this will be innate or instinctive. For example, a race with padded feet might get an automatic proficiency in Stealth.

New Racial Advantages

Below are advantages that can be used to provide exotic abilities for extraterrestrial races. This is not intended to be a complete list of all possible alien powers. The GM is encouraged to come up with all the original alien advantages he can think of.

Many of the following advantages were adapted from metahuman powers in *GURPS Supers*. The GM desiring still more exotic abilities for his alien races is referred to that source for further inspiration.

When an advantage can be enhanced or limited in some special way, this will be noted in the description. The price for these enhancements and limitations is given in *levels*. Each level of enhancement adds 10% to the cost of the advantage; each level of limitation reduces the cost by 10%. All enhancements and limitations are totaled before figuring cost. An advantage with 5 levels of enhancement and 3 levels of limitation has a net 20% extra cost. However, no matter what limitations are taken, the cost of an advantage can never be less than 25% of base cost.

However, the GM can tie radical personality swings into biological processes, as with the Pachekki’s periodic sex and personality shifts (p. S43).

Stuttering

It is most unlikely that a sentient race would ever evolve a language they all stuttered in! It is quite likely, however, that some races would have excessive trouble pronouncing the galactic lingua franca.

The GM may wish to disallow this disadvantage as meaningless in campaigns where universal translators are common.

A racially learned skill is expressed, for instance, as “Genetics at IQ” or “Poetry at IQ+2.” Note that the actual level of skill will vary according to individual IQ. It is assumed that, while every member of the race receives the same instruction, the more intelligent members are able to apply the knowledge more efficiently and creatively. Point cost of racially learned skills is figured according to the chart on page B44.

For skills where specialization is required, the GM may either set the specialization for the whole race or allow the player to select his character’s specialization.

Effects of Experience

Racial skill bonuses can never be increased through experience. However, they are disregarded when figuring the cost for increased proficiency. For example, a character’s race has a racial skill bonus of +1 in a mental average skill. The character pays ½ point to have the skill at IQ -2, then adds his racial skill bonus, bringing the skill to IQ -1. If he later wants to increase his skill, he disregards the bonus when computing the cost. He pays only 1 more point, not 2, to increase his skill to IQ level.

Racially learned skills may be increased just as though they had been bought normally, either when the character is created or through experience. *Example:* A Kaa has the racially learned skill Hypnotism at IQ+1. It will cost him 2 points, straight from the chart on p. B44, to increase it to IQ+2.

Amphibious

20 points

The race is equally at home on land and in the water. Amphibians automatically have the Swimming skill (p. B49) at their normal Move rate. Usually, this will mean they will have both true lungs and gills (below). Note: Aquatic air breathers like whales and dolphins, who cannot function on land, do not need to buy this advantage.

Armor

Varies

The race has thick hide, scales, a shell or other natural armor. Depending on the desired effect of the armor, this can be bought as Passive Defense (p. 15), Damage Resistance (p. 11), or some combination.

Body of Gas

-30 points

The race has no solid form; their “bodies” are free-floating clouds of gas. Individuals can carry nothing. Movement is ½ normal, but they can go up and down at will, and slip through the narrowest of cracks.

Every 5 mph of wind will move a gas creature 1 hex/turn in the direction it is blowing — if that's the direction it wishes to travel in, the wind adds to its Move. Otherwise Move will go down as it fights against the breeze.

Gas creatures cannot be hit by ordinary weapons, but are vulnerable to all energy and psionic attacks. All knockback from strong winds is doubled. In a vacuum, gas creatures take 3d damage per turn. A whirlwind will do 1d damage per turn that the individual remains in its radius.

Body of Stone **6 points/level**

The species is made of rock (in science fiction this usually implies a silicon-based metabolism). The race gains PD 1 for every 4 levels (maximum PD 6) and DR 2 for every 3 levels. Damage from punches and kicks is raised by +2, but Move is reduced 20%.

Sonic and vibratory attacks are automatically “armor piercing” against stone creatures. This means that only 3/4 of the target's DR (round up) is effective.

Special enhancement: The race's body structure is amorphous rather than crystalline, and does not suffer the extra effect from sonic or vibratory attacks. +3 levels.

Body of Water **-20 points**

The species is made of water (or some other liquid compound) kept together by surface tension. Normal crushing weapons do 1/2 damage; normal cutting, impaling and missile weapons do 1 point damage per hit (regardless of DR), and dehydration or fire-based attacks do double normal damage.

Normal physical skills are at -8. Individuals are amorphous, but they can alter form to resemble objects or individuals.

In their natural habitat, water creatures are -4 to be seen. If noticed, they appear as a vague mist moving through the water.

Broadcast **5 points/level**

The Radio Hearing advantage (below) is a prerequisite. The race can broadcast on any radio frequency it can hear. The race's Broadcast range, in miles, is equal to its level of Broadcast squared.

This ability will often qualify for Secret Communication (p. 17), which carries its own cost.

Catfall **30 points**

The race subtracts 5 yards from a fall automatically (this is considered an automatic Acrobatics roll; Acrobatics skill will not increase this bonus). A successful DX roll *halves* all damage taken from a fall.

Chameleon **10 points/level**

The race can blend into the surroundings. In any situation where being seen is a factor, members of the race have an additional +2 per level to their Stealth skill when perfectly still, or a +1 per level if moving.

This advantage will not help in the dark, or against someone relying on senses other than sight.

Claws **15/40 points**

For 15 points, the race has claws which do an extra +2 damage on any hand-to-hand attack (including Karate).

For 40 points, the claws are 6 to 12 inches long, and do thrust/impaling or swing/cutting damage.

In both cases, the cost assumes two hands; pay again for each pair of hands that have claws.

Clinging **30 points**

The race can walk or crawl on walls or ceilings. Move is halved while using this advantage. An individual can stop at any point and stick to the surface without fear of falling.

If an individual is falling and tries to grab a wall before hitting the ground, the GM first decides whether the wall is within reach. If it is, a successful DX roll is needed to touch the wall. Once the wall has been grabbed, a successful ST roll must be made, modified at -1 for each 5 yards fallen. If the ST roll is failed, 5 yards are subtracted from the distance because of the slowing effect the failed clinging attempt had on the fall.

Note that a variation in gravity will affect the above distances. In .5 G, for instance, each 5-yard distance would become 10 yards.

Cultural Adaptability **25 points**

The race has an instinctive knack for getting along with everybody, no matter how physically or psychologically alien. This advantage includes one level of Charisma and two levels of Language Talent. When confronted with a completely alien concept or custom, the individual gets an IQ roll to understand what's going on and respond correctly. Finally, the individual gets an IQ roll when confronted with an Odious Racial Habit to avoid the negative reaction modifier (note that this does not apply to Odious Personal Habits, only Odious Racial Habits).

Damage Resistance **5 points/level**

This functions as the Toughness advantage (see p. B23), but can be purchased in as many levels as desired. This DR will protect against both physical and energy attacks, but will not aid versus mental attacks. This can be armor, a force field, thick skin, or any other mechanism the GM may favor.

Cost of this advantage depends on whether it applies against *everything*, or only against certain types of attacks. For example, a race might have extra resistance only against fire or heat-based attacks.

Against Everything: 5 points per level of DR

Common Attack Type: 4 points per level of DR

Occasional Attack Type: 3 points per level of DR

Rare Attack Type: 2 points per level of DR

Very Rare Attack Type: 1 point per level of DR

Common attack types include Crushing (most bullets, fists, maces, falling safes), Cutting/Impaling (knives, swords, arrows, or spears), Metal (knives, bullets, falling safes again), generic Energy, generic Psionic, generic Living Things.

Occasional attack types include Fire/Heat, Cold/Ice, Air, Light, Earth, Electricity, Sonic, Plants.

Rare attack types include Vibration, Radiation, Acid and Poison.

Very Rare attack types might include such things as Mud, Citrus Fruit or Insects.

Dark Vision **25 points**

The race can see in absolute darkness, using some means other than light, radar or sonar. It cannot detect colors in the darkness.

Special enhancement: The race can see colors in the dark. +5 points.

Decreased Life Support **10 points**

The race needs much less food and atmosphere than normal in life-support situations. Very small races and races with Slow Metabolisms often have this advantage.

Mindshare

A race's individuals may each "share" consciousness between several bodies. A personality may be shared by several telepathic bodies who seem like individuals, or each individual may be a central mind-unit controlling many "drones." In an extreme case, a whole species is, mentally, a single individual.

Cost for the race's mental characteristics is based on personality. Cost for physical characteristics is based on the cost for an average "drone" — the central body, if any, is disregarded.

Several options are available when building a Mindshare race. First, the GM must decide what type of link the race has.

Type of Link

Hive Mind: 20 points

Racial Memory: 40 points

Global Consciousness: 60 points

A *hive mind* creature consists of a single central organism that controls the actions of many individual bodies. The central mind is usually large and well-protected; if the brain dies, the drones, and the character perish with it. The drones (see below) of a hive mind can never be intelligent — by definition all its bodies are controlled by the central brain.

PCs or NPCs that are members of a hive cannot *always* have the full attention of the central mind. Instead, the drone must purchase the hive mind as a Patron — roll each time a significant decision must be made by the drone.

A creature with a *racial memory* has access to the accumulated memories of every individual body. There must be some sort of physical act to transfer memories between bodies — direct contact, a pilgrimage to the character's home, an hour of meditation, or something else non-trivial. Otherwise the link is really a global consciousness (see below).

A *global consciousness* link means that the bodies are sharing knowledge in real-time. Whenever something happens to one of a character's bodies, all other bodies are aware of it. All memories and experiences of one body are available to all. If there is a range factor involved (see below), any intelligent drone must make a Fright Check at +4 any time he moves out of contact range with the rest of his "self."

Type of Drone

Mindless: -10 points

Maintenance: 5 points

Defense: 15 points

Intelligent: 25 points

The first three types are only appropriate to a hive mind.

A *mindless* drone is just that — if cut off from the controlling brain, it cannot do anything at all. It will quickly die, as it won't eat, drink or defend itself.

A *maintenance* drone will only take the most rudimentary actions when out of touch with the brain — eating, drinking, seeking shelter, etc. It is not capable of any true thought or activity, and will not defend itself if attacked.

A *defense* drone will act as above, but will also protect itself if attacked. A group of defense drones that have been isolated from the central mind will act together to protect their existence. Other than self-preservation, however, the drones won't initiate any independent actions.

A *sentient* drone is a bit of an oxymoron. It is fully cognitive, and can continue to function as a PC or NPC even when isolated from the brain. A race of intelligent drones might just be telepathic individuals sharing a mass mind, or perhaps there is a central figure that is the repository of the "memory banks" (see above).

Varies

Mindshare Distance

The range at which Mindshare is maintained varies from species to species.

Touch only: -15 points

1 mile: 0 points

100 miles: 10 points

1,000 miles: 20 points

Planet-wide: 30 points

System-wide: 40 points

Galaxy-wide: 50 points

Universal: 60 points



Number of Drones

2-9: -10 points

10-99: 0 points

100-999: 10 points

1,000-9999: 20 points

Cost increases by a further 10 points for each power of 10.

If the number of drones is large enough, it is possible for the whole race to be a single individual. If the number of drones is small, the race will be made up of a large number of individual, each of whom owns several bodies.

Modifiers

Several options are available to customize a particular mind-sharing race. Any species that Mindshares in a way that can be detected by non-telepathic means (radio, laser, microwaves, etc.) receives a 2-level limitation on total cost. If the communication can be blocked or jammed, this is an additional 1-level limitation.

If racial communication is limited by the speed of light, this is a 1-level limitation. This will cause a serious time lag when communicating over interplanetary or intergalactic distances.

Finally, if the communication is implemented by normal telepathic means (and can therefore be blocked by a psi shield, for instance), this adds a further 1-level limitation.

If replacement drones are exceptionally easy or exceptionally hard to acquire, the GM may define an appropriate enhancement or limitation.

Doesn't Breathe

30 points

The race absorbs the oxygen (or other atmospheric gas) it needs through osmosis. Individuals can't be strangled, and are immune to most gases (their bodies won't absorb anything harmful). Individuals will still suffocate in a vacuum, or anywhere else where there is no oxygen available to absorb, unless they have an oxygen supply and special equipment. The race can live underwater as long as the water has the proper gases in it.

Doesn't Eat or Drink

30 points

The race does not require food. Their bodies are powered in some other manner (solar power or radiation, for example — note that a sufficiently rare power source would qualify the race for the Dependency and Increased Life Support disadvantages).

Doesn't Sleep

10 points

The race does not need regular dormancy periods. Individuals can operate at full efficiency with only periodic normal breaks.

Early Maturation

10 points/level

Each level of this advantage halves the time to reach the age of majority (normally 18). A race with one level of this advantage reaches maturity in 9 years, two levels 4.5 years. A race

with one level of Extended Lifespan and one level of Early Maturation reaches maturity in 18 years.

Enhanced Move **10 points/level**

Each level of Enhanced Move increases the race's maximum speed by the original Move score in one mode of locomotion (running, swimming, flying, etc.). Move is only increased if the individual is moving along a relatively straight, smooth course. Combat Move and Dodge are unaffected, but anyone targeting the individual with a missile or thrown weapon will subtract a speed modifier appropriate to the individual's current speed.

Example: A plains-dwelling race with a Move of 8 buys two levels of Enhanced Move (Running). Members of the race can now run at 8+8+8 or 24.

Extended Lifespan **25 points/level**

An average life cycle is defined as 18 years childhood, 32 years active maturity, and then the onset of progressive aging. One level of Extended Lifespan doubles all these values . . . maturity at 36, onset of aging at 100, rolls begin at every two years, accelerate at 140 and 180. Two levels triples the base values, etc.

Extra Fatigue **5/point**

The race's fatigue is greater than its strength. The race can run farther and fight longer than normal. Extra Fatigue goes into a separate pool that can be used to power natural attacks, psionics or extra effort. This pool recharges at the same rate as normal Fatigue, but will only begin to regain points if regular Fatigue (based on ST) has been completely regained first.

Extra Hit Points **8/point**

The race can take more damage than is normal for its HT. A race with a normal HT of 12 could buy its Hit Point total up to 15 for 24 points. This is written HT 12/15 (note that if an individual of this race bought his HT up to 14, his Hit Points would be 17 at no additional cost). All rolls versus HT, Contests of HT, resistances, calculation of unconsciousness and survival rolls, and anything else regarding HT would be made against the individual's first HT value. Only damage is subtracted from the second value.

Field Sense **10 points**

The race can detect and orient to electromagnetic fields. They automatically have Absolute Direction on any planet with a magnetic field. They can also (for instance) sense whether power is flowing through a device. The power flow from an A cell could be detected at 1 hex, a B cell at 10 hexes, a C cell at 100, and so on.

Flight **40 points**

The race can fly through the air without wings or gliders (perhaps via psionics or natural jets). If wings are used, the advantage costs less; see *Winged Flight*, p. 17.

Flight speed is equal to twice normal move, plus any levels of the Enhanced Move (Flight) advantage possessed. This advantage does not automatically confer the ability to do complex acrobatics and tight turns; buy Flight skill (Physical/Average, defaulting to DX-4) to use in such tough spots.

Full Coordination **50 points/attack**

This is the ability to make more than one physical attack per turn, using each limb only once. The "default" for *GURPS* combat is one attack per turn, regardless of how many limbs one

possesses. Each level of Full Coordination allows one *extra* attack per turn. The maximum number of attacks possible is equal to the number of limbs which may attack.

For instance, a race with four arms could buy Full Coordination/2 and make two extra attacks per turn, or FC/3 and make three extra attacks per turn. Physical attacks are limited to punches, kicks or weapon attacks, not the natural attacks described on pp. 17-18.

When an individual with Full Coordination makes an all-out attack, it may take one type of bonus for each weapon used, but all bonuses must be the same. The individual could not, for instance, swing twice with one weapon while aiming carefully with another!

To *aim* two or more weapons at once requires the Independently Focusable Eyes advantage (see p. 14).

Gills **0 points**

This is included as an example of a *non*-advantage — a special effect. A race which has gills instead of lungs simply has another way of breathing. In and of itself, this is worth no points. A race with *both* gills and lungs is Amphibious (p. 10) — this *is* an advantage!

Gliding **20 points**

This is a limited form of Winged Flight (see p. 17). Gliders cannot gain altitude while flying. Individuals descend at 1 hex per turn. Enhanced Move does not affect speed, but each time it is bought, it halves the descent rate.

Special Enhancement: Gliders can gain altitude by riding warm air currents, or "thermals" (assuming such currents are present!), for +5 points. A normal thermal will raise a glider at 1 hex per turn. If thermals are present, a member of a race with this advantage can locate them on a successful IQ roll (one attempt per minute).

Healing **25 points**

The user must be in physical contact with the subject. On a successful Healing roll, he can restore lost HT up to 1/2 his own health. Failure costs the healer 1d of Fatigue; critical failure also causes 1d damage. The Fatigue cost of successful healing is equal to twice the hits healed.

The healing roll is at -2 when the victim is unconscious, and -2 or worse to cure disease. It can't restore a lost limb. Freshly broken limbs should be carefully set before healing is attempted, otherwise the healing will result in a crippled limb. Crippled limbs are restored at a -6, and each healer only gets one try at any one limb. Healing cannot bring back the dead.

Special limitation: If a race's healing ability can only be used on members of the same race, the Healing advantage costs 15 points. If it can be used on only biologically similar races (for instance plants, or warm-blooded vertebrates) it costs 20 points.

High Technology **varies**

This applies only if the race's *overall* technology is significantly better than the Galactic average. The greater the technology gap, the more this advantage is worth. GMs should be cautious with this advantage, since it will give some PCs better tools and weapons than others.

- +1 TL: 20 points
- +2 TLs: 50 points
- +3 TLs: 100 points

An advantage of more than 3 TLs is not appropriate for a PC race, and will make even an NPC race into demigods, especially if the campaign's base TL is 10 or above.

Ice Clinging **10 points**

The race has the Clinging advantage (see p. 11) for ice only. The race automatically gets the Ice Skates advantage.

Ice Skates **5 points**

The race can move normally on ice — no DX penalties are incurred for bad or slippery footing. Note that if the race moves normally on ice but *not* on land, this Reduced Move disadvantage will probably more than cancel out the Ice Skates cost.

Immortality **150 points**

Members of the race will never die of natural causes and are tough to kill unnaturally! This advantage includes Instant Regeneration, Immunity to Disease, Immunity to Poison, and Unaging.

Immunity to Poison **25 points**

The race is immune to the effect of any toxins. This doesn't confer immunity to a corrosive substance such as acid — just to bona fide biological or chemical poisons. If there is a question, GM's decision, as always, rules.

Increased Speed **25 points/level**

The race's Basic Speed is increased by 1 for each level, which also increases Move and Dodge.

Increased Strength **50/level**

The race's strength is doubled. Racial Strength bonuses are added in before doubling (individual strength adjustments are added or subtracted from the race's final total). Additional levels of this advantage increase the multiple by one each: i.e. ST can be tripled for 100 points, quadrupled for 150 points. (Note that it is much cheaper, in terms of points, to make a whole race strong than it is to make an individual strong.)

Special limitation: This advantage only costs 30 points/level when taken in conjunction with the No Fine Manipulators disadvantage (the race also still gets full point value for the disadvantage).

Independently Focusable Eyes **15 points**

The race can focus in two separate directions, allowing an individual to aim two weapons at once, for instance, or to take full advantage of extra limbs.

Races with more than two eyes can buy this advantage again for each additional eye to be focused independently. Three Independently Focusable Eyes cost 30 points; four cost 45 points, and so on.

Infravision **15 points**

The race's vision extends into the infrared portion of the spectrum, allowing the individual to see varying degrees of heat. Individuals can even see in absolute darkness if the temperature is above 70 degrees. No matter what the temperature, the individual suffers only a -1 when fighting at night due to the heat emissions of its opponent (assuming the opponent is of a race that emits heat!). Individuals are +2 to see any living beings during daylight if you are scanning an area visually.

This advantage also allows the race to follow a heat trail when tracking. Add +3 to any tracking rolls if the trail is no more than an hour old. A sudden flash of heat, such as an explosion, acts as a Flash (see p. 18) to anyone with Infravision.

Note: Infravision can be taken in conjunction with the Blindness disadvantage. Blind creatures with Infravision always oper-

ate as though at night. They can only track if the trail is less than one hour old.

Insubstantiality **80 points**

The race can phase into a different dimension or another vibratory plane. Insubstantial individuals move at a normal rate, but pass through solid objects as though they weren't there. They cannot pick up normal objects or affect them in any way while insubstantial. The GM may rule that certain types of energy barriers impede the Insubstantial individual's progress, however. Physical and energy attacks can't harm the race, but they're still vulnerable to psionic attacks.

Physical and energy attacks from an insubstantial individual will only affect insubstantial members of the same race, or creatures under a similar sort of insubstantiality (GM's determination). Psi skills function normally.

Although it can pass through solids, the individual must still breathe. When moving through a solid object, treat it as if swimming underwater for purposes of suffocation. Insubstantial races must take the Invisible advantage (below) to be unseen when insubstantial.

Insubstantial creatures cannot become substantial inside a solid object. They are unaffected by gravity, and can move up or down at their normal Move.

Special enhancement: The race has abilities which can affect the substantial world even while the individual remains insubstantial. 5 levels.

Special limitation: The race is always insubstantial and cannot become substantial. -5 levels.

Invisibility **40 points**

The race is invisible to normal sight. Anything an invisible individual carries remains visible. Invisible creatures still make noise, leave footprints and can be smelled. If carrying nothing, an invisible individual gets a +9 to Stealth in any situation where being seen would matter. The individual cannot be photographed, but can be detected by mechanical devices. The individual doesn't show up in mirrors.

Invisibility works against only one sort of vision. Types include electromagnetic vision (which includes normal human vision by light, as well as radar and infravision); sonar; magnetic fields; and anything else the GM can invent.

Special enhancement: The race is normally visible, but can become invisible at will. +1 levels.

Special enhancement: The race is invisible to more than one type of vision. +2 levels per added type.

Manual Dexterity **10 points/level**

Each level of this advantage gives the race a +1 to DX, but only on tasks requiring fine motor skills. This skill would help an individual repair a Swiss watch, for example, but not dodge thrown rocks.

Metabolism Control **5 points/level**

The race can control normally involuntary biological functions such as pulse, blood flow, digestion and respiration. This skill allows the individual to enter a deathlike trance; a physician unfamiliar with the race's metabolism must win a Quick Contest of Skills (Physician -2 versus HT) to realize the individual isn't dead. While in this state the individual is unaware of its surroundings. The individual may set a mental "alarm clock" that will awaken it after a certain amount of time has passed. The individual will automatically awaken if it takes any damage.

Each level of Metabolism Control reduces by 10% the

amount of oxygen (or appropriate breathable gas) it normally needs to stay alive. Each level doubles the time that it can safely go without food or water.

Microscopic Vision **4 points/level**

The race's eyes can magnify tiny details that might otherwise only be visible under a magnifying glass or microscope. Each level doubles the race's magnification factor: i.e., 4 points = 2×, 8 points = 4×, 24 points = 64×, etc.

Mimicry **15 points**

The race can duplicate any familiar sound. A new sound becomes familiar if the individual spends five minutes listening to it, and makes a successful roll versus a skill of 12 or IQ, whichever is greater.

This skill can also be used to imitate voices. To memorize someone's voice, the individual must spend at least one hour listening to that person talk, either live or on tape, and make a successful roll versus IQ.

Morph **40 points**

The race is able to assume the form of any creature. The creature being duplicated must be physically present (a high-quality holographic image may suffice at the GM's discretion) or memorized. A morph can memorize a number of forms equal to its IQ. A memorized form can be "overwritten" with a new one.

Mass does not change, although the morph can still take the appearance of a much larger or smaller creature by increasing or decreasing its body density.

The morph gains the physical appearance of the target (including its voice), but not the knowledge, skills or memories. The morph retains all its own skills, and its attributes remain unchanged. It takes a full turn for morphing to finish, and the same amount of time to change back into its original form. Normal clothing can be mimicked (GM's determination when clothing is "abnormal"), but cannot be removed because it's part of the Morph's body.

When impersonating someone, there is a chance that the morph will be discovered by his associates, friends or family. Every time the morph encounters someone who is familiar with the person being imitated, that person gets an IQ roll to spot the difference modified as follows.

Casual acquaintance: -4

Daily acquaintance: -2

Friend: 2

Close friend: 4

Close family: 6

Empathy advantage: 3

If the morph has Acting skill at 12+, viewers roll at -2. If it has Fast-Talk at 12+, viewers roll at -1.

Nictating Membrane **15 points/level**

The race has a transparent lens cover over its eyeballs. This allows them to see normally under water, and will help protect the eyes from sand, gas and so on. Any time an individual is hit in the eyes with a gaseous or liquid attack, the lens provides the eyes, only, PD 2, DR 1 per level (to a maximum PD of 6). The lens also adds +3 per level to all HT rolls concerned with eye damage, and can be opened and closed just like an eyelid.

Passive Defense **25 points/level up to 6**

It is much harder to hit this race. This advantage might be related to speed, a "sixth sense" that warns against upcoming

attacks, or simply natural armor. Each level adds 1 to PD. If external armor is worn, the individual's own PD will not add to the armor's PD; take the PD of the outer layer.

Perfect Balance **25 points**

The race has no problem keeping its footing, no matter how narrow the walking surface, under normal conditions. The individual can walk on tightropes, ledges, tree limbs or any other anchored surface without having to make a DX roll. If the surface is wet, slippery or otherwise unstable the individual is at +6 on all rolls to keep its feet. In combat the individual receives a +4 to DX on any rolls to keep its feet or avoid being knocked down. This advantage adds +1 to the Piloting, Flight and Acrobatics skills.

Polarized Eyes **5 points**

The race's eyes adjust instantaneously to changing light conditions. If the individual has Dark or Night Vision, it can instantly adjust from bright light to darkness. If the individual is caught in a bright flash of light, its eyes will automatically adjust so that the maximum time it is blinded or stunned from the flash is 2 turns.

Pressure Support **varies**

For 5 points, the race can stand up to 5 times its normal pressure. For 10 points, it can stand 20 times normal pressure. For 15 points, it can stand 100 times normal pressure.

For 20 points, the race is effectively immune to pressure; it can survive the crushing pressure of the ocean depths, or the core of a gas giant. This advantage doesn't convey any combat advantage unless the attack form directly manipulates barometric pressure.

Racial Memory **40 points**

A member of this race can access the memories of its direct genetic ancestors. If the individual wants to know something, the GM first determines whether the individual's ancestors knew the answer. Then the GM rolls vs. the individual's IQ (do not use the "rule of 12") to see if he accesses the information. If the ancestors didn't have the answer, the individual will know that if the roll succeeds. On a critical failure, the individual will believe his ancestors didn't know, even if they really did. This Advantage requires one turn of absolute concentration (GM may require more elaborate preparations to recall very ancient memories.)

Radar Sense **50 points plus 1 point per hex radius**

The individual perceives a complete radar "picture" of everything going on around it. It can sense shapes and objects, but not colors. The denser an object is, the easier it is to see. The individual must make a Vision roll to make out details about a non-dense object. On the other hand, radar can look right through water, clouds, leaves, and so on.

Special enhancement: You can see *inside* any object within your radius. +4 levels.

Special enhancement: You can see colors. +2 levels.

Radio Hearing **15 points**

The race can hear emissions on all radio frequencies. Individuals must make a roll versus IQ or 12, whichever is higher, to "tune" to a particular frequency. Each attempt requires 10 seconds.

Recovery **10 points**

The race recovers from unconsciousness very quickly. Instead of staying unconscious for hours, recovery time is measured in minutes.

Regeneration **25/50/100 points**

The race recovers from damage much faster than normal. The individual automatically has the Rapid Healing advantage (p. B22) at no extra cost. Cost of this advantage depends on the speed of regeneration.

Regular Regeneration: the individual recovers 1 HT (or Hit Point) per hour. 25 points.

Fast Regeneration: the individual recovers 1 HT per minute. 50 points.

Instant Regeneration: the individual recovers 1 HT per turn. 100 points.

Regrowth **40 points**

The race regrows lost limbs! A lost ear, finger or toe (claw, pseudopod, tentacle tip, etc.) will regrow in 1d weeks, a lost hand or foot in 1d+1 months, and a lost eye, arm or leg in 2d+2 months.

Special limitation: The race cannot regrow hands, feet or limbs, only small extremities: 20 points.

Secret Communication **20 points**

The race has a method of communication that cannot be perceived by other races — telepathy on a weird band, ultrasonic speech, extra-dimensionally transmitted radio, or just race-specific empathy. The only telepathic race in a non-telepathic universe would have this advantage.

The GM may allow an individual to buy the ability to comprehend another race's private communication as an advantage. Cost would depend on the importance of that advantage to the campaign.

Special enhancement: Other races cannot even perceive when communication is going on. +4 levels.

Special limitation: Only general concepts and emotions can be sent. -5 levels.

See Invisible **25 points**

The race can see objects or individuals that are normally invisible.

Sensitive Touch **15 points**

The race's fingertips (or equivalent organs) are extremely sensitive. For instance, an individual can by touch notice residual heat in a chair, faint vibrations in the floor as someone approaches, similarities or differences between two pieces of fabric, etc. The individual must roll his IQ to use this advantage successfully (note: low IQs do not default to 13 when using this advantage). Note that if this much sensitivity is *normal* to the race, a highly trained individual, buying "extra" Acute Touch as per normal human Acute Hearing, would seem miraculous indeed.

Silence **5 points/level**

The race can move around noiselessly. Individuals get an additional +2 per level to their Stealth skill if perfectly motionless, or +1 if moving (even in armor, etc.). This advantage helps only in the dark, or against listening devices, blind creatures, etc.

Sonar Vision **0/25 points**

The race can "see" by emitting sound waves which bounce off the surroundings. No light is required. Sonar can be "jammed" or fooled by *very* loud sound, but not otherwise. It is color-blind, but can "see" the *interiors* of living things and other objects of equivalent density. Effective range is typically a few hundred yards. It is useless in vacuum.

As a race's sole form of vision, this is worth no points. As an adjunct to another form of vision, it is worth 25 points.

Spectrum Vision **40 points**

The race can "tune" its vision to any portion of the spectrum. Individuals can see radio emissions, gamma rays, UV radiation or any other portion of the spectrum they desire.

Note that just because an individual can see radio or microwaves doesn't mean it can understand them . . . but he can see by their reflection. A TV or microwave tower would be a beacon to this sense.

Stretching **15 points/level**

Each level of stretching allows the race to stretch a limb, or their entire bodies, up to twice its normal size. Human-sized creatures normally cover 1 hex, so a creature of that size with three levels of Stretching can cover $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 1 = 8$ hexes, or stretch a limb up to 8 hexes away.

The speed at which an individual can stretch is equal to its Move. E.g., if a creature can stretch 12 hexes, but has a Move of 7, that creature can only stretch 7 hexes in one turn.

Telescopic Vision **6 points/level**

The race can "zoom in" visually, allowing individuals to outperform even the best binoculars. Power is figured as for Microscopic Vision. The normal horizon for an Earth-sized planet on flat ground is three miles. Beyond the horizon, the curvature of the world will block Telescopic Vision.

Temperature Tolerance **10 points/level**

The race can withstand a remarkably wide range of temperatures without loss of Fatigue or HT. For game purposes, a temperature "comfort zone" of about 50° is considered normal (the GM determines where this comfort zone is centered for each race). For each level of this advantage, the race multiplies HT×5, and adds that number of degrees to both ends of the comfort zone.

Special limitation: The race's extra tolerance is only in one direction — either toward heat or toward cold, but not both. -4 levels.

360-Degree Vision **25 points**

The race has a complete 360-degree field of vision. If the individual knows the Karate skill, it can attack foes behind it at no penalty. Otherwise, treat "off hand" hexes and back hexes as -2 to hit. Note that in humans the "off hand" is usually the left. Every bilaterally symmetrical race is assumed to have an "off" and "on" side unless the Ambidexterity advantage is bought. However, the GM can rule that it's impossible for certain tentacled or multi-limbed races to have off hand hexes).

Individuals suffer no penalties when defending against attacks from the side or rear, and opponents gain no bonuses when attacking from behind.

Extra eyes are merely a special effect of this advantage — a race can possess it and have none, one or a hundred eyes and the point cost remains the same.

Tunnel 40 points + 10 points/level of Tunneling speed

The race can dig through the ground like a worm, spewing dirt and sand behind. This skill lets the individual dig a passage, sized for its race, through dirt or stone. Movement through rock or stone is half normal tunneling speed.

The GM may wish to assess a chance that the tunnel collapses behind the tunneler. The individual must roll each minute vs. IQ to dig a stable tunnel. This can be modified upward for hard rock and downward for soft rock or dirt. Each halving of tunnel speed gives the individual a +1 on this roll.

Ultrasonic Hearing 10 points

The race can hear tones far higher than human ears can detect. (This assumes that they can also hear within the normal human range. If not, this is not an advantage, but just a different mode of hearing.)

Unaging 60 points

Individuals in this race never grow old. Age is fixed at maturity and will never change. Individuals never have to make aging rolls. Members of this race cannot take the Age disadvantage.

Universal Digestion 15 points

The race possesses remarkably hardy intestinal processes which allow it to derive nutrition from any animal or vegetable protein, no matter how alien the biochemistry. *Note:* this does not confer any advantage against normal poisons.

Vacuum Support 60 points

The race can survive in space. Individuals in a vacuum suffer no damage from internal pressure and temperature, and do not need to breathe. This advantage does not protect from attacks or damage of any kind (except, of course, an artificially-created vacuum). The individual can survive underwater or in any non-corrosive atmosphere.

Venom 15 points/level

The race secretes a venom, either corrosive or poisonous, which can be delivered by various means.

Corrosive venoms, such as acids, do damage quickly. A corrosive venom does 1d of damage per level when it is delivered, and may continue to burn for several turns. At the end of every subsequent turn the venom does 1d less damage than on the turn before, until the number of dice reaches 0. It is possible to wash off a corrosive venom, preventing damage on subsequent turns. This requires at least a gallon of water and a full turn. Armor, toughness and damage resistance will protect against corrosive venom for a number of turns equal to DR. There is no HT roll to resist a corrosive venom.

Poisonous venoms work more slowly. They do 1d damage per level when delivered, but may continue to affect the victim for several hours. Every hour after the poison is delivered, the

victim makes a roll against HT minus the number of levels of the poison. If the victim fails this roll, he takes 1d damage per level of the poison; if he succeeds, he takes no further damage from the poison, and does not need to roll again. Armor may protect against the delivery of the poison, but has no effect once the poison is in the bloodstream.

Venoms may be delivered in a number of ways. Corrosive venoms could be defined as saliva, delivered with a bite, or a skin secretion, delivered with a bare-handed punch or touch. A character must make a successful close-combat attack based on DX in order to deliver a corrosive venom. A poisonous venom must enter the blood to harm the victim. Usually this is done by making a successful bite attack on the victim. Any successful hit which penetrates the victim's armor, whether it does damage or not, delivers the venom. Fangs, or similar organs to deliver the venom, are included in the cost of this advantage. Note that this does not increase the normal (1d-4) damage of the bite.

Special enhancement: For +10 points a poisonous venom may be defined as a skin agent, which enters the bloodstream through the skin. A skin agent cannot be washed off.

Special Enhancement: For +5 points a venom may be delivered at range — spit or squirted. This is a ranged attack, based on DX, with a SS 12, Acc 12, 1/2D n/a, and Max 5. Poison venoms must strike open wounds or mucous membranes (eyes, open mouth, inner nostril) to be effective, unless bought as a skin agent.

Other enhancements and limitations: For more ideas about special effects for venoms, see the *GURPS Bestiary*.

Walk on Liquid 20 points

The race can walk on the surface of any liquid as if it were solid ground. This does not protect individuals from any damage they would normally take from coming in contact with the stuff, though — you can't walk across volcanic lava or boiling acid without taking damage. Move is normal. The GM can rule that this advantage doesn't work while carrying more than light encumbrance.

Winged Flight 30 points

The race has functional wings which allow individuals to fly at a base speed of twice normal Move. The Enhanced Move advantage can be taken to increase flight speed.

Wingspan is typically at least twice height, more if the race is especially large or heavy (GM's decision). In order to take off, land or maneuver, the individual must have an open area with a radius equal to its wingspan in all directions. Thus, an individual with a 12-foot wingspan could not take off if there were any obstructions within 12 feet, on the ground or above.

Needless to say, if a winged flyer loses a wing (or more than 1/3 of its wings, for multi-winged creatures), it cannot fly.

See also *Flight* and *Gliding*, p. 13.

Natural Attacks

The advantages below are natural ranged or area attacks which a race may have evolved. In the interest of preventing player character races that are biological artillery pieces, it is quite expensive to increase these abilities beyond minimal level. In order to increase the effectiveness of the attack the race must pay the entire cost of the skill again. Each time this is done the race can increase one of the following: range, area affected, duration or damage by one increment (an increment is defined as

the base value of the attack in that category), or a +1 to the attack roll.

If the cost of enhancements or limitations is given in levels, apply the percentage to the *final* cost of the attack.

To use an ability, roll against IQ or DX, as noted. Creatures with low IQ and DX roll against 12, but in order to buy up their roll beyond that they must first buy it up from their actual IQ or DX! If the heading mentions neither IQ nor DX, no roll is required.

For an explanation of the terminology used to describe these powers (e.g., Ranged, Area, Missile), see p. B149-150. As this implies, these natural attacks are played in some ways like “magic spells.”

Example: A race has the Cool power, as described below. The basic form of the power costs 15 points. The creator of the race decides that the power works twice as fast (another 15 points), in an area three times that described (two extra “increments,” at 15 points each). Total cost of the attack: 60 points. If it is then desired to let the race turn the power on and off at will (a 3-level enhancement), this will increase the cost by 30% of 60, or 18 points.

Constriction Attack

See p. 22

Cool

Area, 15 points

The race automatically lowers the temperature of an area by up to 10°. This cannot be done repeatedly in the same area by the same individuals. Multiple individuals can lower the temperature 1° for each individual past the first.

The temperature will drop at a rate of 10° per turn.

An individual with Cool can become invisible to IR on a successful IQ roll (low IQs do not roll at 12).

Special enhancement: the race can turn Cool on and off at will for an additional +3 levels.

Area affected — 3-hex radius.

Dampen

Ranged, IQ, 15 points

The race can hinder the function of any electrical device by “slowing” the current that powers the object. This does no damage to most equipment — just turns it off for the duration. Computers (and many other devices) can be damaged merely by slowing them down or turning them off — if you dampen the electrical system of a shuttle during re-entry, you aren’t exactly damaging the equipment, but the resulting crash will be nasty.

Area — 3-hex radius. *Duration* — while concentrating.

Deafen

Ranged, DX, 5 points

The race can project a short, focused blast of sound that deafens the victim. This attack is resisted by HT. A critical success with this attack results in a duration of hours rather than minutes.

Area affected — 3-hex radius. *Duration* — 3 turns.

Flash

Area, 15 points

The race can create a flash of light that can blind and confuse those seeing it. Anyone within the area of effect is automatically blinded for 3 seconds and at -3 DX for another full minute (including members of the same race, unless they have the Polarized Vision advantage). Anyone farther out may be affected if they were facing the flash and had their eyes open at the time (GM will rule if someone is affected or not). Those outside the area get a resistance versus HT to avoid some of the flash.

Area affected — 2-hex radius.

Illusion

Ranged, IQ, 20 points

The race can create realistic-appearing illusions to conceal and misdirect. The illusions are up to ¼ hex in size. Illusions

cannot move, nor can they do damage. Any creature with vision can see them, and cameras will photograph them. Physical objects pass through the illusion harmlessly, and anyone inside the illusion can see out normally.

If an individual is creating an illusion of something it’s never seen, everyone who sees it gets an IQ roll on first sight (+3 if the target creature is personally familiar with the object being displayed). If they make this roll, they notice something “wrong” with the illusion (not necessarily that it is an illusion, just that there is something strange about it).

Range — 3 hexes.

Lightning

Missile, DX, 35 points

The race can shoot bolts of lightning through the air, frying those who threaten. Any electrical equipment hit by lightning will not only take damage, but will react as if hit with a Surge (see below). A lightning bolt cannot be fired through a metal grid (bars, a chain-link fence, etc.) as it will ground out and disappear. Metal armor doesn’t help much as protection — treat it as PD 0, DR 1.

Damage — 1d. *Range* — 6 hexes.

Smoke

Area, 15 points

The race can cause an area to fill with thick smoke (creator chooses color). For line of sight and vision purposes treat this as 3 hexes of the Darkness spell (see p. B163).

Anyone inside this cloud must roll against HT or be temporarily blinded for 1d-3 turns after leaving the smoke. Individuals with the Nictating Membrane advantage are immune to the blinding effects of the smoke cloud.

Area affected — 3 hexes, all of which must be adjacent to each other and one of which must be adjacent to the individual.

Sonic Blast

Ranged, DX, 35 points

The race can emit a burst of focused, high-frequency sound that can pummel flesh and shatter brittle objects. Crystalline objects (and most metals are crystalline unless specifically alloyed to be amorphous) are vulnerable to a Sonic Blast; treat it as an armor-piercing attack bypassing ¼ of the target’s DR.

Range — 6 hexes. *Damage* — 1d+1.

Surge

Ranged, IQ, 15 points

The race can cause a power surge in an electrical device. For every two points by which the individual makes his IQ roll, there is a cumulative 1 in 6 chance that the item will short-circuit. If the individual makes the IQ roll by more than 10, it automatically shorts. On a critical success, the equipment catches fire.

Range — 3 hexes.

Warm

Area, 15 points

The race can raise the temperature of an area, up to a maximum of 5°. This cannot be done repeatedly in the same area by the same individual. Extra individuals raise the temperature by +1° each. The temperature rises at no more than 5° per turn.

Special enhancement: The race can turn Warm on and off. +3 levels.

Area affected — 3-hex radius.

New Racial Disadvantages

Anaerobic

-30 points

The race dies if exposed to oxygen. Anaerobic individuals

must wear sealed pressure suits when oxygen is present. The race reacts to oxygen as a one-level contact poison (see *Venom*, p. 17), taking 1d damage every turn.

Dependency *varies*

The race requires some special substance. Without it, they weaken and die. Value of the dependency depends on how common the item is.

Infrequent (very expensive and hard to find): 20 points

Occasional (expensive, somewhat hard to find): 10 points

Common (available almost anywhere): 5 points

This value is modified by the frequency with which the race must indulge in the item:

Constantly: Five times listed value. The race must carry and use the substance at all times — for example, an exotic atmosphere. Lose 1 HT per minute without the item.

Hourly: Four times listed value. Lose 1 HT per ten minutes after missing an hourly dose.

Daily: Three times listed value. Lose 1 HT per hour after missing a daily dose.

Weekly: Twice listed value. Lose 1 HT per six hours after missing a weekly dose.

Monthly: Listed value. Lose 1 HT per day after missing a monthly dose.

Dying Race *-10 points*

For whatever reason, the race's death rate has exceeded the birth rate. If this trend isn't reversed, the race will be extinct in a few generations. It is unlikely that the individual will have any progeny that live.

Discovering the reason for this disadvantage and eliminating it can be an excellent adventure or campaign seed.

Fragile *-20 points*

The race has an extremely brittle and fragile physical structure. The race takes double damage from crushing attacks. Creatures with this disadvantage might include crystalline races, or avian races with hollow bones.

Increased Life Support *-10 points/level*

This race has more environmental and sustenance needs in a life-support situation. The GM should compute the levels of this disadvantage based on the following guidelines. If a race needs to eat twice as much per day as a human, that's one level. Three times as much is two levels. If the race requires a separate pressurized compartment for their atmosphere, that's a level. If the race requires a normal temperature above 200° or below 0°, that's a level. If the race is radioactive or requires a radioactive environment, that's a level. In general, if a member of the race requires more than a ton of additional weight in order to survive in space, it takes 1 level for each ton over the first.

Aquatic *-40 points*

A common example of an increased life-support situation. The cost for Increased Life Support (Aquatic) is based on the fact that water is much heavier than air (one cubic foot of water weighs about 7.5 pounds). The score, however is modified down on the assumption that, with proper filtration, the aquatic environment can double as the ship's water reservoir.

Invertebrate *-20 points*

The race has no spine, exoskeleton or other natural body support. An individual can use ST normally to push and strike, but (unless it is aquatic) the amount that it can lift, carry or pull is only 1/4 normal. On the upside, the race will be more flexible than species with shells or bones. In particular, it can squeeze through much smaller openings than its size might suggest.

Involuntary Dampen *-15 points*

Works as the advantage Dampen, but can't be consciously turned off. All non-insulated electrical devices in range are subject to the effects of Dampen.

No Fine Manipulators *-30 points*

The race has nothing more agile than paws or hooves at end of its limbs. The race has nothing that approaches the human hand in terms of manual dexterity. The race cannot use its paw/hooves to make repairs, tie knots, or even grasp firmly. *Note:* this disadvantage qualifies the race to buy the Increased Strength advantage (p. 14) at a bargain rate.

No Manipulators *-50 points*

The race has no limbs. The only way for the race to manipulate objects is to push them around with their bodies or "heads."

One Fine Manipulator *-10 points*

Most races have two or more hands/fine manipulators that they can use in concert. A race with this disadvantage has only one. They cannot, for instance, repair a device while holding it. An elephant is an example of a creature with this disadvantage.

Parasite *-15 or -30 points*

The race depends on another host race for survival. The host race can survive without the parasite, but not vice versa. For 15 points the host race can fall within certain very broad biological categories, like "any warm blooded vertebrate" or "any fish." The 30-point disadvantage is absolutely race specific — the parasite can survive on one and only one host race. Thus the individual must bring a member of his host race with him wherever he goes.

Planetbound *varies*

The race requires certain environmental conditions which cannot be duplicated away from its home planet. Thus, individuals must return to the planet periodically or die. The value of this disadvantage depends on the amount of time an individual can stay away from the homeworld, and the time that it takes to lose each point of HT after it has been away too long. This must be described in terms relative to the average travel times in the campaign! The times listed below assume that the average time for a journey between two planets is one month; vary them as appropriate.

One month (cannot leave system safely): -40 points

3 months (can make short trips only): -30 points

One year (can make all but long trips): -20 points

2 years (can make long trips by planning carefully): -10 points

Loses 1 HT per day after time limit is exceeded: double values

Loses 1 HT per week after time limit is exceeded: listed values

Loses 1 HT per 2 weeks after time limit is exceeded: halve values

Special enhancement/limitation: The GM may vary the value of this disadvantage to fit the race story. For instance, if the race can survive on more than one "home planet," but such planets remain very rare, the value of the disadvantage might be halved. If the effect of staying away was to lose IQ rather than HT, the value would also be halved (unless IQ loss was permanent!)

Reduced Hit Points *-5 points/ Hit Point*

The race has fewer Hit Points than its health. This is written HT 10/7, for example. Very small races often have this disadvantage.

Reduced Move

-5 points/point of Speed

The race moves more slowly than its characteristics would normally entitle it to. The race cannot take more points of this disadvantage than it would take to reduce its racial average speed below 1.

Sessile

-50 points

The race can't move. They can be moved (although this might require major excavations), and they can have manipulators, but their base is anchored where they sit.



Short Lifespan

-25 points/level

The race's lifespan is significantly shorter than average. Each level decreases the lifespan by 25%. A race with one level of this disadvantage would reach maturity at 13½, begin to age at 38, and roll every 9 months thereafter. A race with three levels (the maximum) reaches maturity at 4½, begins to age at 12½, and rolls every 3 months thereafter.

Slave Mentality

-40 points

The race has no initiative of its own. Individuals become confused and ineffectual without a "master" to give them orders. This does not necessarily imply a low IQ. A race might be quite intelligent enough to obey the command "plot a course to Cygnus, then pilot the ship there," but if the same being was starving and found \$10 it would be hard pressed to decide to pick up the money and go buy food — unless somebody told it to.

A member of a race with Slave Mentality must make a roll vs. IQ -8 before taking any action that's not either obeying a direct order, or part of an established daily routine.

As a rule, such a character will always fail Will rolls. In a case where the GM thinks a roll might be reasonable, it is at -6.

Sleepy

varies

The race needs more sleep than average (humanity, taken here as average, sleeps 33% of the day). The more time it must spend asleep, the greater the value of the disadvantage:

50% of the time: -10 points

66% of the time: -20 points

75% of the time: -30 points

90% of the time: -40 points

Note that the race's precise schedule is a "special effect." A species, for instance, might be awake and active for 3 days and then sleep for 9 days. This could also be used to represent *hibernation*. For instance, if a race is awake and active on a basically human schedule for 6 months, and then hibernates for 2 months straight, then *on the average* it is asleep half the time.

Slow Metabolism

-10 points/level

A disadvantageous form of Extended Lifespan. Each level increases lifespan by a factor of 10, but reaction time and cogni-

tion times are slowed down by the same factor. It is difficult and frustrating to communicate with a member of a race with one level of this disadvantage. Some scientific or psionic enhancement would be necessary to communicate with a race with two levels. Any race with three levels or more would probably not perceive normal creatures at all, and normal creatures could only tell the race was alive if a team of scientists made a concentrated effort to find signs of life.

Subjugation

-20 points

The race has been subjugated by a more powerful race. The race has no rights and only those privileges which the overlords choose to extend. It is possible for an individual member of the race to escape to freedom, but that individual will be wanted in the overlord race's territories. If caught in Overlord territories the individual is subject to re-enslavement or sterner penalties. Any member of the overlord race is considered an enemy, even outside of overlord territories (the individual can also buy the Overlord race as an Enemy disadvantage — that indicates that the overlords are actively seeking the individual). Note: a race with Slave Mentality cannot also take the Subjugated disadvantage — races with Slave Mentalities serve willingly.

Vulnerability

varies

The race takes extra damage from certain forms of attack, or are weakened and hurt every time they come within a certain distance of a substance. For each level of Vulnerability purchased, individuals take an extra 1d damage (for attacks doing less than 1d damage, multiply the damage times the level of vulnerability).

The value per level depends on how common the substance is. See *Damage Resistance*, p. 11, for examples of attack forms; the GM decides the value of substances.

Rare: 3 points per level

Infrequent: 5 points per level

Occasional: 10 points per level

Common: 15 points per level

If affected by merely being near the substance, add 10% per hex of range to the cost per level. If damage comes off of Fatigue rather than hit points, the value is halved.

Example: The folk of the planet Creeptain take 4d damage whenever they're within 5 hexes of a certain glowing green rock. The green rock is rare, making the cost 3 points per level; however, 5 hexes add 50% to that cost, making the cost per level 4½. The Creeptainians have 4 levels of Vulnerability, so the total value comes to 18.

Weakness

varies

This is like a Vulnerability, but less severe. A Weakness is a sensitivity, not to any kind of attack as such, but to the presence of a common substance or condition. It cannot be a food item or something easily avoided. The more quickly the individual takes damage, the more the Weakness is worth:

1d per minute: 20 points

1d per 5 minutes: 10 points

1d per 30 minutes: 5 points

Halve the value if the damage done is only Fatigue.

The rarity of the weakening condition also affects the value of the weakness.

Rare: (exotic radiation or minerals) half value

Somewhat common: (microwave radiation, intense normal cold, airborne pollen): listed value

Common: (cigarette smoke on a human world, loud noises) double value

Very common: (sunlight, living plants) triple value

Extra Limbs

Science fiction is full of multi-limbed creatures — monsters, aliens and run-of-the-mill mutants. Extra limbs, or limbs with unusual abilities, are treated as advantages.

Arms

If a limb can be used to manipulate, it's an arm, regardless of where it grows or what it looks like. Any normal arm can be used to strike a blow which does (thrust-2) damage based on ST. To do extra damage, buy the limb as a striker (below). Characters have two arms at no cost. Extra arms cost 30 points each.

Coordination

Extra arms allow extra actions. A three-handed alien could perform a two-handed task (e.g., firing a crossbow) and a one-handed task (e.g., swinging a sword) at the same time. He could not *aim* two weapons unless he has Independently Focusable Eyes (see p. 14).

A creature with multiple arms can use all of them in concert during normal situations (to repair a watch, for example), or during instinctive actions such as grappling in close combat or catching a thrown object. The ability to make multiple combat actions of other kinds is paid for separately, however.

Modified Strength

Any race may “buy” extra strength (relative to normal body strength) for some or all of its arms. This ST must be bought normally, *not* as the Increased ST advantage. This ST applies only to efforts to lift, throw, punch, or use weapons. Arm ST is bought up (or down) as follows:

For one arm: 30% of cost for overall body strength.

For a set of two arms: 50% of cost for overall body strength.

This is additive. *Example:* All Huks have four arms (60 points). Purple Huks have two arms with 2 points of extra ST; this costs them 50% of the normal cost for +2 ST, or 50% of 20 points, or an extra 10 points. Blue Huks have three strong arms; this costs them 80% of 20, or 16 points. Green Huks have four strong arms; this costs them 100% of 20, or 20 points.

Modified Dexterity

A race may purchase extra DX (relative to normal DX) for some or all of his arms. This DX applies to anything done with that arm or hand. If a task requires more than one hand, and they don't have the same DX, use the lower DX. Arm DX is bought up (or down) as follows:

For one arm: 60% of cost for overall body DX.

For a set of two arms: 80% of cost for overall body DX.

If a race is to have more than two arms, all with high DX, the race must buy the appropriate high DX for the whole creature.

Extra Flexibility

Arms may be designed for great flexibility, compared to human arms. They may be tentacles, or they may just be multi-jointed. Such arms are not necessarily strong or weak; they are not necessarily either dexterous or clumsy. Those abilities and disabilities are bought separately.

The effect of this is simply that any arms that can reach each other can work together, regardless of body positioning, general layout, or “right” and “left.”

Cost is 10 points (for the whole creature), or 5 points (for a single limb, such as a monkey's prehensile tail).

Sub-Races

To bring more variety to an alien race, the GM may define sub-races within the race. A sub-race is a recognized, significant portion of the race which differs significantly from the norm in game terms.

In some races, for example, the sexes may have radical physiological and psychological differences. In some cases, there's little to tell an outsider that male and female (and any other genders) are part of the same race.

There are also true subspecies — members of the same species who have separated themselves from the main branch long enough to evolve significant differences. Usually, however, the two types can interbreed, raising the possibility of half-breeds.

In yet another variation on this idea, the GM can specify that one out of every 10, 1,000, or 1,000,000 births, at random, results in a member of the sub-race. Such characters will often possess powers far beyond the rest of the race (at a suitably higher point cost), and may well be sterile, explaining why they haven't evolved into the dominant line.

Taboo Traits

The GM may rule at any time that it is impossible for individuals of a certain race to possess any given advantage, disadvantage or skill. Not being able to buy a particular skill or advantage is not itself considered a disadvantage, and carries no point value. (This is necessary for game balance! If “Cannot learn medical skills” was worth 10 points as a disadvantage, that would be a free 10 points for any player willing to abuse the spirit of the rules while creating a non-doctor character.)

The GM is cautioned about putting more than a few such “taboos” on any one race (although some racial traits will logically eliminate a whole host of possibilities — Sessile characters, for instance, are forbidden any further movement-related traits). The GM will find his players accept such dicta more willingly if he presents them with a plausible cultural, psychological or physiological reason for the taboo.

Super-Advantages vs. Racial Advantages

The reader who already has *GURPS Supers* will note that some abilities are treated as advantages for an individual in that book, while *GURPS Aliens* treats them as disadvantages for a race. The reason: A single individual with (for instance) a gaseous body, in a world full of "normal" individuals, will find many uses for this comparatively special ability — more than enough to make up for its drawbacks. Even if he doesn't have the ability to turn solid in order to answer the phone, he can hire somebody to do it for him! But a whole race of gaseous creatures would be severely handicapped by their inability to work with solid objects.

Of course, if a single member of a race with one of these advantages were to come to Earth and go adventuring, he would have to be bought as a super, rather than as a member of his race, because he'd be dealing with humans. Alternatively, the GM could assess a huge Unusual Background cost.

If the "default" condition for such super-abilities were to be Switchable, rather than constantly on, the relative point values would be closer, if not identical.

Using Supers Psi Rules

If these races are being used in a campaign involving *GURPS Supers*, the GM must make a decision as to which version of psionics he will use — *Supers* or the *GURPS Basic Set*.

The main difference in the two is in power. If the desired effect is a powerful psionic race with a great range and strength, then the tables in *Basic Set* are more appropriate, as they *double* with each additional level of power.

If a more scaled-down version of psionics is sought after, then it would be better to use *GURPS Supers*. The high range of power is still available, but at a much greater point cost — and there is a much finer gradation at the lower end of the spectrum.

To convert the limitations and enhancements given in the *Basic Set* over to *Supers*, just take the nearest 10% and turn it into a level. For example, a 1/2 limitation becomes -5 levels, while a 1/3 limitation turns into -3 levels. When in doubt, round up!

Constriction Attacks

A race with Extra Flexibility may also take a constriction attack for 15 points. In order to make a constriction attack the individual must first successfully grapple its opponent. Then roll a quick contest of ST. If the constrictor wins, the victim takes as much damage as he lost by. If the victim wins, he takes no damage.

To constrict successfully, the constricting limb must be twice as long as the victim's size in hexes. So to constrict a human (size 1 hex) the constricting limb must be at least 2 hexes long.

Extra Length

Arms may be made longer or shorter, relative to human arms. For game purposes, human arms have a reach of 1. When ancient/medieval weapons are used, subtract 1 from any weapon's reach if it is held by short arms, and add 1 or more to the reach of a weapon held by longer arms.

Shorter arms (reach 0; does not have the leverage to use any weapon which must be swung; -2 on any attempt to grapple) cost only 10 points per arm.

Longer arms cost +10 per arm for each extra hex of reach. Each extra hex of reach also adds +1 to the creature's *normal* swing damage, and +2 to any attempt to grapple. Note that long arms can be attacked in other hexes, as though they were long weapons (see p. B110).

The maximum arm length is limited to the creature's height in hexes plus 1.

Example: A human is 2 hexes tall. The maximum arm length would be 3 hexes.

Close Combat with Extra Arms

Extra arms give a huge advantage in close combat. You cannot punch with more than one arm at a time unless you have Full Coordination (p. 13). But you may *grapple* with all of them at once. Every extra arm, over and above the generic set of two, gives a +2 on any attempt to grapple or pin, or to break free from a grapple or pin. Other limbs do not help.

No Physical Attack

If the arm can manipulate but cannot attack physically (due to structure or lack of ST in that limb) each such arm is worth 20 points. Generally, that limb can be used to wield a firearm or similar ranged attack, but cannot attack physically. An example of such a limb might be a monkey's prehensile tail.

Legs

If a limb cannot manipulate, but can be walked on, it is a leg. The "default" number of legs is two. A leg is assumed to be able to kick, doing thrust/crushing damage. If a creature cannot kick for damage, reduce body cost by 5 points. If kicks do extra damage, the leg is also a striker (see below).

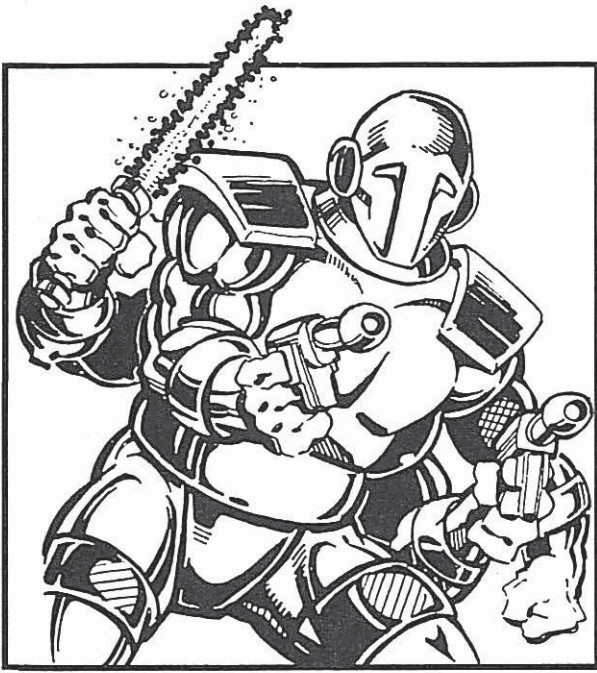
Cost for three or four legs is 5 points; if the individual loses one leg, it can continue to move at half speed (round down). Loss of a second leg causes it to fall.

Cost to have five or six legs is 10 points. Each leg lost reduces speed by 2 until only three legs are left. At that point, speed is only 2. Loss of one more leg causes the individual to fall.

Cost to have seven or more legs is 15 points. Each leg lost reduces speed by 1 until you have only three legs are left. At that point, speed is only 2. Loss of one more leg causes the individual to fall.

Feet Manipulators

If a leg ends with a manipulator, that limb is considered to be an arm that can



kick. Such limbs cost 35 points each. If a race spends the extra points to have multiple such limbs, it is not necessary to also pay the cost for extra legs above.

Strikers

If a limb can strike an aimed blow (rolling vs. DX) but cannot manipulate or be used for walking, it is a "striker." Damage from strikers is based on thrust for the creature's ST. Each striker costs 5 points for crushing damage, 15 for cutting damage (e.g., a cutting edge), or 25 for impaling damage (e.g., claws).

Some strikers (e.g., tails) cannot be aimed well. If a striker attacks at a penalty to DX, subtract a point from its cost for every -1 to DX.

Strikers bought at base value are assumed to have a range of 0, good in close combat only (e.g. horns, beak, fangs). In order to have strikers with a reach (e.g. a stinger that attacks over the shoulder or behind) it must be purchased at the rate of 10 points per hex of reach.

Combined Strikers

If a striker is also an arm or leg, reduce the cost by 5 points. For instance, to have one extra arm and one cutting striker would cost (30+15) points. To combine them into a single limb would save 5 points, for a total of 40. A combined limb cannot do two things at once; you cannot kick with a leg-striker while running.

Filling in the Blanks

Once the GM has selected a new race's advantages, disadvantages and skills, he's ready to begin the real meat of racial creation. Some questions that still need to be answered. . .

What does the race look like? How big is it? How tall? What shape? What color? Does it have hair? What color? Does it have eyes? Does it have distinctive markings? Does it have hands or claws? What direction do its joints bend?

Where and how did the race evolve? What environmental pressures combined to give the race its advantages and disadvantages?

How does the race live? How do they govern themselves? Are they gregarious or solitary in nature? If gregarious, do they favor large cities, small villages or family groups?

How does the race think? Do they have any particular psychological oddities which could qualify as racial Quirks? (It is suggested that races not be given more than three Quirks without a very good reason.)

Do they have a racial philosophy? Do they have a religion? Do they have many religions? How do they react in an emergency? Do they like new things, or are they complacent? Can they be trusted?

How does the race get along with others? Do they fight among themselves? How do they react to new races? Suspiciously? Enthusiastically? Do they trade with other races? Are there other races they particularly like or dislike?

Alien PCs

The GM is encouraged to make some of his alien races available for use as PCs. A few interesting aliens in the group can spice things up tremendously for everybody.

When designing races for PC use, balance becomes extremely important. The GM is cautioned against loading any species with racial advantages and disadvantages. Remember, a PC alien must go where the human PCs go and do what the human PCs do. It's all very well to look for a role-playing challenge, but a sessile methane-breather might be a bit much unless his life-support system is *very* good.

For a 100-point campaign, the total value of racial skills and advantages should be kept as far below 200 points as possible. The final cost for the race should be kept between 100 points (the player should not have to dip into personal disadvantages just to pay the racial cost) and -25 (races that give an extremely high bonus tend to raise the question "if this thing is so bad off, why can it do so much more than my human can?"). These point values are intended as guidelines, not hard and fast rules. Extremely careful racial design can create a playable race that exceeds these numbers in any direction.

Player-Generated Races

Although the creation of aliens for a campaign is primarily the responsibility of the GM, the adventurous GM might allow an especially good player or group to design races for their characters. Such player-generated races can add an appropriate feeling of randomness to the alien campaign. Of course, opportunistic players can also seriously undermine game balance if allowed to abuse these rules.

A few tips, then, for the GM whose players may be interested in creating their own races:

Player-generated races work best in a campaign that already has many different sorts of aliens. If you're asking the whole party to play aliens, make sure you have a few ready-made PC races on hand for those who might not be interested in the extra game mechanics of racial creation.

Closely oversee every step of the creation process. It's your campaign. Nothing can come in that you don't approve.

Be cautious of player-created NPC races. Remember, NPC races should be somewhat mysterious to the players, and mystery is hard to maintain when the creator is a member of the party. If a player comes to you with a number of good NPC races, encourage him to start his own *GURPS Space* campaign!

Example of Racial Creation

The GM of a light-hearted cinematic campaign decides he wants to introduce the legendary Bug-Eyed Monsters of screen and pulp fame into his game. He starts off by flipping through the racial advantages in this book and the *Basic Set*, looking for appropriate loathsome and inhuman racial traits.

He decides to give his creatures six legs (10 points) and three arms (30 points for the extra arm). All the limbs are tentacles, so the creatures get Extra Flexibility (10 points). The monsters should be physically formidable, so he buys up ST +1 (10 points), then buys increased ST (50 points), leaving the BEMs with an effective ST of 22. They must also be clever, so he decides to give them +3 IQ. Rather than buy up HT, he saves a few points by buying three Extra Hit Points (24), then makes them a little tougher with two points of DR (10) and Regular Regeneration (25).

Everybody knows that BEMs drool poison, so he buys them two levels of Corrosive Venom (30), and for a mere 5 points more, the repulsive ability to spit acid. BEMs can control the minds of their victims, so he buys them power 10 in Telepathy (50), and Telecontrol skill at IQ +3 (10). The Telecontrol has prerequisites of Telepathy and Telesend at 15+, so the monsters also need these skills at IQ +2 (8 each). While he's shopping in Telepathy, the GM decides to give them Sleep at IQ (4). Finally the GM decides that the BEMs can telepath to each other on a weird band normal Terran sensitives can't detect — that's Private Communication for 20.

Almost done now, the GM gives the monsters Mimicry so they can lure their victims with the voices of loved ones (15), and a racial skill bonus of +1 in Interrogation (read: torture) for 2 points.

That's 356 points in racial advantages and skills, normally a little bit high, even in a 200-point campaign. However, since this is a rather goofy campaign where nobody's supposed to really get hurt, the GM decides he can load the BEMs up with lots of flashy disadvantages for the PCs to discover and take advantage of.

BEMs lust after our women. He decides that's Lecherousness (-15 points), and abduction is an Odious Racial Habit worth -15 points. Then he adds on a whole bucketful of horrid personality traits — Megalomania (-10) and its attendant Fanatic (-15), Bad Temper (-10), Cowardice (-10), Paranoid (-10) and, of course, Sadist (-15). Physically the critters have Bad Sight (-10), -1 DX (-10), and are Invertebrates (-10). Their Appearance is Hideous (-40), of course, and finally they have a Weakness to tobacco smoke — they take 1d damage for every minute of exposure. Since tobacco smoke is a common substance that comes to -40 points (the GM decides that the whole adventure will hinge on the PCs discovering this fact in time).

BEMs have one racial Quirk . . . that inexplicable pulp tendency to explain their plans to their captives (-1). The one disadvantage they don't get is Reputation, since at the start of the adventure the humans don't know they exist.

Then the GM fills in the blanks — BEMs have green, slimy, warty skin. Their legs are surmounted by a shapeless blob that serves as both head and body. Their only recognizable features are three watery eyes and a gaping maw that constantly drools acid. They come from a hot, wet, high-gravity, nasty planet 20 light-years away, where they were quite happy plotting against each other, until telecasts from our planet began arriving, awakening in the monsters unspeakable lusts that finally motivated them to put aside their racial Paranoia and invade of Earth!

The race of Bug-Eyed Monsters now has a racial value of 160 points. They're the perfect adversaries to go one-on-one with his cinematic adventurers, or even to become the PCs for a particularly silly night's gaming.

Buying Off Racial Advantages and Disadvantages

The player of an alien PC can buy off racial advantages and disadvantages provided, 1) the GM consents, 2) he can pay any points necessary, and 3) he can come up with a rational explanation for his character's departure from racial norm. Thinking up such explanations is the player's responsibility, though the GM can offer any alternate explanations he might wish on a "take it or leave it" basis.

Since it is inevitable that players will want to do this, the GM might find it helpful when he's creating a PC race to define each racial advantage, disadvantage and skill as cultural, psychological, or physiological in origin.

Cultural tendencies are the result of the character's early environment — customs, taboos, oral tradition and early training can all be sources of cultural tendencies. The character can buy these tendencies off pretty much at will. Other members of the race will regard the character who lacks cultural tendencies as a nonconformist at best, and as a heretic or criminal at worst.

Psychological tendencies are "hard-wired" directly into the individual's brain. Characters who lack these are probably either brain-damaged or mutant. Usually other members of the same race will regard the character as strange, perhaps even insane.

Physiological tendencies are the result of the character's biology or physical structure. Characters lacking these are mutants, or the subject of radical surgical or genetic tampering. Other members of the same race will often regard the character as a freak or a cripple.

There is no point cost for any of the above. These definitions are offered merely to help the player and GM develop rational backgrounds for the PCs.

The GM should determine on a case-by-case basis whether the player can buy up racial advantages, either at the character's original creation or through earning experience points.



3

THE ALIENS

The following pages contain 28 extraterrestrial races for use in *GURPS*. The GM can use as many or as few of these into the campaign as he chooses.

All of these races are space-traveling. Most of them are technologically advanced, and can be played at the campaign's tech level. Some are in space through accident or the sufferance of others. Most are suitable for use as player characters.

Expanded, updated versions of the four races from *GURPS Space* have been included in this roster. Every effort has been made to keep these races as close as possible to the original in terms of both point value and abilities. Players and GMs already using these races should find it easy to update their characters — or simply ignore the revised version entirely — without affecting either campaign balance or their own roleplaying.

In creating and defining these races it was necessary to provide them with some sort of social and political context to exist in. Some specifics in the racial description will reflect a TL10 interstellar culture where all of these races know of each other and interact frequently. The various races have banded together into a loose alliance, which humans dominate as the most aggressive and widespread



race, but do not rule. This alliance (deliberately not described in detail) is threatened by the treacherous Kaa empire and the hideous Verm hives. This should allow all these races to be adapted into the *Space Atlas* campaign setting with little trouble.

If the GM's campaign differs widely from this, he should feel free to make any changes he deems necessary to make the races fit. If the campaign currently involves few or no alien races, the GM may want to introduce them one by one, over a period of time, rather than simply declaring "they've been there all along" to the players.

Another thing that most of these races have in common: they share recognizable goals and motivations with humanity. This was also done deliberately, to make the races easy for the PCs to play and interact with, and also because many — probably most aliens in SF literature and film think, and often look, quite a bit like humanity. Nonetheless, each race has been given a unique racial character, to make them something more than Guys in Suits.

Those who want their aliens to be truly bizarre, and utterly incomprehensible to mankind, need only turn to the racial generation rules in this book and let their imaginations go wild.

AN PHAR

An Phar in the Campaign

Psychologically and physiologically, the An Phar are about as close to humanity as an alien race is likely to get. An Phar characters can be used to fill virtually any slot in the campaign.

They are a generally quiet and conservative race, so Phar swashbucklers and galactic heroes will be quite rare. But that doesn't mean they don't exist (and if they're smart, they're using their race's sedate reputation as a cover)! Most An Phar, however, should be just "ordinary folk" . . . soldiers, shopkeepers, police or bureaucrats.

The GM can play up the small differences between An Phar and humanity for humorous relief and to add color to the campaign, but he must also be wary of making the An Phar (or any other race) into stereotypes. Some An Phar are surly or pushy, and a few even hate kids and don't understand philosophy!

An Phar Player Characters

The GM need not be at all hesitant about letting the players play An Phar — the race is so nearly human that they can't possibly unbalance the campaign. An Phar are perfect for the beginning roleplayer who wants to play an alien, but who isn't yet ready to cope with radically strange extraterrestrial psychology.

The low racial point cost for An Phar means the players have lots of choice about where to take their characters. This race should not be pigeonholed — they can show up literally anywhere, doing anything a human can do, from a hidebound, ineffectual businessman, to a hard-bitten asteroid miner, to a dedicated, courageous Patrolman.

A not overly aggressive race, the An Phar make good characters for those players who would rather follow than lead. They make excellent sidekicks, playing Frank Gannon or Festus to the more aggressive Joe Fridays and Matt Dillons of the campaign. However, players who prefer to play against type and make their Phar a leader or a doer should be encouraged, not penalized.

An Phar resemble anthropomorphic pigs, due to their pointed ears, broad snouts and coarse hair that grows from their heads. Their eyes are dark and intelligent. One unique feature of An Phar . . . while they evolved human-like hands with opposable thumbs, their feet remained cloven hooves. They normally don't wear shoes. Unlike pigs, they have no tails and are not normally fat.

Their skin is dark and their hair ranges from silver through red and brown to jet-black. The exact length and

appearance of ears, forehead and snout also varies widely between individuals; even members of other races have little trouble telling An Phar apart.

They stand about five feet tall, and generally wear clothes according to current human fashion (and vice versa — some An Phar are important trend-setters). The race is known for its fanatical cleanliness.

The An Phar homeworld is slightly larger and drier than Earth (1.1 G, 49% surface water), with an average temperature of 70°. They breathe a standard oxygen mix at 1.02 atmospheres.

Advantages and Disadvantages

An Phar have ST -1 (-10 points), and two Extra Hit Points (16 points). They have the advantages Acute Hearing +2 (4 points) and Common Sense (10 points). They have the disadvantage Mild Rupophobia (Fear of Dirt) (-10 points) and the quirk Preoccupied with Philosophy (-1 point).

It costs 9 points to be a Phar.

Psychology

An Phar are generally reliable, unassuming and likable. They do not, however, allow themselves to be pushed around. An Phar make excellent soldiers, but they are seldom heroes. They tend to look for a non-violent solution first, but will use force when necessary.

An Phar's racial preoccupation with health and cleanliness tends to help humans get over their resemblance to terrestrial pigs. An Phar hate to get dirty and generally bathe three times a day — upon rising, before bed, and in the middle of the day. The morning bath is private, the mid-day bath is social, taken with co-workers, neighbors or classmates, and the evening bath is usually taken



with the immediate family. Most An Phar eat twice a day. Meals are large but informal; often a busy Phar will eat as he works. The social function meals serve in human society is taken by baths among An Phar. An Phar eat quickly, without formal etiquette, but quietly and very, very neatly.

The family unit is the most important part of An Phar society. The relationship between two mated An Phar is rather formal by human standards, with little outward display of affection. Children however, are raised with remarkable care — they are frequently held and played with, and also affectionately quizzed and instructed about anything that might be at hand. Phar society encourages parents to alternate taking several months off work while the children are growing up. Consequently the bond between parent and child remains strong throughout life. It is unthinkable for an adult Phar not to support and respect his retired parents.

The second most important part of a Phar's life is his Social Status. As with humans, higher status means more power, and often more affluence, and most An Phar seek to better their lot. However, the society at large remains remarkably egalitarian, and a Phar unskilled laborer is treated with the same courtesy as a Cho among his own kind.

Crime in the usual sense is extremely rare among the Phar. Rather more common are ideological dissidents and rebels. Moral conviction is an acceptable defense in An Phar courts, and a defendant who can prove he honestly felt he was doing the right thing can expect no worse punishment than exile, preferably to someplace where the rest of the population agrees with him. The occasional real criminal, however, is required to pay back 2 to 5 times the amount he took from, or otherwise cost, his victims. This often results in the criminal being placed in a position not unlike slavery to his former victims. The extremely rare violent criminal is considered a hopeless case and mercifully and regretfully executed.

An Phar enjoy music, drama, dance and literature, although human and Fasanni critics generally consider An Phar taste unendurably pedestrian and dull. The race has produced few artists of note on the galactic scale.

Among the An Phar's most visible traits, and a consistent source of amusement and vexation to humans, is their fascination with moral philosophy. In his lifetime a typical Phar will embrace several different ethical systems. He will pursue one system wholeheartedly, attempting to apply it to every segment of his life, politely but incessantly defending it against any who might wish to argue (and arguing philosophy is a favorite Phar pastime). Then the Phar will find a tenet of the system which he considers to be inconsistent or personally unacceptable, and (sometimes literally) overnight will adopt a completely new system.

However, religion in the human sense seems to be quite alien to An Phar. Before they made contact with other races they apparently had no concept of a supreme being or beings. Those contemporary Phar who give the matter any thought at all (and few do) will say that such matters are beyond mortal comprehension, and remain cheerfully agnostic. Many Phar do, however, enthusiastically embrace the moral tenets of such human religions as Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism.

Ecology

An Phar's ancestors were plains-dwelling omnivores that roamed widely over far-flung territories in packs. Unlike Earthly plains dwellers like pigs or baboons, where a few dominant males have harems of females, the An Phar became monogamous early in their evolution. Xenologists speculate that a preponderance of natural predators caused the males to learn early to organize and coordinate themselves.

For reasons that are still mysterious, An Phar evolution was extremely rapid. The earliest An Phar tools are only 25,000 years old, and the race developed writing only 3,000 years ago, yet the race was already TL9 spacefarers

An Phar Naming Rules

An Phar (singular: Phar) have a complex naming convention which, in addition to personal and family names, takes into account such factors as social status, marital status, age and progeny. A Phar's full, formal name consists of 5 to 7 short words. This section will go into considerable detail about Phar naming, as an example for the GM who finds this kind of campaign material interesting and wishes to create his own. Naming information given for other races in this book will be less detailed.

The first word in a Phar name indicates status. An Phar society includes status levels 0 through 7, with a different indicator for each. These indicators are, in ascending order; Ka, Dir, Gom, Lai, Nam, Bra, Cho, Da-Cho. The Da-Cho is the chief executive of the race, appointed by an assembly of all available Cho. There is only one at a time. There are two special status indicators: Mi, used for children, and Pe, roughly translated as "respected elder" and indicating a Phar who has retired. All Mi and Pe An Phar are theoretically equal, though in practice the Pe retains the status he held at retirement and the Mi holds a status two levels below his highest-status parent.

The second indicator indicates sex. Males are No, females are Ro.

Third is the family name, always of one syllable. The parents alternate passing their family names on to progeny. The higher-status parent goes first, when there's a difference; otherwise the first child's family is determined by whose family is more important, according to complex rules of precedence.

Fourth is the individual's personal name. This is often two syllables but may be only one. Phar family and personal names are random syllables, with no meaning in the An Phar native tongue.

Next is an indicator of marital status. Lo signifies the individual remains unmated, Lom means he's mated but childless, and Los signifies a parent. Mi-Phar do not yet possess this character; Pe-Phar always take Los, regardless of actual marital status or progeny (Pe-Phar are considered to be parents to everybody). A widowed or (rarely) separated Phar retains the applicable married indicator.

The final character is always the word Phar, used as an honorific.

Some Phar names: the current Da-Cho, Ard of the Brom family, is Da-Cho-No Brom Ard-Los Phar. His little grandson Derra is Mi-No Brom Derra Phar. A likely PC Phar might be unmarried, with a little bit of status indicating her (presumably) advanced education — she might be named Dir-Ro Cam Irda-Lo Phar. An elderly Phar spinster might be named Pe-Ro Kru Karman-Los Phar.

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An Phar Naming Rules (Continued)

Full Phar names are generally only used for official records and very formal occasions. Our PC Phar above would be known socially as Irda, or more formally Irda-Phar. The human form Miss Irda-Phar is both redundant and incorrect, but would normally be tolerated as a well-meant gesture.

Non-An Phar individuals who live among and contribute to an An Phar community may be asked to officially join the Phar race; at that time, they are given a Phar name. This is considered a high honor for the non-An Phar. The highest-status non-An Phar in An Phar society is a human named Marion Jacobs, the leader of a prosperous Human/An Phar colony world. Jacobs was granted the Status of Cho and the Phar name Cho-No Cob Mari-Los Phar.

An Phar Adventure Seeds

Where Are The Children?

Children are vanishing from an An Phar community. Foul play seems a certainty. The local An Phar are at a loss to understand how anybody could ever harm children. The community is turning paranoid and people are talking about leaving. The PCs might be hired or assigned to assist in the investigation. Alternately, a wave of paranoid hysteria in the An Phar community could make all non-An Phar in the area, including the party, targets for mob violence. The disappearances could be the work of a single sick individual (perhaps himself a Phar), an organized ring of slavers, or a ruthless plot to drive the An Phar offworld by undermining the roots of their society.

Status Hunt

An aging Bra-Phar, desperate to attain Cho status before he retires, is tempted to adventure as a "get status quick" scheme. He decides to finance and command an expedition to a little-known planet that, according to his "inside information," possesses untold exploitable natural resources, or perhaps Precursor artifacts. The party is hired to crew the mission. The search might be a wild goose chase or a genuine opportunity. The Phar, anxious to protect his discovery, might not even tell the PCs exactly what they're looking for. For an added complication, the Phar could be played as a sedentary businessman, far out of his depth on the high frontier.

when they first encountered beings from other planets. Most xenologists feel that An Phar's headlong evolution is currently at a plateau, though others disagree. This rapid evolution may be the reason for the An Phar's remarkable cultural cohesiveness (one racial language, one racial ruler). The current An Phar social structure was already firmly established 3,000 years ago at the dawn of recorded An Phar history.

An Phar are still omnivores, though they presently have a cultural taboo against eating any species with an IQ above 3. They prefer small villages and towns rather than cities (their homeworld has only three cities with populations greater than 100,000. The largest has less than a half million An Phar).

Young An Phar reach majority at about age 16. Like humans, they decide at that time whether to enter the work force or pursue higher education.

An Phar mate once and for life, usually between the ages of 20 and 40. Typical An Phar families consist of two to four children. An Phar age like humans, beginning at age 50.

Culture

The An Phar have developed an enviable, almost Utopian meritocratic society. Social Status is important to the Phar because he knows that his advancement is limited only by his ability.

Upon reaching majority each Phar is considered to be Status 0. Upon completing the cultural equivalent of a college degree the Phar is automatically granted a Status of 1 (more than half the An Phar population attends college and almost all graduate). A parent of high status can arbitrarily grant a child who carries his family name a status no higher than two levels below his own (some children, and some parents, prefer the children to do it the hard way). Though there is no official mechanism for automatically raising the status of a spouse, the culture generally sees to it that mated couples keep individual statuses no more than one increment apart.

To increase his status, an adult Phar must first get a sponsor of the next status level. The sponsor then prepares a written summary extolling the candidate's qualifications and character (often the summary is actually prepared by the candidate, and merely signed by the sponsor). The sponsor then seeks co-sponsors, who, based on the summary, agree that the candidate should be elevated. It normally requires 20 co-sponsors before a candidate is elevated. Elevation is quite formal, and an occasion for celebration. The candidate's friends and family give gifts.

Demographically, about 30% of the Phar are Status 0, 60% are Status 1, 5% are Status 2, 3% Status 3, 1.3% Status 4, .5% Status 5, and .2% Status 6. There is only one Phar at a time with Status 7.

It is extremely important to every mated Phar to produce two children, one to carry on the family names of each spouse. A widowed Phar will not remarry, but if the union produced fewer than two children the survivor may enter into a procreation agreement, typically with a trusted friend (to propagate the survivor's family) or a member of the deceased's family. In modern times, however, it is becoming more common for a couple to simply leave sperm and eggs frozen, to be fertilized and brought to term artificially, in the event of an individual's or the couple's untimely death. Such "progeny insurance" is available for a modest fee from the Phar government.

If a mating produces more than two children, the couple usually alternates giving family names. Other times, a child is named for a family member who died without leaving children. It is not unknown for a family to change the family name of a minor child to that of a sibling who died without issue.

If the third or later child is not carrying the name of some childless sibling or other relation, he is free, upon reaching majority, to declare himself the

founder of a new family. In doing this, the individual declares that he plans to make his own way. He can no longer expect more than minimal social or financial help from parents or siblings. Such a declaration is considered rather daring, and not at all an insult to either parent's family.

An Phar health care and education are both fully socialized. Each adult Phar pays from 30-60% of his income to insure that both remain top-notch. Phar generally do not resent this racial tax.

Phar children are weaned when they learn to walk (at about age 8 months). At that time they begin to attend "school" for 2 to 4 hours per day. More formal education is not considered necessary, because the children are also being tutored by their parents, and most Phar are voracious learners anyway. Teachers are usually Pe-Phar. Upon reaching majority, most Phar attend a college on the Phar homeworld for 2 years of general studies, then 1-6 more years of specific career-oriented studies, either at a Phar college or off-world.

The Phar homeworld has long sponsored immigration and colonization programs to control population pressure. The Phar are enthusiastic colonists, knowing that they can expect support from back home.

A Phar living offplanet knows that the homeworld will pay all medical and educational expenses for his family; furthermore if he ever becomes indigent, the homeworld will pay to bring him and his family back. In return, he pays the usual 30-60% to homeworld (adjusted for local taxes and cost of living).

An Phar have never warred among themselves; however since entering galactic civilization they have bowed to the realities of other races' nature. Each Phar receives some military training, making the whole race a citizen's militia. They maintain no racial standing army, but they often enlist in galactic military and paramilitary organizations.

The racial leader, the Da-Cho, is selected by an assembly of all available Cho. He serves until death or retirement. A new Da-Cho is expected to serve at least 3 years, health permitting, although it is not unknown to appoint a specialist Da-Cho to solve some crisis, with the understanding that he will retire as soon as the crisis is resolved.

An Phar government is free-form. Official positions are created when a need is conceived, and last until that need is satisfied. Civil authorities are appointed by the appropriate Status class. Appointees are generally chosen for their expertise, and within their sphere of authority, their decisions are seldom questioned, even by An Phar of higher Status.

Personal disputes are likewise settled informally. If two parties are unable to settle a dispute they may, if both are of the same Status, convene a jury of five to nine An Phar of like Status. Simple majority rules. If the Statuses are different, the two generally appeal to a Phar of higher Status than either for a summary judgment (this option is also common for litigants of the same Status, as it saves time).

Humans cannot imagine how such an anarchistic system can lead to such an orderly society, but the An Phar make it look easy.

Politics

An Phar are enthusiastic participants in the galactic body politic. They are traditional allies of Humanity. In times of conflict, An Phar have served honorably in the military organizations of humanity and other, more war-like races. Several Phar have risen to general rank. Even more important in wartime is the efficient Phar military-industrial complex. Their industrialists have standing plans which allow their companies to switch from peacetime to wartime industry in a few days.

Off-world Phar maintain close ties to homeworld society. No matter where lives, a Phar is always considered to be a citizen of the Phar homeworld.

Character Example

Dir-Ro Cam Irda-Lo Phar

Irda-Phar is an unmarried female in her mid 30s. She is somewhat unusual among An Phar in that she is unmarried and prefers it that way. Fortunately, she is a third child and not obligated to carry on the family names. She is a naval ROTC graduate and a skilled pilot. A decompression accident several years ago left her with mild hearing loss — she is rather vain about her handicap and she will not use mechanical correction. She has just completed her active military service and is looking for a new career. She is reserved around strangers, but very competent at what she does.

Irda is a 100 point character ready to begin adventuring.

Attributes

ST 9, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 10/12.

Advantages

Ambidexterity, Common Sense, Military Rank 3, Peripheral Vision, Social Status 1.

Quirks

Philosophy (she is currently into a school of Zen Buddhism. Because of this she does not eat meat and has become a pacifist); Vegetarian, Uncomfortable Around Children; Likes Mystery Novels; Hates Commercial Video; Refuses to Correct her Hearing Loss.

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Naval Officer), Duty — Military Reservist (Fairly Often) Hard of Hearing, Pacifism — Cannot Kill (she justifies her military career by the fact that she's a pilot, not a gunner. She hasn't told her superiors about her beliefs about taking life), Rupophobia (Mild), Shyness (Mild).

Skills

Administration-12, Beam Weapons-14, Carousing-12, Computer Operation-14, Electronic Operation (Sensors)-14, First Aid-13, Free Fall-13, Karate-12, Piloting (Large Spacecraft)-15, Piloting (Space Shuttle)-14, Tactics-13, Theology-12, Vacc Suit-13.

AURORAS



Auroras in the Campaign

In any campaign, in any genre, it's always nice to have a friend who can do anything. The Auroras can meet a campaign's quota of omnipotence very nicely. They should not interfere often, lest the campaign fall into the old *Star Trek* trap: the galaxy is full of omnipotent aliens of all different kinds, and aren't we lucky they let us play with our starships? If the PCs are not to feel like the insects that they are, the Auroras must be rare and aloof.

A casual encounter with an Aurora is an impressive event that can add atmosphere when the game seems to be lagging.

A really major Aurora Quest — the kind where the party has to find the lost graveyard of the starships and fight their way to the ancient temple of the Precursors and recover the lost artifact before somebody turns off the universe — can be a nice caper to a long-running campaign where the characters already have about as much experience as the GM wants them to earn.

An Aurora can be used as a Patron if the GM feels the characters really need that kind of high-power support. An Aurora Enemy would be rather like having Santa Claus on your case . . . “he sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been bad or good . . .” An Aurora Enemy should never appear on more than 6 or less. He'll pop up every now and then and melt the PC's spaceship, teleport them across the galaxy, announce all their plans to their second biggest enemy, and similar little jests. After this happens a few times the PCs will be giving serious consideration to the “beg for mercy” option.

If the GM cares to accept the “war in heaven” angle — that the Auroras are fighting to keep eldritch horrors nasties out of our continuum — that opens up whole new vistas of high-power, multi-dimensional adventures.

Auroras are creatures of pure mental energy, and they can choose any appearance. Common manifestations include elaborate glowing mandalas miles across, or a point of light of stellar brightness. They have also been known to appear in the forms of humans and other races.

They are seen as often in space as anywhere else; nothing is known of their home world (if it was a world at all). They have no environmental restrictions.

Advantages and Disadvantages

The powers of the Auroras are far beyond human scale; building them with the character generation system is pointless. They are not omnipotent, but for casual encounters, they can do whatever the GM wants.

Anyone who feels it necessary to exactly define an individual Aurora's capabilities should build it on at least 3,000 points, broken down (roughly) into 1,000 points of characteristics and skills, 1,000 points of psi powers and skills, and 1,000 points of general advantages, to include Immortality, Insubstantiality, Invisible, Spectrum Vision, Vacuum Support, Charisma and Voice. They also travel between the stars at FTL speeds without apparent use of machinery!

Names

Like most psionic races, the Aurora do not have names, but psychic symbols that define their existence (though sensitives of other races can only produce a crude abstraction of the Aurora's true name). They may adopt names which they select from the mind of the individual they're conversing with. Mythological figures are popular. Examples include Dionysus, Ariel, Osiris and Baldur. They also selected the name “Aurora” for humans to use to refer to their race.

Psychology

The Auroras have abandoned the planets to lesser races and now live between the stars. They have transcended matter, but are still active and immensely powerful. They can take on physical form at need. They are an old race — far older than even the Engai or the Liook Sujan. And they are as truly immortal as a being can be. No known force can kill an Aurora, though they claim to be able to will themselves to pass beyond this plane of existence.

They appear to take an active interest in the galaxy's other civilizations. They will often appear near a major world, and are frequently seen from starships, sometimes following for parsecs.

They never actively interfere with the development of other races, but they will sometimes communicate with mortals. They appear to enjoy conversation with lesser beings. Often these talks will focus on minutiae — the Aurora's host's family, the small details of his job, his taste in entertainment or his political opinions. The Auroras prefer to ask questions rather than answer them. They will flee from a too-persistent questioner.

They can even form friendships with mortals. One reclusive old asteroid miner was known to be in almost constant contact with a single Aurora for more than 50 years. Each entity seemed to regard the other as a sort of pet.

On very rare occasions, however, an Aurora will appear with a message or a warning. This is invariably a matter of literally galactic importance. The Auroras care little for individuals or even worlds, but (for instance) a threat to a whole race can move them to act.

Their powerful gifts of precognition, as well as their superhuman intellects, allow the Auroras to see an approaching crisis far enough in the future that it can be dealt with by physical, mortal beings. But why the Auroras use mortals to do tasks that they could accomplish with a mere thought remains a mystery.

Popular fiction has made much of these “Aurora Quests.” In fact, they have directly interfered in mortal affairs only a half-dozen times since the Irari went into space and began the current cycle of galactic history. On only one of those occasions were the consequences of failure explained to the mortals contacted.

Ecology

The Auroras definitely go back to the time of the Precursors. In fact, the Auroras may be the Precursors, now in their final evolutionary state. This seems to be the best explanation of the race’s existence — that they were once mortal, physical beings who evolved out of their physical existence. Some have suggested that the Auroras are the final evolutionary phase of *all* races who survive long enough to achieve it. Some Auroras have made cryptic remarks which seem to indicate they may once have been physical, but they won’t say for sure.

Another mystery is how, or even if, the Auroras reproduce. Certainly if the multi-racial theory is true and the Aurora population is periodically augmented by an entire new race, there’s no need for further reproduction. Auroras are known to be able to fission into two or more beings, but whether this is true reproduction or merely a means of temporarily dividing the individual’s consciousness is unknown.

Culture

The Auroras seem to be solitary by nature. Of the hundreds of recorded Aurora sightings and encounters, only four involved more than one entity. One was a group of four, the others were couples.

Some mystics have claimed that the Auroras are continually at war with inimical beings from another reality who want to conquer, destroy or devour our universe. Fortunately, incursions of these beings, usually dubbed the Others, are quite rare. Most of the Auroras’ energy is expended on preventing new incursions before they occur. The mystics claim that these incursions are the usual cause of the end of a galactic epoch.

An Aurora once described his own existence as, “Watching and wandering — creating new thoughts . . . and waiting.” When asked what he was waiting for, he didn’t reply.

Politics

The Auroras have never taken part in the politics of the mortal races. On the rare occasions when they require something of physical beings, they generally approach one or a few individuals of no particular importance, and send these to obtain whatever official cooperation is needed. This recalls stories of divine visitations in many religions, and it has been suggested that some of these are based on Aurora encounters. The Auroras find this offensive, and strongly assert that no Aurora would ever claim to be a deity. They say beings exist even more powerful and advanced than they: “You can call them gods if you like.”

They have been heard to comment on several of the galaxy’s races. Liok Sujun have been referred to as “almost ready” — one of the strongest statements suggesting that many races can evolve into Auroras. They seem quite unhappy with the Engai, referring to them more than once as a “tragic failure.” They speak highly of the potential of humans, Kaa, Mmm and the Cidi. One specific remark about the humans and Kaa was, “They present an incredible danger to the whole galaxy, as all the truly great races do.”

Aurora Player Characters

For a 4,000-point campaign in which anything is possible, an Auroran would make an excellent PC. Otherwise, forget it.

Auroran Adventure Seeds

The Message

The players are contacted by an Aurora who informs them that the sun of a populated world is going to blow up, for no visible reasons, in one year’s time. The Aurora does not say why the star is going to go poof, or how the PCs can verify this claim. He also does not explain why a single star is of enough importance to warrant Auroran intervention.

When they arrive at the doomed world, the PCs will find officials understandably skeptical. It’s up to them to persuade the planet that the Aurora’s warning is for real. They might contact the tabloids to gain grass-roots support, concentrate on convincing one seemingly-sympathetic politician, begin a minute scientific analysis of the sun, or find a powerful psionic to confirm that they’re not lying about what the Aurora said. The GM should let the party come up with their own ideas.

If they’re successful, they may want to hang around to help coordinate the relocation effort. If they fail, the sun will blow up right on schedule, and many people will blame the PCs, this being the way people behave.

The Mouse and the Lion

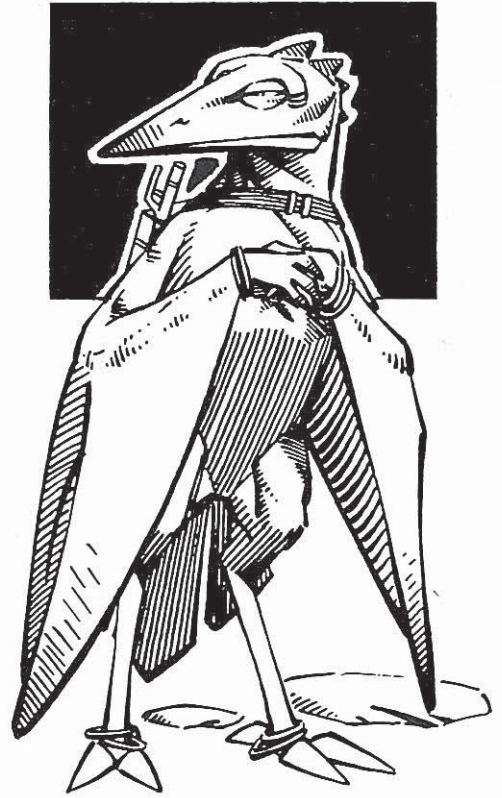
This is for GMs who might be interested in the “war in heaven” option.

The PCs’ ship sensors pick up strange, very powerful energy readings at extreme range. When they get to the site, they discover an Aurora under attack from a huge, horrible creature that has the Aurora all tied up in strands of dark energy like a spider wrapping up a fly. Maybe Auroras can’t be killed, but maybe they can . . . this one looks to be in desperate straits.

Of course the nasty is far too tough for the party all by itself, but if they charge in with all beams blazing they’ll distract it long enough for the Aurora to get loose, jump it from behind, and kill it.

This scenario can be used to introduce the characters to the war, and to provide them with a very tough friend. It can also be a device to increase the power level of a campaign . . . the death of the evil creature released a ripple of psychic force that affected the human spectators in very strange ways, and they begin to develop psi powers or even stranger metahuman abilities. They’re still insects compared to their newfound Aurora patron, but now they’re insects with a *sting*, and they can be useful.

IRARI



The Irari are featherless winged bipeds about 5½ feet tall. Their heads consist mainly of a long, sharp beak below large, double-lidded eyes. They have a crest of bony protuberances beginning on the top of their heads and extending to the base of the neck, decreasing in size. Their wings end in agile, four-fingered hands, and they have about a 10-foot wingspan. Their thin legs end in three-clawed feet designed for perching and grasping. Their skin is leathery and colored a bright red to a russet brown. The race does not wear clothes apart from an occasional tool belt or harness. They often paint themselves in decorative patterns.

Irari as Player Characters

The Irari's unique world view, as well as their long life and ability to fly, make them entertaining PCs. Although not designed for heavy combat, they are not necessarily weak, and can fill an important function in any well-rounded campaign.

Due to the advantages Winged Flight and Extended Lifespan, it is expensive to be a member of this race. This severely limits the player's options when creating the character, particularly in a 100-point campaign. An Irari makes an excellent PC for a certain type of player — one with a taste for roleplaying and no special love of mayhem. The race is not for everyone. Even with maximum disadvantages, the Irari PC will probably have only one or two advantages and his skills will have to be mostly scientific. Attributes will vary only slightly from the racial average. Nonetheless, they can be both entertaining to play and useful to the party. In cinematic and higher point-value campaigns there is room for more unconventional Irari characters.

The Irari are native to a 1-G world with an average temperature of 80°. They breathe a standard oxygen mix at 1.05 atmospheres. The Irari world is very dry, with less than 10% surface water; the Irari drink very seldom and detest humid climates.

Advantages and Disadvantages

The Irari have a IQ +2 (20 points) and the advantages Extended Lifespan (25 points) and Winged Flight (30 points). They have the disadvantages Compulsive Behavior — must pursue promising lines of research (-10 points), Fragile (-20 points), Impulsiveness (-10 points), and Stubbornness (-5 points).

It costs 30 points to be an Irari.

Names

The Irari (singular, Irari) tongue is quite suited to human speech, and Irari usually use their names in their own language rather than translations. Irari names are usually three to six syllables with a rather musical lilt. They often begin, and usually end, with a vowel sound. Examples: Allalree, Dolreetretha, Amanaranta.

In their own tongue, Irari names are descriptive. At birth they are given a child name that refers either to early behavior (Afraid-of-Moths) or appearance (Black-Spot-On-Wing). Upon reaching majority they adopt their new names, which usually refer to their chosen field of endeavor (Student-of-Igneous-Rocks, Student-of-the-Relationships-Between-Quarks, Pilot-of-Medium-Shuttlecraft, Repairer-of-Wooden-Furniture). The most often seen syllable in Irari names is "Iree," meaning "student of."

If an Irari is particularly successful, later in life he may change his name to describe his greatest achievement. Such names are often remarkably long and involved, taking 12 or more syllables in the economical Irari tongue (Fleet-Commander-in-a-Decisive-Naval-Engagement, Chief-Executive-Officer-of-a-Multi-System-Cybernetics-Corporation, Discoverer-of-the-Variable-Tolerance-Pseu-

do-Organic-Polymer-Chain-and-Its- Applications). The decision to make such a name change is entirely up to the individual, but a spurious name change is considered the height of absurd vainglory.

Psychology

The Irari are insatiably curious sentients. An Irari not only needs to know what's going on, but why, for how long, and when it's likely to happen again. It's not surprising, then, that the Irari have carved out a niche for themselves in the galactic community as scientists, researchers and explorers. The race has earned a reputation as being somewhat reckless in their pursuit of knowledge. The Irari chemist is not above trying the potion on himself if it didn't kill the first guinea pig. The archaeologist might not go back to camp for others if he's alone when he discovers the tomb.

For the Irari, research often becomes an obsessive end to itself. He will pursue a promising line of inquiry for days without rest. Cases are recorded of a poorly-supervised researcher literally working himself to death from exhaustion.

Not all Irari are scientists, by any means. They also tend to make excellent detectives for instance, and innovative chefs. When so inclined they make fine executives and managers. Relatively few are common laborers or craftsmen; since entering multi-racial society they can afford to leave such jobs to members of races better suited to them. In the military, they tend to be either officers or intelligence or technical specialists — Irari temperament is ill-suited to the duties of a common line soldier. Irari officers, however, have developed a reputation for brilliant and daring strategy. The racial temperament leads to many citations for valor in combat, particularly of the posthumous sort.

Irari dwellings tend to be small, Spartan and close to work — merely a place for periodic necessary maintenance. Irari prefer to work among others, and even a writer or programmer or other solitary professional will rent work space to share with others of similar employment, rather than work at home.

When not preoccupied with some project, the Irari are a sociable race. They prefer to socialize in small groups of 3-20 in public places such as restaurants or parks. The Irari's normal demeanor, both on and off the job, is pleasant and a trifle distant. They are sensitive to others' feelings, and are not generally put off by alien customs. They display a sophisticated but acute sense of humor greatly valued by perceptive sentients of most races. All of these positive traits can vanish, however, when the Irari enters an obsessive state. At those times, the individual becomes distracted, even curt, and is often capable of unethical behavior (anything from industrial espionage to unauthorized experimentation on sentient beings) in pursuit of the truths they seek. The punishments for criminal behavior during research, however, are severe. The race does not practice capital punishment, but murder carries the penalty of forced manual labor for life — literally a fate worse than death for most Irari.

Irari do not mate for life, and they very seldom share their dwellings with others. Females produce three to five eggs over a relatively short fertile period of 15 to 25 years. When an egg is imminent the female asks a male she respects to fertilize it. This decision is usually made logically and pragmatically with an eye towards improving the race. It is considered very bad form for the male to refuse without an excellent excuse. This system leads to a few respected, well-known males fathering many children while others father none at all. Males without offspring often resent their more prolific brethren.

Eggs and young are cared for by the race's third sex, the neuter nurses. Irari nurses are smaller, stupider and shorter-lived than the other sexes. They are rarely encountered by members of other races.

Irari in the Campaign

Scientists are common in science fiction, and these scientists can often be Irari. Irari will show up wherever research is being conducted — at universities, corporate R&D departments, secret government laboratories and in the field. The earnest Irari scientist, eager to delve into any new discovery, should become a familiar character type.

The Irari are not pedantic bookworms; they are an adventurous race. Their sense of adventure is usually tied into their passion for science, however. An Irari might be reluctant to sign on with a treasure hunt or paramilitary operation, but hold out the merest hint of a new discovery and he'll go anywhere and dare anything. They can be useful allies, but also sources of irritation in their excessive zeal.

Irari make excellent Patrons and sponsors for scientifically-inclined characters. They tend to look before they leap when it comes to science, and an Irari-sponsored expedition will often be planned with only the research goal in mind, and insufficient attention to outside factors such as hostile natives, dangerous environmental conditions, or potential jealous rivals. A party hired to provide security for an Irari expedition will need to work fast and stay on their toes.

Vengeance is not a large motivating force with the race and they don't often have or become Enemies, but an Irari can be a fierce competitor for a scientist PC, and a renegade Irari can always be used when a "mad scientist" type is called for.

The Irari "nurses" — the neuter third sex — will almost never be encountered by non-Irari, but if the GM needs stats, figure ST 8, HT 9, IQ 8, DX 9, no advantages except Winged Flight, and 10 to 20 points of skills. They have the disadvantages Fragile, Sense of Duty (to children) and Fanatic (about protecting children).

Irari Adventure Seeds

The Expedition

A scientific organization is funding an expedition made up mostly or entirely of Irari to travel to a newly discovered world and analyze some intriguing facet of the planet's flora, fauna, mineral composition, etc. The party is hired to provide security, as an afterthought, and they have little time to prepare and little funds to prepare with before departure. Once there, they may have to deal not only with the local environment, but also with hostile competitive expeditions sent by a rival corporation or enemy government.

The Lost Expedition

The expedition above didn't hire the PCs, and now they haven't been heard from in several weeks. The sponsoring organization hires the PCs to find out what happened.

Weird Science

A brilliant but reclusive Irari biologist is rumored to be pursuing a potentially dangerous line of research, possibly involving illegal experiments on sentient beings. The party is sent to discover the truth behind the rumors. The scientist lives alone in a wilderness area or barren planet, perhaps with a small group of robotic or biological assistants. The rumor may just be malicious gossip, which would make unsubtle characters look like rude busybodies, but perhaps the PCs will discover a secret which could endanger galactic civilization, as well as the party's lives.

Brain Drain at Gunpoint

An eminent Irari scientist has been kidnapped by a rival government or corporation. So far the kidnappers have been polite, hoping their prisoner will come over to their side with the proper inducements. But it's only a matter of time before they resort to more barbaric means of getting the scientist's secrets. The PCs are hired to find the scientist and bring him back to his original employers. And if by chance he has gone over to the other side, the rescue might suddenly turn into a re-kidnapping of an unwilling victim.

Status among the Irari is based on the individual's achievement, particularly in the fields of scientific research and exploration. High Status is strictly informal among the Irari, and does not necessarily give the individual authority over others, or carry any other social benefits other than, for males, more offers to sire children. The Irari are known as shrewd businessmen, and particularly skilled researchers command a high fee for their services. Some are not above going outside the law for a profit, and the race produces subtle, high-stakes criminals. Their crimes are rarely violent, however.

Few Irari have more than a passing interest in art, but a few individuals have established reputations for brilliance. Irari art emphasizes design, and is symmetrical and intricate. In general, though, artistic Irari make better scholars and critics than actual artists.

Irari have a racial religion that personifies knowledge as the Supreme Being. This faith is more philosophical than ceremonial, and has little outward impact on individual lives.

Ecology

The Irari evolved as cliff-dwelling, vegetarian avians on a rather barren world. Xenologists theorize that their racial inquisitiveness and resourcefulness arose from the need to find food in the barren wastes, and to build more secure nests to protect nurses and young from predators. Even the earliest pre-Irari seemed to prefer building better and stronger nests to actually standing guard over the young.

They have been sentient about as long as mankind. They evolved culture much earlier, however — they have almost 50,000 years of recorded history. Irari had been in space for over a millennium when they met mankind.

The Irari are urban, tending to congregate around major industry or places of learning. Their cities resemble hives — a large open area where business is conducted, surrounded, warren-like, by individual living cells. They fit comfortably into the living patterns of urban humanity.

They are a long-lived race, capable of living for 200 years without the aid of anti-agathics. Their early life is spent in a large nest or crèche with many other chicks and several nurses, and consists of 10 years of childhood, followed by another 10 years of adolescence spent in the crèche helping the nurses. During adolescence, the young are often visited by one or the other of their parents — usually their mother, unless their father has few offspring. Often, they leave the crèche for extended visits or vacations with the parent.

This period is followed by 20 — 30 years of intense, cloistered study (except for the nurses, who never leave the crèche) in one or several fields. Preferred fields of study include almost all the Scientific skills in the *Basic Set* rules. If an individual finds he lacks aptitude in his first chosen field, he will simply transfer to another. There is no stigma attached, as long as he eventually masters something. The Irari have traditionally educated the young free of charge, paying for it with a levy against corporate profits. Other worlds have found it in their interest to offer full scholarships for the Irari's long scholastic career, in exchange for which the student agrees to work for or on that world for a like amount of time. A stupid Irari who is incapable of achieving the equivalent of a human Master's degree is a social outcast and an object of ridicule. The most deadly insult to an Irari is "tall-nurse," indicating that the individual is no smarter than the race's diminutive third sex. Such a remark will certainly mark the speaker for a long and vicious campaign of non-violent but humiliating revenge from the offended party.

At the end of his formal education, the individual enters Irari society. Often he will begin his career with a stint in the scout service or the military, finding

such a vigorous life a welcome change from the rigors of higher education and the sterile environment of the crèche. Eventually, however, most Irari settle down to a life of corporate-or government-sponsored research, and eventually teaching as well. Irari tend to prefer applied research with a definite goal over pure research for its own sake, at the same time, the hard sciences are usually preferred over professions like engineering or medicine.

Culture

The indigenous Irari culture is almost extinct, a fact which the Irari mind not at all. Before entering galactic culture, the race ruled itself through a sloppy, informal bureaucracy similar to the government of an Earthly university — senior Irari were appointed to serve short terms as public officials. While a few managerially-minded individuals thrived under the system, most just waited for their term to end so they could return to their research.

When the Irari discovered other spacefaring races, it didn't take them long to figure out that other races were better at social organization. Soon the Irari were hiring Humans, An Phar, Fasanni and others to help run their government. The current government of the Irari homeworld and pre-contact colonies is made up of over 90% non-Irari employees supervised by a few organizationally-inclined Irari. The Irari have no hereditary or elected rulers, only appointees and employees. The closest thing they have to a chief executive is an appointee with the innocuous title Colonial Coordinator. The current coordinator is a former diplomat named Maraperuchipinu (Organizer-of-Many-Important-Alliances-and-Preventer-of-Two-Potentially-Tragic-Wars).

An Irari's most important peer groups are his co-workers and colleagues. The race generally likes to take vacations every two or three years, and these are usually taken with a group of co-workers (including, perhaps, an adolescent or two from the crèche). Often these are working holidays to a conference, convention or an affiliated research center. His greatest loyalty is reserved for his company or institution.

Politics

Many Irari emigrate, establishing themselves as resident aliens or naturalized citizens, depending on local laws. Irari are often involved with the initial surveys of newly discovered worlds, but avoid the early stages of colonization, preferring to wait until civilization is established and local industry is well founded.

They assimilate well with other races, and can work with humans, Gerodians and others in close proximity. Their only special racial needs are large workplaces, small, private quarters and a place for a crèche if the local Irari community consists of more than a few individuals.

Technical worlds encourage Irari immigration, valuing them for their scientific perseverance and ingenuity. It is not unknown for a prosperous developing world to offer free land and cash inducements to Irari who may want to lend their skills to local industry.

Economically, the race is rather opportunistic, going where the best research facilities and economic inducements are offered. Irari are known to have accepted positions of scientific authority from the Kaa, and even to have accepted positions during wartime on the opposite side from their homeworld. This sort of behavior carries relatively little social stigma among the Irari. They will seldom, however, break a contract, or take privileged information to a competitor. Furthermore, enemies and competitors are hesitant to make such offers, as the race has earned a reputation in the galactic espionage community as skilled and sophisticated spies and double agents.

Character Example

Erolamallree

A xenologist, Erolamallree (Student of the Lost Ancient Ones) is obsessed with the Precursors, a race he has not yet had an opportunity to study in the field (he was forced to do his graduate research on Gormelites, whom he has come to dislike intensely). He's just out of school and wants to join a scout team in the hopes of finding fresh evidence of the Precursors. He does have a good deal of field experience. For an Irari, he's a bit of a swash-buckler, throwing himself enthusiastically into the task at hand, singing lustily (and badly), cracking rude jokes and wearing loud scarves. In fact, he's a rather charming rogue, using his appealing personality to persuade others to do things his way, but holding back when danger threatens (unless knowledge of the Precursors is involved). He's also intensely competitive and tends to "forget" obligations not directly related to his research. In spite of these character flaws he's basically honest and loyal to his friends.

Erolamallree is a 100-point character ready to begin adventuring.

Attributes

ST 10, IQ 14, HT 9, DX 11.

Advantages

Absolute Direction, Charisma +2, Extended Lifespan, Winged Flight.

Quirks

Boring and pedantic on subject of Precursors; Sings loudly while working; Dislikes space travel; Tells Gormelite jokes; Wears loud scarves.

Disadvantages

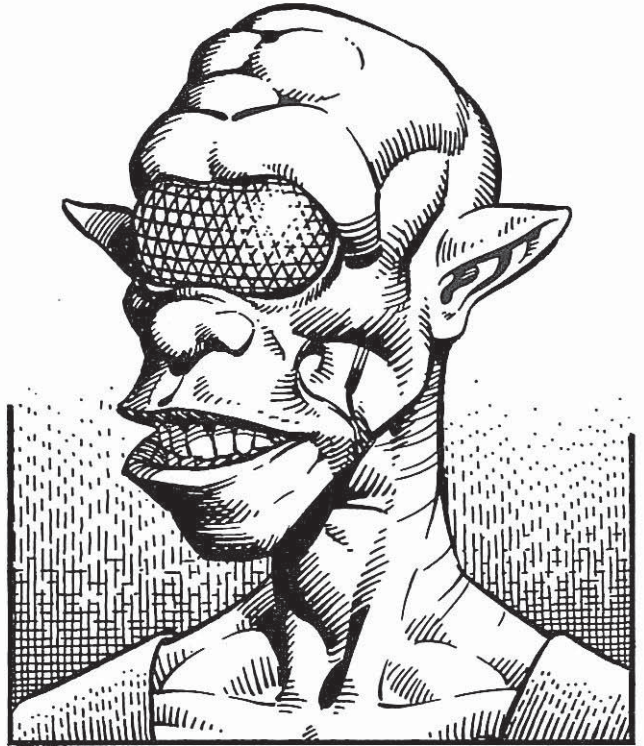
Absent-Minded, Code of Honor (Ethical Scientist), Compulsive Behavior (Research), Cowardice, Impulsiveness, Jealousy, Stubbornness.

Skills

Archaeology-16, Beam Weapons-11, Chemistry-14, Computer Operation-14, Cooking (Camp)-14, Driving ATV-10, Economics-12, Fast-Talk-14, Language (Gormelite)-14, Linguistics-14, Psychology-16, Research-15, Savoir-Faire-14, Survival (Jungle)-14, Xenology (Gormelite)-15, Xenology (Precursors)-17.

JARIL

The Jaril are giant humanoids 10 to 12 feet tall. They are completely hairless with pale gray skin. Their features are coarse but human, with the exception of their single, large, multifaceted eye. They have seven long digits on each of their broad hands and feet. Their body structure is so close to human that their clothes are very similar; most Jaril wear a garment like a practical, many-pocketed jumpsuit. They prefer light-colored clothes so they can make notes on sleeves and thighs when no recorder is handy.



Jaril in the Campaign

When inserting Jaril into a campaign, it is important for the GM to realize that he is not required to use the race at exactly the stage of development set forth here. The campaign could begin with the discovery of the Jaril and the massive genetic engineering project that saved the race, or it could begin with the Jaril fully repopulated, and a significant member of the galactic community (if this last option is taken, however, the race will no longer have the Sense of Duty disadvantage, and it will cost 72 points to play a Jarilu!).

At the stage of their development set forth here, Jaril are still a curiosity. Most citizens of the galaxy will never have seen one. Many, especially colonials and those who don't read the papers, will never have heard of them. Their size makes Jaril stand out, and they will tend to excite comment wherever they go.

In spite of their size, the race takes to space travel, and they can often be found as part of starship crews. A Jarilu makes an excellent tough-but-kind chief engineer.

They also tend to congregate around industrial sites as laborers (they can lift as much as a light forklift), specialists and foremen. They even make good heavy equipment operators — the machines aren't built for them, but the race has a knack for working in close quarters.

Despite the high racial cost, they are a versatile race and can do almost anything a human can — a party would have to be pretty desperate to get past a Jarilu secretary without an appointment.

A renegade Jarilu makes a formidable member of a criminal organization. But the most trouble a party could get into with this race would be if they harmed a mother or child, even accidentally.

The Jaril come from a dying world. Its surface temperature was over 130°, with an air pressure of .72, at the time they were found. They survived in caverns with a year-round temperature of 75° and a pressure of .98 Earth normal. Their native gravity is 1.15 G.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Jaril have ST +1 (10 points), Increased ST (50 points), and three extra Hit Points (24 points). They have the disadvantages Sense of Duty — to repopulation of race (-15 points), Gullibility (-10 points), Increased Life Support (-10 points) and Truthfulness (-5 points). They have the quirk Belief in Folk Magic (-1 point). Jaril have the following racial skill bonuses: Engineer +2 (6 points), Mechanic +2 (4 points), Electronics +1 (4 points).

It costs 57 points to be a Jarilu.

Names

Jaril (singular Jarilu) consider their real names sacred and secret, and adopt day-to-day "use names." It is difficult for most smaller races to pronounce the deep-pitched Jaril language (which certain individuals have compared to borborygm, or "tummy rumblings"), so it has become customary for Jaril to adopt at least two names, one for home use, the other for use among other races.

Usually a Jarilu will adopt a Terran use-name — either a simple name in common use among Terrans (Mike, Dave, Jonesy) or a descriptive name (Digger, Tiny, Sparks) or, less frequently, a name of an admired historical figure (Lincoln, Einstein, Patton). When an official signature is called for, the Jarilu signs with his race and his human use name, e.g., Jarilu Digger.

Psychology

Although the physiological and psychological resemblances between the two races are remarkable, it is a severe mistake to think of Jaril as merely big humans.

Like most large animals, a Jarilu has a rather sedate demeanor at most times. For the Jarilu this produces an air of quiet dignity. This perception is enhanced by their slow, soft, deep voices and the racial habit of speaking only when necessary. They do, however, have a temper, and will not hesitate to use their size and strength to discourage hostile behavior. To threaten a Jaril child or mother is suicidal for any race.

The Jaril live in family units of 4-15 adults. These units are completely polygamous — every Jaril is considered to be “married” to every other in his family unit, although the race has a strong incest taboos and will not breed with anybody who shares a common ancestor within two generations.

The Jaril are a race recovering from the very brink of extinction, and the females have elected to devote themselves full time to the bearing and rearing of children, while the males work to support the repopulation effort. Xenologists predict that females will begin to return to the work force after three to five more generations of intensive breeding. Even now, about 10% of the females work — these individuals usually have been found to be sterile, so they take on the male role of economically supporting the family.

This social structure means that female Jaril are very seldom seen outside of the home. This leads to the common misconception that they are a patriarchal culture. Actually, the reverse is true. In theory, all family decisions are made by vote among the adult members, with the greatest weight being given to the opinion of the eldest. In practice, the mothers are considered the most important members of Jaril society, and they have the final word on most decisions.

A Jaril home is stark by the standards of other races, because they do not use furniture. The typical dwelling is a large open area (in human communities Jaril favor large lofts and industrial space) with several cupboards, shelves and recesses, and the utensils necessary for food preparation. Jaril prefer quarters that would be intolerably cramped to a human of similar size. Although averaging over 10 feet tall, they prefer living space with a headroom of 7-8 feet, moving easily about in crouched postures that would be inconceivable to humans. By far the most common fear among Jaril is agoraphobia, the fear of open spaces.

Children are attended constantly by adults — pampered and cared for with exaggerated concern for their well-being. Most Jaril children attend human schools, and their first day of school is often the first time they have ever been away from the immediate supervision of an adult Jarilu for more than a few moments. It is often a traumatic time, particularly for the mothers.

The Jaril love of children spills over to the offspring of other races, making the Jaril popular within the host society. Despite the large size of their playmates, there is probably no safer playground for a human child than an uncluttered Jaril dwelling, surrounded by doting Jaril females.

Apart from their home life, Jaril have become mostly assimilated into human culture, and Status is based on the achievements of individuals within human society. Males in a given family may have widely varying status as they follow their own career paths — one might be chief engineer on the flagship of a luxury cruise line, another might be a dishwasher. Mothers may be treated as though they were one Status above the highest Status male in the family.

Some Jaril have been lured into organized crime by the promise of huge profits for the family; however an immigrant’s desire to make a good impression on the host culture combines with the positive support of the Jaril’s family to keep such activities to a minimum. Occasionally, however, a Jaril is thrown out of his family — usually for harming a child through gross negligence or in anger. They often become renegades against all society, and are desperate individuals indeed.

They are not an artistic race, apart from their beautiful, deep voices. The Jaril contra-basso-profundo voice has found great favor in recent choral compo-

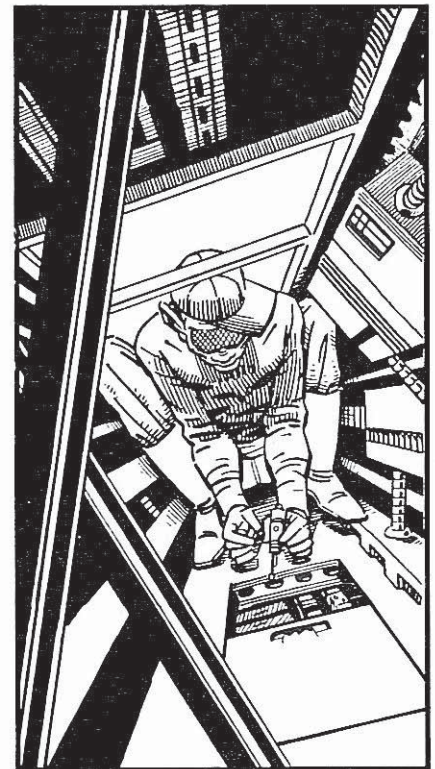
Jaril as PCs

The obvious Jaril PC is the starship engineer, but players should be encouraged to look beyond this. The race is expensive (it’s not cheap to be a super-strong giant) but still very versatile.

A combat-oriented party will crave a Jarilu as the squad mechanic and enforcer. This is fine, but the players must remember the Jaril Sense of Duty . . . before accepting a dangerous job a Jaril would, at a minimum, demand his employer take out a large (and therefore expensive) insurance policy on his life and health, with his family as the beneficiary.

The one thing a Jarilu can never be is subtle . . . the race is rare and impossible to hide. Players should be wary of playing Jarilu in a campaign that emphasizes stealth and secrecy.

If a player decides his Jarilu dislikes children or refuses to take part in the repopulation effort, he can buy off the Sense of Duty disadvantage, but automatically gains a 15-point Social Stigma disadvantage with regards to other Jaril.



Jaril Adventure Seeds

Discovery

The PCs are along on the scouting expedition that discovered the remnants of the Jaril race. First they must gain the trust of the debased, desperate survivors, then they become instrumental in organizing and expediting the genetic engineering project which saves the race. Thereafter the PCs and their descendants will have earned the undying gratitude of the Jaril race.

“Hide Me!”

A frantic individual appears at the door of the PC’s headquarters or the airlock of their docked ship. Almost in hysterics, he manages to explain that he accidentally struck and killed a Jaril child with his vehicle, and now the whole family is in hot pursuit, ready to tear apart anything between them and the killer. Killing a child is a horrible thing, but how can the party surrender the unfortunate individual to a mob of grief-maddened giants?

But what if the death wasn’t an accident? Perhaps the fugitive is a contract killer or a madman. Even if they survive the Jaril, the PCs could end up in trouble with the law.

High Traders

The party is along as guests, observers or passengers on the maiden voyage of the first Jaril city-ship. But a rival trading concern is trying to sabotage the project. The PCs get wind of the plot and must try to stop it. Or perhaps the PCs are in the employ of the competitors, paid to see that the mission fails without too much loss of life (which would provoke an investigation). On the other hand, perhaps the characters try to stop the plot, but the Jaril still think they’re the saboteurs.

Colony

The party is employed or assigned to find a suitable world for the first all-Jaril colony. Several NPC Jaril would certainly be along as liaisons, and any likely candidate for colonization would have to meet their approval.

sition, and many Jarilu work as professional vocalists, or sing chorally as a hobby. They also have a folk tradition of beautiful songs in their own tongue. As might be guessed from their recent history, their lullabies are particularly lovely and poignant.

Working Jaril are usually engineers or technicians, though some work as skilled or unskilled laborers. They are a hard-working, results-oriented people, with little time for theory. They are probably most creative in the fields of mechanical engineering and architecture.

At the time they were first encountered, the Jaril religion was a debased form of ancestor worship. Since their integration into human society, many have adopted human religion — Christianity (particularly Mormonism) and Islam are especially popular.

Ecology

The Jaril are true troglodytes, adapted to living underground — this explains the ease with which they adapt to the cities and starships of the much smaller humans.

They are an old race. They evolved over three million years ago, and have been civilized for more than a million years. Archaeologists estimate that at its height, Jaril civilization was at least TL11 (although no firm evidence has been unearthed that the Jaril were capable of space travel, a mysterious omission for such an advanced and technologically-minded people). They built labyrinthine underground cities designed to house millions, planet-spanning ultra-high-speed “subways,” elaborate and efficient underground reservoirs and plumbing, and beautifully-decorated grottoes and galleries for entertainment and public events. The surface they turned into a garden — a safe and beautiful place to visit. Then, about 10,000 years ago, a violent upheaval occurred from which Jaril civilization never recovered. It appears to have been a planet-wide revolution of some sort, but the details are unknown because the first act of the new regime was to obliterate as much as possible of the artifacts and records of the old — a task they undertook with dismaying efficiency over a period of several centuries.

The revolution began a long, slow cultural decline that accelerated dramatically about 2,500 years ago when the race developed a genetic defect that pushed infant mortality above 50% and rendered many of the survivors sterile. The last vestiges of Jaril civilization crumbled, and when the race was discovered fewer than 50 Jaril remained alive. Biologists estimate that the race would have been extinct after three generations.

The race was saved, however, by a triumphant feat of genetic engineering by a combined team of human, Gerodian and Irari scientists. Now, just a few generations later, there are almost a million Jaril spread throughout human space, and the race is well on its way to becoming a potent force in the galactic community.

The Jaril have devoted themselves to the cause of repopulation . . . a necessary measure since even with all the advantages of modern science and medicine the infant mortality rate and sterility rate remain about 10%. The Jaril female has a fertile period of 20-25 years; births are always single and the gestation period is almost two years. In spite of this, the race’s fertile females produce an average of six to seven surviving children each (although test-tube incubation and cloning techniques were used to produce the first generation of prolific Jaril, the race has made every effort since then to avoid such methods, which they find repugnant when not absolutely necessary).

The Jaril homeworld is strongly dominated by the animal kingdom, and the Jaril, like most of their planet’s species, are carnivorous, eating vegetable protein only in the form of spices and medicines. They rarely cook their food.

The Jaril are slightly shorter-lived than average (begin aging rolls at 40),

seldom living past 80. However, the Engai claim to have recently perfected Jaril anti-agathics, and those will certainly extend that lifespan. They reach maturity at about 15, and usually enter the work force as close to that time as their education allows. Even engineers with advanced degrees are usually through with their education by age 20 — a tribute the race's perseverance and intelligence.

Culture

The biggest holdover from the homeworld culture is a kind of folk magic tradition. Most Jaril believe in evil and good spirits (that's why they keep their names secret . . . so they can't be used magically against the individual). There are also magic ceremonies to be performed at birth, maturation and death, none of which involve outsiders. However, angry Jaril have been known to pronounce a curse on people or objects. Human popular folklore has responded to this tendency, attributing horrible fates to those who receive a Jaril curse. Even Jaril converts to human religions keep this tradition, but it is seldom referred to outside the home and makes little impact on the surrounding community.

At age 15, the Jarilu is adopted into a family group as an adult member. For genetic reasons this is never, under normal circumstances, the individual's birth family. Upon adoption the Jarilu is considered an adult, and expected to begin working or breeding.

This ongoing sharing of offspring is the primary channel of cultural cohesiveness among the Jaril.

Apart from their domestic arrangements, the Jaril are thoroughly assimilated into human culture . . . they work with humans, attend school with humans and socialize with humans. In that society, they are generally well-liked and respected for their hard work, technical prowess and devotion to family. The Jaril have earned that most coveted of reputations in a multi-racial society — good neighbors.

The Jaril homeworld, meanwhile, is mostly occupied by thousands of archaeologists trying to uncover the mystery of the fall of Jaril civilization. Only a few hundred Jaril remain on planet, technically as advisers, but in practice as skilled labor for the excavations. The world remains nominally in the control of the Jaril race, though, and Jarilu talk of beginning terraforming to revive the tired and abused planet in a few generations.

Politics

The Jaril's political views have never diverged much from that of their adopted society. So far, no Jaril has risen to significant public office, but that's expected to change in the next generation or so as the race's stock as respected members of the human community continues to rise.

Because of the repopulation effort, the race has been granted a blanket exemption from military service, lasting until the galaxy-wide Jaril population has risen to 10,000,000 individuals. The military is wetting its collective lips in anticipation of the day when the race can be used to form elite battalions of huge, powerful, technically-skilled troops.

Likewise, the Jaril have been ignoring the colonization option in favor of the safer environs of urban humanity. Now that the race has grown to a point where population pressure could become an issue, the Scout service is beginning to keep a lookout for worlds that might benefit from an influx of Jaril.

The race has had a profound effect on the space industry, both shipboard and groundside. Jaril ground crews are already known as the very best, and a qualified Jaril chief engineer can name his price and his job — another long-range plan under consideration involves huge interstellar ships designed to house 1,000 Jaril, traveling from system to system as interstellar traders, freighters and freelance technicians. This scheme could be a reality within a generation.

Character Example

Jonesy Jr.

"Jonesy" is a second-generation starship engineer. One of his fathers is chief engineer on a luxury liner, and a well-known figure at the local spaceport. To make the family connection clear, Junior decided to adopt his father's use name.

This is Jonesy's first time away from home and he's very much a greenhorn. He's piteously shy and a hopeless pie-in-the-sky idealist. He's hardworking and eager to please, but he has a stubborn streak that comes out whenever somebody tells him how to do his job or asks him to compromise his lofty principles.

Jonesy Jr. is a 100-point character ready to begin adventuring.

Attributes

ST 24, DX 10, HT 11/14, IQ 12.

Advantages

Improved G-Tolerance (.3 G), Reputation +2 (Father's son, recognized sometimes-mostly around spaceports).

Quirks

Belief in Folk Magic; Intimidated by females of all races; Likes to dance; Believes what those in authority say; Prefers to work alone; Eager for responsibility.

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Irrational Idealist), Gullibility, Honesty, Increased Life Support, Sense of Duty (to Race), Shyness, Stubbornness, Truthfulness.

Skills

Administration-12, Brawling-10, Computer Operation-13, Electronics Operation (Shields)-12, Electronics Operation (Communication)-12, Electronics Operation (Sensors)-12, Electronics-13, Engineer (Stardrive)-16, Mechanic (Stardrive)-15, Metallurgy-12, Tangler-11, Vacc Suit-13.

CIDI

Cidi in the Campaign

Cidi are a versatile and entertaining character race. They can go anywhere (including places where larger races can't) and do anything. It can be amusing for the GM to confront "cute-o-phobic" players with a super-competent, six-inch-tall mopet. Players who are excessively into saccharine cuteness, on the other hand, may soon find their characters are targets of the CRL for chronic patronization. It may be difficult for the PCs to take a Cidi Patrol officer or judge seriously, but disrespectful characters will pay the price.

A party on a Cidi-dominated world would find themselves in the situation of Gulliver in Lilliput — too large to be comfortable, and clumsy and powerful enough to be a danger to life and property. The locals will do their best to accommodate large visitors (as long as they behave civilly), but will eventually become vexed with the effort.

Cidi also make excellent opponents. Their size makes them perfect spies, thieves and snipers. A normal-sized party would have a frustrating time trying to run down a Cidi fugitive, and a small group of Cidi could make life hell for a party in the wilderness with tricks, traps and ambushes.

Cidi as Player Characters

Cidi are an excellent choice for an experienced gamer looking for a unique new character type. Their size, as well as their other advantages, presents the imaginative player with a host of possibilities.

They work well as part of starship crews, particularly in technical positions (a Jarilu chief engineer and a Cidi electrician's mate make an almost unbeatable engineering team).

They're also ideal for covert operations, being uniquely designed to plant bugs or bombs, or shadow an individual or party through the wilderness.

For the same reasons, surprisingly, they work well in combat-oriented groups. While the rest of the party attacks from the front, the Cidi can work the corners, striking carefully from ambush. A single Cidi with a beam weapon or satchel charge can do a lot of damage, particularly if he picks the right hiding place.

The experienced roleplayer will find it a challenge to play a Cidi well. The race demands both humor and dignity, as well as an eye for new possibilities.

The Cidi are the tiniest sentient vertebrates yet discovered. They stand 5 to 8 inches tall and weigh 1 to 2 pounds. They have large, dark eyes, a snout resembling a bear's, pointed ears and sharp teeth. They are completely covered with short, soft fur, ranging in color from golden blond to a deep brown or russet. Their hands are like humans'; their bodies tend to be plump. Their legs and tail make them uniquely suited to both life on the ground and life in the trees — they resemble a terrestrial kangaroo rat's, and a Cidi can hop for short stretches as quickly as a man can run. At the same time, the feet have sharp claws and the tail is prehensile, making the race excellent climbers.

The Cidi come from a dry planet with .9 Earth atmospheres, 1.2 G, and an average temperature of 85°.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Cidi have DX +2 (20 points), Manual Dexterity +2 (20 points), ST -6 (-50 points), HT -1 (-10) and Hit Points -5 (-25). Their small size gives them PD +1 (25 points). They have a Prehensile Tail (30 points). They have the advantages Decreased Life Support (10 points), Night Vision (10 points), and the racially learned skill Climbing at DX (2 points). Because of their very small size, they have the racial disadvantage Dwarfism (-15 points); other races' equipment is much too large for them. They have two quirks: Hate to be Patronized and Curious About New People (-2).

Racial cost is 15 points.

Names

Like several other races, Cidi (singular: Cidi) adopt human names for daily use among humans. It's not that their own names are unpronounceable or secret; rather, the Cidi feel that their names in their own language are too "cute" to human ears, contributing to a general tendency among humans to disregard the race as sentient toys or pets. Their theory is that humans will be more likely to take seriously a sentient with a human name.

Cidi personal names are one to three syllables, clan and sept designators are two to four syllables. A Cidi's full name consists of his personal name, followed by clan, sept, and the names of both parents, same sex last. A typical example is Imi Nirumu Nera Piku-Jimi. This same individual might call herself Sandy among humans, after the color of her coat. If further identification were needed she would probably use her clan name: Sandy Nirumu.

Psychology

In addition to being the galaxy's smallest known sentient vertebrates, the Cidi are also among the galaxy's most capable and psychologically healthy races.

With their large eyes, fine features and soft fur, most other mammalian sentients find the Cidi remarkably beautiful creatures. This has not always worked to the Cidi's advantage. The entire race is particularly frustrated by a racial tendency among humans to regard them as clever pets — this has been a source of friction between the two races for many years (this is mild, however, compared to the Cidi's feelings about Kaa and Gormelites, both of whom tend to regard the race as appetizing snacks). The problem is complicated by the fact that the Cidi are by nature affectionate, inquisitive and loquacious — in short, their behavior, and not just their appearance, is "cute."

Presently the racial doctrine is to keep one's temper with patronizing humans, and prove your worth through job performance — something Cidi are well suited to.

Cidi often mate with several different individuals during their lifetime. Females only have one mate at a time, while males may have several wives. However, females are allowed to change mates at any time (except during pregnancy or nursing) and customarily do so at least once or twice during their life. Young are always reared by the father and his current wives, even if the mother leaves the family. There is a cultural taboo against leaving a lone male with children to raise. If the male has no other wives, the mother will either stay with him or convince a friend to take her place.

The number of females a male has is determined by his Status, which is determined primarily by his economic security (+ 1 Status for each level of Wealth). Of course, personality and attractiveness are also important.

Unscrupulous Cidi make excellent criminals. They are insidious cat-burglars and extremely effective con men. The mainstream of Cidi society is content to leave such individuals to the common justice. Much lower in esteem, however, are lazy Cidi who are content to, in effect, actually become pets, accepting the patronage of a wealthy human, receiving a luxurious lifestyle and a generous allowance in return for which they merely provide occasional companionship and entertainment. Such individuals are shunned by others of their kind. This prejudice, sadly, has been known to carry over to Cidi in such legitimate careers as secretary, personal assistant or valet to a human, discouraging individuals from accepting such employment, at which they often excel.

Several members of the race have established reputations as artists and writers (a recent best-seller, "Oh, You Sweet Little Treasure," an autobiographical work by Sandy Nirumu, has done much to dramatize Cidi feelings about patronization). The race has a passion for social dancing, humans find the sight of their acrobatic cotillions enchanting and amusing.

The Cidi are pantheists, believing that the Supreme Being is the universe and that god dwells in everything. Exposure to terrestrial Buddhism and Hinduism has led many Cidi to incorporate the doctrines of karma and reincarnation into their personal faiths.

Ecology

The Cidi are descended from forest animals who lived in the trees but foraged on the ground. Consequently, the race is remarkably fast at both climbing and hopping. Modern Cidi have not lost their primitive ancestors' speed or agility, or their ability to hide rapidly and effectively.

The Cidi became sentient about a million years ago, but only developed civilization within the last 3,000 years. The earliest Cidi settlements were elabo-



Cidi Adventure Seeds

A Pet Defects

A Cidi has been living easy as the paid companion (read: "pet") of a wealthy human dowager, but he's become disgusted with his lifestyle and wants to leave — the only problem is a long-term, iron-clad contract. He approaches the PCs to smuggle him offworld to begin a new life. The dowager, of course, is sparing no expense to track down the "kidnappers" of her little darling.

The fugitive may want to appeal to the CRL for help. That organization may offer its assistance, or it may tell him he can lie in the bed he made.

Ms. Nirumu's Entourage

The party is hired to escort the noted Cidi author and activist, Sandy Nirumu (below) on a multi-planet speaking tour to promote her new book ("Small Folk of all Sizes"). They will find the author a difficult, demanding charge, and the schedule grueling. Also Ms. Nirumu has stepped on more than a few important toes in her career, among both big folk and more conservative Cidi, and these Enemies will be on the lookout for any way to discredit or inconvenience the author.

Slavers!

A Cidi private courier ship with a crew of five has been ambushed and hijacked. The PCs must track down the hijackers, recover the important diplomatic documents the Cidi were carrying, and rescue the crew, who are being carried off to a hostile, unenlightened government for sale as slaves, curiosities or delicacies.

Gremlin

An enemy of the PCs hires a Cidi to halt or delay the party's current mission. Unbeknownst to any of the characters, the Cidi stows away on the party's ship and begins a program of non-fatal, but serious interference with the party's business. Eventually, of course, the party will figure out something is up and smoke out the intruder. Eventually.

rate and populous cities built entirely in the branches of a single large tree. In spite of the Cidi's cultural youth, they had already achieved inter-system space flight when they were discovered, and they were making progress towards a stardrive.

They are omnivorous, though their meat protein is usually limited to insects and certain small fish and crustaceans.

They are a remarkably prolific race. A Cidi female can produce as many as five litters of three to six young every 3 years, over a fertile period lasting 20 years or more. Cidi females living on civilized planets customarily voluntarily limit themselves to one litter in their lifetime.



Culture

The Cidi are pulled two ways culturally. On the one hand, their intelligence and gregarious nature causes them to adapt readily to other cultures. On the other hand their communal family structure tends to keep them together, and their very size makes it difficult for them to interact freely with other races.

Economically, for instance, the Cidi face advantages and disadvantages. An apartment that a single human would find barely livable could support several Cidi families in palatial splendor with the aid of a few portable partitions. On the other hand, many necessary devices, from simple eating utensils to weaponry, have to be specially (and expensively) reduced for Cidi use. Such items often cost 2 to 4 times normal price.

Normally, on worlds dominated by larger races, the resident Cidi will buy a single large dwelling or industrial space and convert it into a community — in effect, a Cidi city within a city. In addition to individuals working in the greater community, a Cidi community will also need an internal support industry consisting of the trade or manufacture of Cidi-scale technology.

On the Cidi homeworld or a Cidi-dominated colony, of course, the situation is reversed, with larger visitors having to stay in specially-designated areas to avoid accidentally harming the community or its citizens.

A sure sign of an affluent or important Cidi is the possession of a wallubot. These devices are 4½- to 5-foot-tall exoskeletons, patterned after the traditional Cidi riding beast, the wallu. They're bipedal, with two arms ending in three-fingered hands suitable for grasping. The pilot sits between the shoulders. The biological wallu's head is thrust forward, allowing the rider to see over. The robotic version is simply headless. Wallubots have a ST of 8 or more. A wallubot allows a Cidi to use human-sized tools and negotiate human-sized obstacles, like stairs. These devices are priced beginning at \$50,000.

A few radical Cidi reject the use of the wallubot as demeaning, an admission of inferiority to larger races. Most, however, find them inoffensive, in part because of their resemblance to the traditional racial riding beast.

When a Cidi needs to go armed, he generally uses a hand weapon modified for use as a Cidi-sized rifle. The race tends to avoid projectile throwers with recoil, which can be catastrophic at their size.

The Cidi are excellent technologists and spacefarers. Their small hands allow them to quickly finish jobs that a human would require precision tools for. It is also easy for a Cidi technician to get at a problem behind a wall or a bulkhead. On commercial spacecraft Cidi will often sign on as electricians, engineers, computer operators or communications technicians.

A few Cidi-only commercial ships are in existence. These are mostly the

private yachts of the very wealthy, but a few Cidi crews have found success as commercial couriers.

Cidi infants are weaned at about 4 months. At that time they're already walking and beginning to talk. Thereafter, though, development slows down. Cidi are formally educated for at least 18 years, beginning at age 1. Their 19th year is a year off, spent on a long trip (finances permitting), frequently taken by all the littermates, or just spent relaxing. At age 20 the Cidi begins higher education or his career.

Politics

The Cidi homeworld is governed by a representative democracy set up along parliamentary lines. The citizenry votes for their representative to parliament, and the parliament elects the head of state, called simply the president. The president serves until he receives a vote of no confidence from the parliament, at which time the parliament elects a new president from among their number. A president may resign at any time, naming his own successor, who will then be approved by the parliament.

There are several Cidi colony worlds. Traditionally these worlds are granted political independence as soon as they can prove economic independence from the homeworld. The colony world then must begin to pay back the expenses of colonization, a process that usually takes decades. Consequently, several Cidi colonies have never petitioned for independence at all, preferring to remain under the homeworld's protection.

On other race's worlds, the Cidi Respect League (CRL) has become a political force to be reckoned with. The CRL is an anti-defamation league, dedicated to educating the public about the race's accomplishments and dislike of patronization. Although the butt of countless jokes, the CRL seems to be having an impact. Not laughing are the editors and producers who have walked into their office to find a 6-inch-tall CRL official waiting to explain, patiently and at length, exactly why yesterday's episode or editorial cartoon was offensive to small sentients. The CRL is also active in consumer protection, campaigning against price gouging in miniaturized items, and the Cidi's right to have items they need produced locally by other Cidi. The Cidi community generally respects the CRL's efforts, though many also feel the organization takes its mission and itself more seriously than is really necessary.

On the galactic scale, the Cidi race receives considerably more respect than a Cidi individual is accustomed to. Not only does the race's technological acumen and pleasant personality make the Cidi valued citizens, but the galactic government is also aware that only a sense of good citizenship keeps the Cidi from breeding indiscriminately and dominating other races by sheer force of numbers. The galactic government is willing to entertain any reasonable concessions to insure that the Cidi remain good neighbors.

Cidi have served honorably in the military of many worlds. Though their size makes them unsuitable as line troops, they are infinitely useful to the navy as technicians, and they make excellent scouts and intelligence agents. Some experiments have been conducted with Cidi-crewed armor. The results were mixed — the crews performed impeccably, but the fact that a Cidi tank cannot be piloted by any other race makes large-scale manufacture of such vehicles unlikely for economic reasons.

Somewhat more successful have been all-Cidi scout teams. The race's size and intelligence makes them ideally suited for collecting a lot of information fast, without losing equipment or personnel, or disturbing local conditions.

The Cidi homeworld maintains a standing planetary and colonial defense navy, and a small armored ground force, both of proven efficiency. Several of the independent colonies also maintain an active military or trained reserve.

Character Example

Imi "Sandy" Nirumu Piku-Jimi

Sandy Nirumu is one of the galaxy's best-known Cidi, particularly among the intelligentsia. Her books are not only impassioned appeals for dignity and respect for her own race, but also stinging indictments of the complacently sizeist galactic culture. Although the Cidi have never been a particularly persecuted or downtrodden race, Nirumu has managed to turn their relationship with humanity into a cause célèbre — a textbook example of benign oppression of one race by another. Many of her fellow Cidi think that she's lost all perspective on the issue, and is seriously endangering the basically good relationship between the two races by making a mountain out of a molehill.

Nirumu is eloquent, intense and a bit aloof around strangers. She's a demanding boss — no personal secretary has lasted more than 3 months in her employ. Unlike most other Cidi, she prefers to wear clothes, favoring dark cloaks and broad hats — she says that's the only way a human can tell her from any other Cidi, a not inaccurate observation.

She is an experienced character with a value of 137 points.

Attributes

ST 3, DX 12, IQ 14, HT 9/4.

Advantages

Charisma (3 levels), Decreased Life Support, Manual Dexterity +2, Night Vision, Passive Defense +1 PD, Prehensile Tail, Night Vision, Reputation +3, Status 3, Strong Will +2, Voice, Wealthy.

Quirks

Curious about new people; Hates to be patronized; Afraid of dogs; Enjoys media attention; Wears clothing; Pretends to want to retire from public life and write fiction; Always firing secretaries.

Disadvantages

Addiction (Tobacco or campaign equivalent), Fanatic, HP -5, Intolerance (Insensitive Humans), Odious Personal Habit — Didactic Activist, Sense of Duty (to Cause of Cidi Respect).

Skills

Administration-13, Bard-14, Climbing-12, Computer Operation-14, Cooking-14, Detect Lies-15, History-13, Law-13, Leadership-13, Politics-13, Research-14, Savoir-Faire-14, Teaching-13, Writing-16.

FASANNI



Fasanni Player Characters

The Fasanni are another excellent choice for experienced roleplayers looking for a challenging new experience. The race is adventurous and audacious, but Fasanni specialize in accomplishing their ends through non-violent means. This is not a good race for “zap and blast” campaigns.

A Fasanni in the group can be helpful all sorts of ways . . . making friends with newly-discovered savages, keeping the party on the right side of local authorities, and talking their way out of tight spots.

If the player decides to become a freelance writer or reporter, this can lead to all sorts of interesting situations as the party follows up leads and carries out assignments in all the galaxy’s hot spots. An interplanetary news organization makes an excellent Patron. If the PC produces a consistent series of scoops it could even lead to that most coveted of journalistic honors — the expense account.

The Fasanni might also be particularly useful in a Scout campaign, where a new sentient race could lurk behind every new stone (in fact, every new stone could *be* sentient).

Fasanni are bipedal rodents a little smaller than humans. Their ears are long and pointed, their eyes are large, brown and bright. Their muzzles are conical and bewhiskered, like a Earthly rodent’s. They have short, hairless tails. Their legs end in clawed feet, but their hands are close to human. Their short, coarse fur can be any shade of red, shading through pink to white. They usually only wear clothing on their upper body. Customarily, Fasanni clothing closely matches the clothing of whatever culture the Fasanni are among or are most fond of.

The Fasanni are native to a 1.1-G world with about 1.2 times Earth’s atmosphere and an average temperature of 75°. Their native star was a dim K-class sun, considerably hotter and brighter than Sol, and they prefer brighter light than is found inside most human buildings.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Fasanni have DX +1 (10 points) and ST -1 (-10 points). They have the advantages Cultural Adaptability (25 points) and Intuition (15 points) and the racially learned skill Fast-Talk at IQ +1 (4 points). They have the racial skill bonuses Bard +1 (2 points), Savoir-Faire +1 (1 point), and Writing +2 (4 points). They have the disadvantages Color Blindness (-10 points), Overconfidence (-10 points), and Pacifist, Self Defense Only (-15 points). They have the quirk of preferring to dress like whatever race they’re among (-1).

Racial cost is 15 points.

Names and Naming

Fasanni (singular: Fasann) names are usually simple one- to three-syllable words. Names are taken not only from the native Fasann language but from the languages of other races as well (including human). Fasann names usually mean something, and the Fasann will often introduce himself with the translation of his name in the appropriate language. Among each other, the Fasanni use only one name. If further distinction is required, he will append an appropriate career or geographical designator (Baltu the editor, Tulip of Cygnus IV). Among other races, the Fasanni will, when possible, alter their names to fit local conventions, arbitrarily adding new elements when necessary. Among humans, for example, Baltu might use the name Baltu Kane (taking his “surname” from an appropriate figure from human history, culture or mythology). Among An Phar he would probably call himself Gom-No Kane Baltu-Los Fasann.

Psychology

Fasanni are cultural chameleons, taking on the characteristics of whatever race they happen to be living among. The race is known for producing some of the galaxy’s most articulate, incisive writing. Fasanni are often employed as reporters, envoys, personal secretaries, salesmen and in other communications-related fields.

In spite of, or perhaps because of, the ease with which they adopt other cultures’ ways, the Fasann have little culture of their own. All that remains of

the aboriginal Fasanni culture is the language, which is still used for names, though not often in daily speech. The only reason the Fasanni still learn their ancestral tongue is to allow them to communicate privately among themselves.

Fasanni are often rather contemptuous of members of other races, considering their adherence to a single set of racial customs quaint and provincial. This opinion is generally not apparent to anybody who doesn't speak Fasanni, since in other languages the race tends to be flawlessly polite.

Few creatures care to offend a Fasann, for the race's barbed wit and gift for parody is legendary. An individual who tries to match wits with a Fasann will soon find himself a laughingstock, the butt of all the popular jokes. Frequently, the only thing that can save the reputation of such an unfortunate is the intervention of a (very expensive) Fasanni public relations firm.

The Fasanni ability to assimilate other languages and cultures is completely instinctive, and appears almost psychic to members of other races. The smallest behavioral clues can tell a Fasann volumes about an unfamiliar culture's habits and etiquette. Within a day of contact with a new culture, the Fasann is already adapting to local customs and manners, within a week, he'll have picked up whole phrases in the new language. True fluency, of course, takes much longer!

The Fasanni don't always simply ape local customs. Among the Truul, for instance, a Fasann would adopt a dominant personality, meeting that race's need for direction. Among the ancient, wise and rather arrogant Engai, on the other hand, the Fasann would behave in a much humbler fashion, as befits such a shorter-lived race.

There are limits to the race's ability to absorb culture. A Fasann who spent a year on a mining colony would possess a wealth of mining lore and miner's customs, but to actually mine minerals he would need to go down into the tunnels and learn to use the equipment like everybody else.

There seem to be moral limits as well. A Fasann among Gormelites would behave aggressively, but not violently. Among the Markann, they would not acquire that race's scientific callousness.

Almost the only universal trait among Fasanni seems to be a disdain for violent methods. A Fasann tends to think he can out-talk or out-think any potential threat, and will resort to violence only as an absolute last resort (this will not stop him from making extravagant and bloodthirsty, but convincing, threats).

When forced to go armed, Fasanni tend to favor stunners, rubber bullets, cudgels and other non-fatal means of self-defense. Judo is the martial art of choice.

Fasanni seem to have somewhat of a racial penchant for crime and unscrupulous behavior. Many Fasanni make their living as confidence men, industrial spies, or embezzlers. However, many are also superlative detectives, tracking down Fasanni and non-Fasanni criminals with equal skill.

They are not a technical race. They tend to avoid occupations like mechanic or computer operator (although they have no problem learning enough to operate a word processor or help crew a spaceship), and are almost never scientists or engineers. They frequently excel at the social sciences — history, sociology, xenology, etc.

Fasanni writers are famous throughout the galaxy. The race produces tremendously popular writing, particularly humor, inspirational non-fiction, and genre fiction. However, serious Fasanni writers are much rarer.

Fasanni are most known for their accurate and incisive journalistic work. The inquisitive and persistent Fasann reporter is respected and feared throughout the galaxy. They also make excellent editorial and speech writers, with an uncanny ability to incite the populace for or against a certain cause. Fasanni public relations and advertising firms are particularly valued for their ability to actually become ardent proponents of a certain cause or company, at least while

Fasanni Adventure Seeds

Laughingstock

A PC threatens or insults a Fasann (possibly with good cause, but nonetheless. . .). A few days later, people start giggling whenever that person enters the room. Soon the story gets back to the party — a story (true, if possible, though probably slightly altered) that makes the character look like an utterly incompetent moron. Soon more jokes are circulating. Eventually another Fasanni appears offering to mend the party's tattered reputation . . . for a price. The party can pay the PR man, find the original Fasann (to beg forgiveness or to seek revenge), or they can get out of town.

On Assignment

Baltu Kane (below) hires the party to get him to the site of a major invasion or civil upheaval which he intends to cover personally. The situation is so hot that normal modes of transportation are unavailable. The party may have to run a blockade or go through the enemy fleet just to get there.

If any of the party have significant journalistic experience, Baltu might accept that individual as an assistant. Otherwise the PCs are expected to sit tight and patiently wait for the Fasann's return . . . but patience is not a virtue adventurers are known for.

Behind Enemy Lines

The PCs are a combat unit assigned to a Fasanni commando squad working behind enemy lines. They're expected to stay out of the Fasanni's way except when combat is unavoidable, then come pull the specialists' fat out of the fire. In addition to the proximity of the enemy, some friction might develop between the two units.

Fasanni in the Campaign

Fasanni can be one of the most important races in a multi-racial campaign, smoothing over the rough spots when two cultures meet. Whenever a new sentient race is discovered, the Fasanni will soon be on the scene, eager to explore a new way of thinking and living.

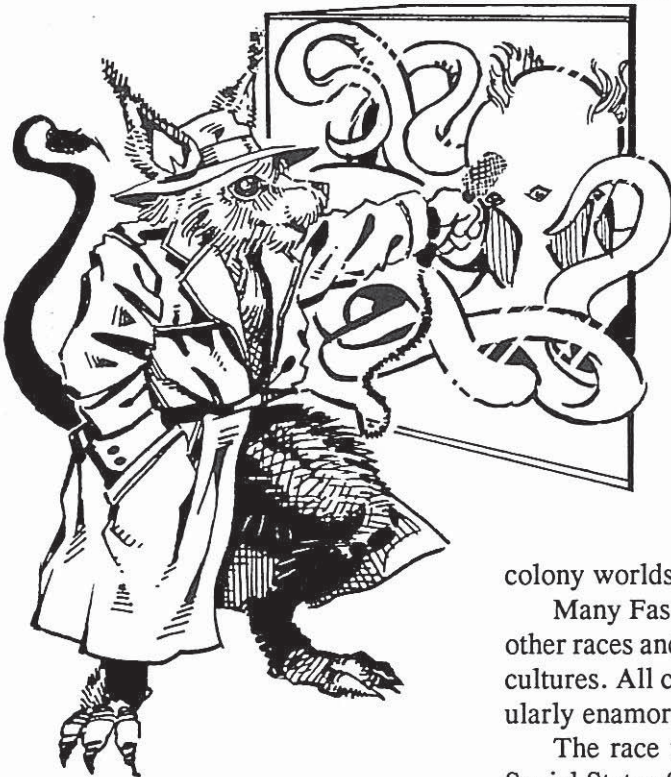
Fasanni will often be present in political environments, particularly in diplomatic service but also in the military and executive branches serving as translators or cultural consultants.

But perhaps the most frequently encountered Fasann will be the journalist. He may be an intrepid investigative reporter, an oily muckraker, a diligent correspondent, or a famous and affluent columnist, humor or travel writer.

The race will also be found in Scout crews, in business, in the entertainment world and in space.

All Fasanni, and particularly the reporters, make excellent sources of information. This is a race that always knows all the rumors, and frequently knows more facts than they're telling.

They make excellent Enemies, because they settle their feuds with words, not guns. A Fasann Enemy is an excellent chance for the GM to show the characters that not all damage comes out of HP, as their reputations are sullied, their allies start to desert them, and the employers stay away in droves, all due to a few subtle, and probably accurate, rumors quietly placed in the right places.



Fasanni

they're working on that account (although they seldom become ardent enough to reduce their fee).

Fasanni voices are not melodious and the race has little talent for music (though they make excellent lyricists). Likewise they show little talent in the visual arts, including film and its various descendants. They are natural actors, and often appear in dramatic productions under the direction of some other race.

The aboriginal Fasanni religion was a rudimentary totemism, and is now completely dead. Fasanni often adopt local religions with apparent zeal, though the more dogmatic faiths are often appalled by the Fasanni tendency to change religions when they change address.

Ecology

The Fasanni's ancestors were burrowing mammals. Xenologists speculate that their cultural adaptability began as the ability to mimic other races' defense behaviors (to discourage predators), and mating calls (to attract prey). They are true omnivores, able to eat almost any animal or vegetable protein, a trait that has proved most useful in adapting other cultures' dietary habits.

Contact with interstellar civilization ended a long evolutionary plateau for the Fasanni. Archaeological evidence suggests that the race had been sentient for 2,000,000 years or longer, and almost 1,000,000 years of poetry and literature exist, yet the race had barely reached TL3 when they were found by other beings. Contact provided a catalyst, and within a generation the race had become fully assimilated into galactic culture.

Fasanni mate to raise children. A couple will have one to three young, usually in rapid succession. The children stay with their parents for about 10 years. Fasanni do not attend elementary school, since those institutions primarily teach social skills and basic literacy, which a Fasann picks up instinctively. The children leave their parents to attend secondary school; they are generally finished with their education in 5-7 years and ready to enter the work force. After all the children are sent to school, the parental couple has no further formal obligation to each other, though they will often remain together for convenience or affection's sake. Male Fasanni sometimes mate twice, though this is rare unless the first union proved infertile. Fasanni also often adopt the mating customs of the culture they live among.

Fasanni begin to age at about 55.

Culture

Although lacking in the outward displays of habit and custom which normally define culture, the Fasanni retain communication among themselves, and a keen awareness of themselves as a unique race.

The aboriginal Fasanni society appears to have been, for all practical purposes, an anarchy. Wars were small and local, authority was earned and unofficial.

The Fasanni were discovered by a corporate-sponsored scout ship. Shortly thereafter, the race incorporated their world, and it remains a corporate bureaucracy, exploiting the planet's mineral and botanical resources. The corporation also includes several

colony worlds.

Many Fasanni, however, left their world out of an insatiable curiosity about other races and civilizations, and rapidly became absorbed in one or several alien cultures. All cultures are sources of fascination to Fasanni, but they seem particularly enamored with the chaotic variety and dynamism of humanity.

The race tends to favor the middle classes. Individuals seldom fall below Social Status 0 or rise above Social Status 3.

In addition to their mark on the journalistic and literary worlds, Fasanni have also become important to galactic industry as public relations specialists and troubleshooters, bridging the gaps between potentially hostile cultures and communities.

In space Fasanni are greatly favored as communications specialists, and no major scout expedition is considered complete without a Fasann xenologist along to evaluate new sentient and semi-sentient races.

The race is at great pains to keep lines of communication open between Fasanni enclaves in different cultures. Most of the race are fanatic correspondents with several dozen “pen pals” throughout the galaxy. These are usually about 50% members of other races, and 50% Fasanni on other worlds.

Fasanni almost never use their native language in the hearing of outsiders. Those few linguists of other races who’ve been able to both learn Fasann and overhear private conversations say anything said in that language is almost certainly uncomplimentary of the host culture. Friendly mockery of other beings’ ways is a favorite Fasanni pastime, though one those other beings seldom hear. The native language is quite beautiful and expressive, and its only other current widespread use is in poetry, which many Fasanni compose as a hobby.

Some xenologists have suggested that a “hidden” Fasanni culture exists — that the race’s writings contain a subtextual thread that only other Fasanni can perceive and understand. These scientists say this hidden meaning can occasionally be observed when a Fasann, in an unguarded moment, reacts to a literary work by a fellow Fasann in a seemingly inappropriate fashion. Laughing uproariously at a piece of serious editorialization, for instance, or pondering over a seemingly obvious burlesque. Fasanni xenologists are of no help confirming or denying this hidden culture — while the race is capable of rigorous analysis of other cultures, they refuse to undertake more than the most superficial examination of their own.

Politics

The Fasanni have become all but indispensable in galactic politics, particularly in the diplomatic branch. Their ability to comprehend both cultures in a conflict is a great asset, often allowing them to pinpoint solutions which those involved might miss. A Fasann is also able to instantly translate between any two languages he knows.

Often employed as translators, attachés and similar specialists, the Fasanni seldom reach ambassador rank. Their identification with the host culture is considered a bit too complete for these positions, where a certain amount of objective distance, as well as unswerving loyalty to one’s native culture, is considered necessary.

The race’s consummate skill at spying is both a blessing and a curse, as some Fasanni are not above being bought off by enemy powers. The race would not be so indispensable to the world of counter-espionage if they weren’t so good at espionage.

Fasanni make excellent soldiers. Their commando units are legendary for their ability to analyze the behavior patterns of the enemy and use them against him. Although Fasanni will not directly engage the enemy unless cornered, a small commando unit behind enemy lines can hide for weeks or months, gathering valuable intelligence and playing havoc with troop movements, construction, and lines of supply.

Although Fasanni specialists are often of officer rank, they tend to avoid command assignments unless the unit is all Fasanni — in which case “command” tends to be a meaningless concession to military tradition rather than actual leadership.

Character Example

Baltu Kane

Baltu is one of the galaxy’s best reporters and a tough, experienced adventurer. Beginning his career as a hotshot investigative reporter and war correspondent, Baltu went on to head up one of the Galaxy’s largest news syndicates. In recent years Baltu has quit his desk job and returned to his first love, covering all the roughest stories for the highest bidder, and writing an occasional book.

Baltu worships the American press of the ’30s and ’40s, which he considers the finest journalists ever. He often wears a dirty trench coat and a beat-up Fedora with his press credentials attached to the band. He lost an eye on one of his first stories and never had it replaced, preferring to wear a patch. He carries a replica of a 20th-century revolver, claiming that the psychological effect of such a loud, messy weapon is enough to get him out of most combat. His manner is gruff and abrupt, but he’s a deeply caring, committed individual.

Baltu is a highly experienced character suitable for use as a Patron. He has a point value of 200 points.

Attributes

ST 9, DX 11, IQ 15, HT 11.

Advantages

Alertness +3, Charisma +2, Cultural Adaptability, Empathy, Intuition, Luck, Reputation +4, Status 4, Strong Will +3, Wealth (Comfortable), Status 4.

Quirks

Dresses like culture he’s among; Loves 1930s and ’40s Earth; Likes boxing; Dislikes parties; Satirical wit; Says “Great Scott.”

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Journalistic Ethics), Color Blindness, One Eye, Overconfidence, Pacifist (Self-Defense Only), Sense of Duty (To Get Out the Story), Stubbornness. Baltu also has numerous Enemies all over the galaxy.

Skills

Administration-14, Bard-18, Computer Operation-14, Diplomacy-13, Economics-13, Fast-Talk-15, First Aid-14, Guns (Revolver)-11, History (20th-century Earth)-13, Interrogation-17, Language (Kaa)-15, Language (Kronin)-15, Law-13, Leadership-14, Lockpicking-14, Photography-16, Research-16, Savoir-Faire-15, Streetwise-16, Writing-20.

GERODIANS

The Gerodians are the most human in appearance of any of the extraterrestrial races. They are tall (as much as 8 feet), and very thin. Their limbs and features are long and thin. They have no eyebrows or lashes, but heavy eyelids. They have very high brows and sparse hair growing from the back of their heads. Their hands are four-fingered and each long finger has four joints. Their skin is pale with a slight blue or green tint. They prefer to wear simple, loose clothing and sandals.

Their home planet is .8-G, with an atmosphere of .85 Earth normal and an average temperature of 60°. It is a rather dry planet. However, records show that it was somewhat warmer (perhaps 70°) and wetter before the Gerodian's "Final War," and Gerodians are most comfortable at 70°.

Gerodians in the Campaign

If the Irari are the general scientists of the campaign, the Gerodians are the biologists, geneticists, cyberneticists and specialists in any other of the life sciences. The Engai know more, but the Gerodians are more accessible. More importantly, the Gerodians can be the healers and level-headed counselors of the Space campaign.

The race's specialized knowledge in medicine can be useful as a minor *deus ex machina*. A Gerodian physician might be able to cure an injury or disease that the party's physician or paramedic couldn't begin to cope with. Likewise, if the party is heading in a suicidal or morally reprehensible direction, a patient and wise Gerodian official or bureaucrat can be produced to explain the probable consequences of the party's actions (of course, that same individual might well counsel moderation and discretion when bold and audacious action are called for).

A Gerodian could be a fascinating enemy, particularly for a morally shady party. He would not take direct action against the character, but he would always be there, alert, watching, anticipating the adventurers' plans and, if they were anything short of completely morally upright and beneficial, informing concerned parties or the proper authorities, and generally throwing monkey wrenches into even the most delicate and meticulous schemes.

The wise, temperate Gerodians may seem a poor choice for inclusion in a mayhem-oriented campaign, but perhaps not. After all, such campaigns can always use plenty of noble, martyred victims.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Gerodians have +3 in IQ (30 points), but a -1 in ST (-10 points) and HT (-10 points). They have the advantage of Eidetic Memory (30 points). They have the racially learned skill Psychology at IQ (4 points), and the racial skill bonus +1 *Savoir Faire* (1 point). They have the disadvantages Code of Honor (-10) and Sense of Duty (-10), both explained below, and also the disadvantages Acceleration Weakness (-5 points) and G-Intolerance (-10 points). The advantage of Empathy is very common, and those who possess it usually become doctors.

It costs 10 points to be a Gerodian.

Names

Gerodian names consist of a personal name and a family name, in that order, separated by the word *Ina*, meaning "of the line of." The current Gerodian families were established almost 200,000 years ago, at the time of the race's last great war. Originally there were 7,500, named after the 7,500 male survivors of the holocaust. Just under 6,000 of these names survive to the present. Family names are traditionally passed down through the mother's side, unless the child is a clone of a male.

Both personal and family names are short (one to three syllables) and easy to pronounce — examples: *Alajo Ina-Dorn*, *Nir Ina-Labra*. Personal names can either be words in the Gerodian language, or traditional names with no particular meaning.

Psychology

The Gerodians are an ancient, noble and peaceful race. They had lived for millennia at peace with their world and one another when they were discovered by spacefaring civilization. They soon joined the galactic community, acting as healers of mind and body, and advocating peace and cooperation between cultures and individuals.

Although the Gerodian philosophy is admirable, the race is not by any means saintly. They are easily vexed by younger, more impetuous races and can still lose their tempers. Like any other race they can be lazy, opportunistic, domineering or even dishonest, but the majority of Gerodians adhere to the race's principles.

These principles involve a respect for life and free will, and a resolution to help others without interfering with or controlling their personal growth and destiny. A Gerodian will help anyone in need, to the best of his ability, regard-

less of the individual's intentions, past actions, or motivations. They will offer advice only if asked, or if under professional obligation to do so. They will refuse all but the most casual or temporary authority over others.

Gerodians have a profound respect for life, and many make a personal decision to renounce violence or killing. This is not, however, a universal belief. Those who do believe that violence is sometimes necessary will use it only in the most extreme circumstances. A Gerodian proverb says, "Violence is like fire . . . a useful tool that too easily becomes a devouring monster. Both must be used carefully, and in the proper place." Another says, "When a body grows a cancer, the cancer must be removed. How much better though, when, through prudent and vigilant living, the cancer never begins to grow at all."

The race feels that it is their duty to teach their ways to the rest of the galaxy. In a real sense they are a race of missionaries, but they do not preach. Their message is taught entirely through the example of their lives.

They mate once and for life. However, the race is solitary by nature; couples do not live together, although they communicate frequently and visit when they live close together. Most unions produce one to three children. Cloning is also an established custom, although it is considered rather vain for an individual to clone himself more than once.

Social Status is informal and based on the person's accomplishments. The race respects its elders, and an honorable Gerodian will generally accrue status with his fellows as he ages. Gerodian criminals, while rare, do exist. Often they are activists or "Robin Hood" types, opposing a government or organization that they consider damaging to the health of innocents or the environment. Such individuals, when caught, bear their punishments stoically. Other Gerodians, while they might respect the crusader, will seldom interfere with his fate.

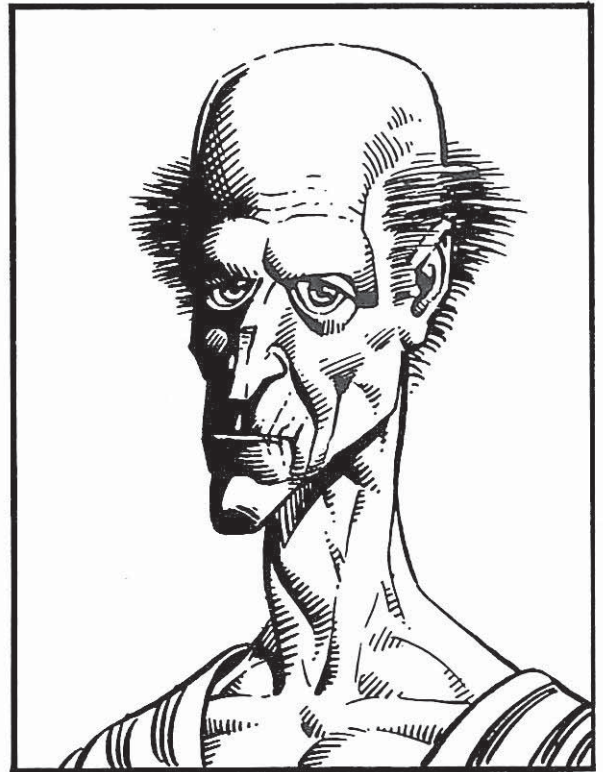
Gerodian art is considered rather austere by most other races, particularly their poetry, which almost all non-Gerodians find utterly unreadable. Their painting and sculpture often has a certain dignified beauty about it. Their literature (typically essays or philosophical novels) ranges from the lovely to the unendurably pedantic.

The Gerodians are deists, believing that a supreme being exists, but is unknowable in this life. Some believe in a sort of reincarnation, although they do not believe that a person will be reborn in this universe. Rather they believe that a soul must pass through multiple, radically different realities before it can know the supreme being.

Ecology

Like the humans they closely resemble, the Gerodians' ancestors were plain- and forest-dwelling anthropoids. The Gerodian homeworld has only about $\frac{2}{3}$ Earth's gravity, accounting for their elongated skeletal structure.

The race evolved intelligence almost two million years ago, and over a half-million years of recorded history exist. Early Gerodian civilization was much like humanity, with a good deal of balkanization, cultural divergence and war. The direction of Gerodian history changed radically about 200,000 years ago, however, when the race suffered a massive war that all but wiped it out. The only survivors were a survivalist enclave of conscientious objectors, numbering about 15,000 individuals, who built a sealed shelter deep beneath the planet's highest mountain range and remained there for several years, until the forces on the surface had wiped each other out.



Gerodian Player Characters

Every party can use a healer, and Gerodians are tailor-made for that slot. They also fit in well in scientific campaigns (where they can balance the impulsiveness and general instability of any Irari which happen to be with the party). In a scout campaign they can serve as biologists, botanists, or xenologists.

The Gerodians are not pacifists, and a Gerodian adviser can be a profitable addition to a military campaign. They will not be out on the front lines, but they will be there to provide necessary support and backup. A Gerodian might even be part of a mercenary company, teaching the troops Gerodian ways and encouraging the brass to accept only ethical missions for good causes. They work very well in the Patrol, where the welfare of others is the first priority and violence is to be avoided whenever possible.

The moderate point cost for this race gives it a lot of versatility. Not all Gerodians have to be doctors or even scientists. A Gerodian can be a diplomat, merchant, journalist or almost anything. The player should be encouraged to design his PC creatively, without losing sight of the race's unique goals and nature.

As with many of the more intelligent, less physical alien races, the Gerodian character needs an experienced, mature player to do it justice. This race is most fun for players who like to play a responsible, important character without controlling the party. Gerodians look for a violent solution last, not first, and so should players with Gerodian PCs.

Gerodian Adventure Seeds

Escort

An important politician or industrialist has been the victim of an assassin! By all rights the victim should be dead, but fast work on the part of paramedics managed to get him into cryogenic suspension before his life slipped away. Although he seems to be beyond the reach of even the most advanced modern techniques, there is one eminent Gerodian surgeon/toxicologist who just may be able to perform the operation/concoct the antidote that will save the victim. The good doctor, however, has retired to the Gerodian homeworld. Time is of the essence — the victim *must* recover in time to address the upcoming galactic conference. The PC's are assigned to pick up the Doctor and get him to the victim quietly and quickly. Of course, whoever attempted the assassination in the first place is interested in keeping the doctor from his patient — with extreme prejudice!

Strikebreakers

A government or corporation is exploiting the workers and destroying the ecology of a formerly lovely and peaceful planet which possesses urgently needed resources. A small group of Gerodians have moved in and organized a general strike among the workers to force the bosses into line. The players are hired to infiltrate the union and undermine the strike effort.

The Gerodian organizers are determined that the resistance be non-violent, leaving the PCs with the moral dilemma of being ordered to use force against unarmed, passively resisting opponents (of course, certain types of players find this sort of situation entertaining).

Adventurers with a conscience may well decide to shift their allegiance to the strikers. If so, they will face a choice between adopting the Gerodians' non-violent strategy, or striking out on their own and taking on the bosses physically. The first choice puts the party in a great deal of danger with little chance of defending themselves. The second is also very dangerous, and further risks alienating both sides of the struggle.



These survivors were an apolitical faction that advocated an early form of the Gerodian principles. Each of about 7,500 couples founded a family, and almost 6,000 of those families continue to this day. The survivors began rebuilding their world, and by the time the race was discovered by modern starfarers the planet was lush and pastoral.

It may seem odd that a race with a technological history as long as the Gerodians never went into space, but they are poorly designed for space travel. Although such modern conveniences as artificial gravity and acceleration baths allow the race to visit other worlds, the Gerodians feel they never made space on their own because they could not survive the rigors of primitive interplanetary exploration.

Some historians, however, claim that there is evidence that the pre-cataclysmic Gerodians were spacefarers, and some have even suggested a genetic link between the race and the humans they resemble (although it seems less likely that Earth is a Gerodian colony than that both races are descended from the Engai).

Although the original Gerodians were omnivores, millennia of vegetarianism has deprived the race of its ability to get nourishment from animal protein. Apart from this there appears to have been little evolutionary change in several hundred thousand years.

Strangely, the race seems to lack (or to have lost) the ability to produce psychics. No Gerodian sensitives are known or recorded.

Culture

The indigenous Gerodian culture is a true anarchy. Each individual determines his own path, keeping the welfare of his neighbors in mind. When a community decision is called for, a committee is formed of volunteers. The citizenry is informed of the committee's membership and agrees to abide by its decisions. If a person objects to any individual on an ad-hoc committee, he is invited to join the committee himself and shoulder his share of the responsibility, or be silent.

A child is raised by his mother for the first 7 or 8 years of his life, then lives with his father for a like amount of time. When he leaves his parents the young

Gerodian begins his “formal” education. This is initially a series of educational experiences . . . he might apprentice himself to a craftsman for two years, then study for six months under a noted philosopher, then spend a year working on a public-works project. Eventually he will decide what his life’s work will be and begin to specialize. Normally this specialized study consists of intensive work under an elder established in the chosen specialty. Often the individual’s education ends with a stay at an offworld institution of higher learning, under the mentor’s sponsorship.

Gerodians are best known in the galaxy for their contributions to the medical sciences, particularly genetics and psychology.

Their geneticists operate according to a strict code of ethics. They will use their art to eliminate radical, crippling genetic defects, but they will not alter minor traits for “cosmetic” reasons. Persons wanting “designer” offspring need not bother to go to the Gerodians. However, their contributions to the eugenic development of many races is considerable.

Psychologists are often therapists or counselors. Their techniques resemble terrestrial psychoanalysis, though their theories are not at all Freudian. Gerodian psychiatric techniques have been proven beneficial to many races.

They are also often students of other sciences, both hard and social. The race’s reputation is particularly high in the field of cybernetics, where they have put their psychological theories to good use in the development of artificial intelligence and their medical skills in bionic research.

Politics

The Gerodians are a valuable and respected part of galactic society, however they will not accept political power or authority over others. They are not anarchist agitators — they accept that most races have a need for social control — but they hold up their own way as an ideal to aspire to.

They will often serve as diplomats, usually as negotiators, observers or consultants rather than ambassadors or administrators. They will sometimes sit on legislative bodies, but make it clear that they do not speak for any member of their race other than themselves. They make excellent, impartial judges, and their lawyers are known for integrity.

Gerodians will serve in the military, most often as doctors and psychologists, but also as military lawyers. They are almost always officers, but will not accept command. They will sometimes accept administrative responsibility, running a hospital or the base’s legal office. They make excellent police officers, often serving as investigators, counselors or scientists.

On other worlds Gerodians live among the indigenous population, almost always in single quarters. They do not congregate into communities or neighborhoods, but will often socialize when living among other races. Their are no all-Gerodian colonies, but they frequently join other race’s colonies.

The Gerodian homeworld is open to other races, and, despite some difficulties with sentients who don’t understand the Gerodian way of life, the race is determined that it remain so. The necessity of keeping guests in line has resulted in the creation of the only official, uniformed Gerodian social organization: a bureau of tourism. Members of this all-volunteer organization can be recognized by their white trousers and light blue tunics. Many members of the bureau are Gerodian youth pursuing their education. This organization acts as a combination tour guide, traveller’s aid society and unarmed constabulary. The bureau has the authority to deport any non-Gerodian for any act of violence, actual or threatened, against life or property.

Major crime, even among visitors, is very rare. When it occurs it is often efficiently handled by ad-hoc vigilance committees. Occasionally the Gerodians have asked the Patrol to step in and help with a major crisis.

Character Example

Alajo Ina-Dorn

Alajo is a fairly typical young Gerodian doctor, just out of med school and looking to begin his career. He thinks he might like to be a ship’s doctor for a commercial freighter or perhaps a passenger liner. On the other hand, maybe he should spend a couple years on a colony world first. Then again, there’s always the Scouts . . .

Alajo is fairly quiet and low-key (though he does sometimes fly off the handle under pressure, a trait that alarms him as much as it bothers his co-workers) and totally devoted to his career. He has few close friends and tends to neglect his personal appearance.

In an effort to control his temper, Alajo has taken to practicing meditation for several minutes every day.

Alajo is a 100-point character.

Attributes

ST 9, DX 11, IQ 14, HT 10.

Advantages

Ambidextrous, Eidetic Memory, Empathy.

Quirks

Fond of caramels — usually carries a few around; Meditates at least a half hour every day; Likes to relax by watching dumb quiz shows; Ardent chess player; Shoddy dresser.

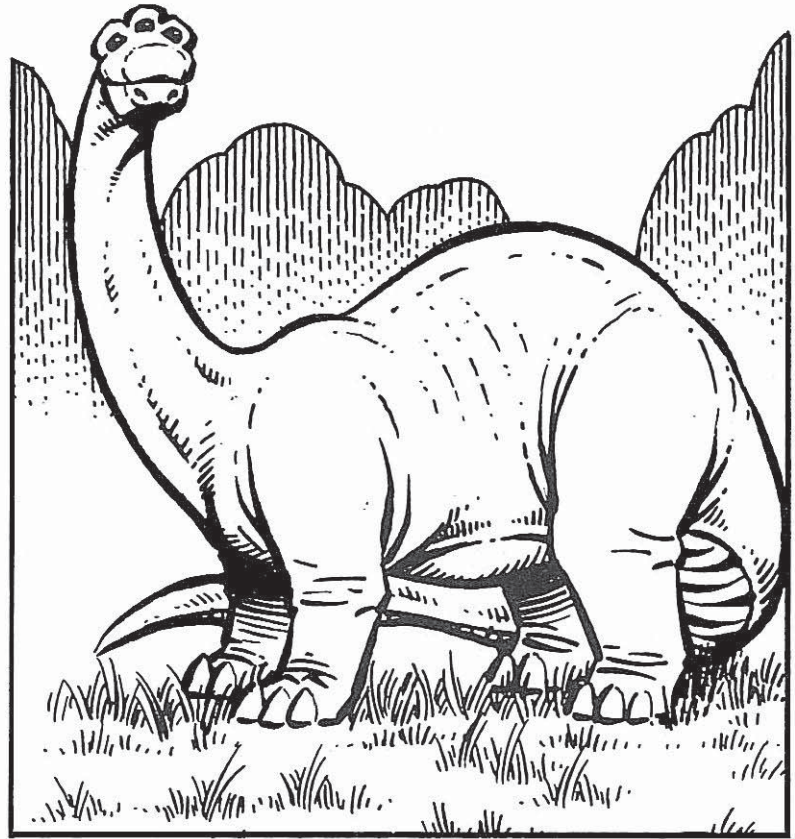
Disadvantages

Acceleration Weakness, Bad Temper, Code of Honor, G-Intolerance, Pacifism — Self Defense Only, Sense of Duty, Truthfulness.

Skills

Administration-15, Beam Weapons-12, Computer Operation-16, History-16, Hypnotism-16, Judo-14, Physician-21, Pottery-15, Psychology-16, Savoir-Faire-16.

BANDUCH



Banduch in the Campaign

The Banduch are a colorful and powerful race that can be an entertaining addition to the campaign. Any time the GM feels that things are too easy for the party, the addition of a small psychic dinosaur can add spice to the campaign. By the same token, any Banduch can make a useful friend or Ally for the PCs.

The important thing to remember about the Banduch is that they start as 100-point characters and go up from there. They can go a *long* way up from there. The average citizen of the Banduch homeworld will have 100 to 150 points, most offworld freelance psychics will fall into the 200- to 500-point range, and if the GM is intrigued by the idea of Banduch megaminds he can throw in a 1,000- or 1,200-point NPC to make things really get hopping. If the GM has ideas for unique or enhanced psychic powers, the Banduch are a good place to try them out.

Banduch should not be found on every street corner. This race should be used deliberately and sparingly, with a definite purpose in mind. Meeting a Banduch for the first time should be an event that stands out in any PC's memories for ever — something on the level of lunch with the team that won the Super Bowl, or being questioned by the CIA.

Of course, the bigger the reputation, the more exaggeration. The cagey GM could build up the Banduch as gigantic psychic juggernauts, huge dinosaurs who smash ships with a flicker of thought. Imagine the PCs' surprise when these dread beings actually turn out to be retiring pacifists about the size of a milk cow. . .

Banduch are large quadrupedal herbivores. Their bodies are about the size of a cow's (3 hexes) and they resemble a small brontosaurus, with a long neck, small head, four short, sturdy legs and a long tail. A large hump at the base of the neck is the creature's braincase. Their skin is soft with a texture like grainy leather, and ranges in color from pale gray to medium brown.

The Banduch world is a 1.4-G greenhouse planet, with an average temperature of 90° (Banduch are uncomfortable below 60°, and may wear blankets). Its atmospheric pressure is 1.2 times Earth normal.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Banduch have ST +2 (20 points) and Increased ST (30 points), HT +1 (10 points), and DX -3 (30 points). They have the advantages Amphibious (20 points), Animal Empathy (5 points), Empathy (15 points), Extra Limb — Striker, accuracy -2 (Tail) (3 points), 4 Legs (5 points), Luck (15 points), Nictating Membrane (15 points), Telekinesis power 8 (40 points), and Telepathy power 10 (50 points). They have the racially learned skills Detect Lie, Psychokinesis, Telereceive, and Telesend, all at IQ level (4 points each). Their disadvantages are Acrophobia (Mild) (-10 points), Increased Life Support×2 (-20 points), Lazy (-10 points), No Fine Manipulators (-30 points), Non-Violence (Total) (-30 points), Shyness (Mild) (-5 points), Sleepy (half the time) (-10 points) and Truthfulness (-5 points).

It costs 94 points to be a Banduch.

Names

Banduch (singular: Banduch), being mute, don't have names. They identify

themselves with a momentary, non-verbal psionic transmission that conveys the essence of their personality. However, they recognize the psychological necessity of names to verbal races, and they will adopt nicknames for use among those races. These nicknames are sometimes descriptive (Speedy, Sleepy, Fats), but are usually simply random common names (Norman, Bob, Ralph). Their “official” names are usually written, for instance, “Norman of the Banduch.”

The race, by the way, is named for the human who discovered them. Most racial names translate to “men,” “us” or “the people,” but can still be used because of the different languages involved. The Banduch racial designator, like their personal names, is a non-verbal psionic pattern.

Psychology

The Banduch are peaceful, mute, swamp-dwelling vegetarians. They “toil not, neither do they spin.” There are no Banduch buildings, clothing, tools or artifacts. In fact, there is little outward evidence that Banduch are sentient at all.

The Banduch would be dismissed as hopeless backwoodsmen, and left alone in their primitive paradise, were it not for one thing . . . they are the galaxy’s most powerful naturally psionic race. All Banduch are strong Telepaths, almost all are powerful Psychokinetics, ESP is common, and Teleportation and healing are not rare.

And the Banduch do have an ancient and advanced civilization — it’s just not physical. It exists in the minds of the race. The Banduch have a language — the most advanced and efficient system of telepathic symbology known, which countless sensitives of all races have learned for the speed and exactitude it lends to their communication. They have a culture — countless myths, legends and stories passed down from generation to generation by an eidetic-memory-endowed “troubadour” class. They even have art — some have said that it’s the ultimate aesthetic experience to perceive the elaborate psychic mandalas of concepts, sensations and emotions which serve the Banduch for poetry, song and painting.

Although the Banduch civilization is mostly mental, that does not mean that they don’t control their outward environment. Although a Banduch swamp just looks like a swamp to the human eye, a naturalist can tell that it’s actually a controlled, comfortable environment. There are no predators and no pests. The foliage is lush and healthy, food is plentiful, and even the weather usually stays within a reasonable band of comfort. For the Banduch, it’s paradise. This is all accomplished through the collective psychokinetic energy of the Banduch community.

On a physical level Banduch life is incredibly boring. They sleep about half the time and graze the entire time they’re awake (even among other races Banduch usually wear “feed bags” which allow them to nibble regularly). Nonetheless the whole time they’re awake they’re communicating, observing, philosophizing, creating, and improving their environment.

Social status is meaningless among the Banduch, though older, wiser individuals are respected. Likewise artistic talent, eloquence, and psychic skill are recognized by the rest of the community. Raw psychic power is respected, but very powerful individuals are viewed with some alarm until they have the age and experience to fully control their power.

Banduch mate casually, without commitment, during an annual (approximately once every two Earth years) mating season that lasts about a month. Young are born the next (Banduch) year, and raised by the entire community.

Following ancient instincts, Banduch migrate about every six years. Males migrate in the direction of the planet’s rotation, females and young in the opposite direction (it is possible on the Banduch homeworld to circumnavigate the globe by land). This constant reshuffling of communities helps keep the gene

Banduch Adventure Seeds

Escort

A hijacked freighter has been located, or at least what’s left of it has. Roy, the freelance Banduch psychometrician (below), has been hired to investigate the hulk and see if he can read anything about the hijackers. The party is hired to get Roy to the wreck and back safely. Of course, the unknown hijackers may be lurking on the nearest planetoid, and Roy’s made a few enemies in his years of criminal investigation. . .

A Rescue

The party is in space when they receive the loudest, most compelling psychic distress call any of them have ever heard or imagined.

Not long ago or far away, a smuggler ship was hired to procure a Banduch (very likely by the Markann). The smugglers landed on the Banduch homeworld and gassed the first native who happened along.

Unfortunately the individual they snatched happened to be one of the rare Banduch megaminds. This is an elderly, experienced individual with about 1,000 points in psionic power and a few hundred more in skills and advantages.

The situation is currently a stalemate. The Banduch’s cell is tough enough that he can’t psychokinetically bludgeon his way out, but that didn’t stop him from destroying the ship’s drive and communicator. The Markann provided the crew with powerful mechanical psionic shields, so the Banduch can’t take over their minds, and he won’t physically harm them by breaching the hull or crushing them.

The Banduch wants the PCs to come and get him out. If they succeed they’ll have an immensely powerful friend. Anyway, the psionic command is so powerful they can’t refuse.

Really devilish GMs can have the Banduch impose his own morality on the PCs, psionically preventing them from physically harming any of the smugglers.

Trailblazers

The Banduch are beginning to settle their first racial colony. The world is a jungle, but it’s not as *tame* as the Banduchs’ own world. In fact, for small, non-psionic people, it’s fairly dangerous. The PCs are among several groups hired to explore and map promising migratory routes (or perhaps establish a ferry system over an unavoidable body of water). The native wildlife leaves the Banduch herds alone, but the PCs are on their own (although a couple of younger, more adventurous Banduch might tag along).

Character Example

Roy of the Banduch

Roy is a very successful freelance Banduch. By trade he's a psychometrician — he reads places and objects to find information about their history. He's also skilled in clairvoyance and clairaudience, and has some talent for precognition. His Telepathic and Psychokinetic skills are normal for the race.

He's a bit of a character. Fat and middle-aged, he customarily wears a silly-looking necktie and a pair of glasses. The neckties are pure affectation, but the glasses serve a purpose . . . they magnify things about 4×, making it possible for Roy to spot and read tiny details he might otherwise miss.

Though not outgoing, he likes new people, and enjoys socializing. After he warms to a person, he displays a very human-like sense of humor, telling jokes and extravagant tall tales starring himself, and even flirting with females.

Roy's services are in demand from government, industry, law enforcement agencies and wealthy individuals. He spends as much time off the Banduch world as on.

Roy is a 250-point character suitable for use as an NPC or Patron.

Stats

ST 22, DX 7, IQ 13, HT 10

Advantages

Amphibious, Animal Empathy, Empathy, Extra Limb — Striker, ESP power 30, 4 Legs, Luck, Nictating Membrane, Reputation +1, Status 3, Telekinesis power 10, Telepathy power 10, Wealth (wealthy).

Quirks

Fond of expensive chocolate/liqueur cordials; Enjoys stand-up comedians; Wears necktie; Lies entertainingly about own career; Likes to socialize.

Disadvantages

Absent-Mindedness, Acrophobia (Mild), Increased Life Support×2, Lazy, No Fine Manipulators, Overweight, Pacifist (Total), Shyness, Stubbornness, Sleepy, Truthfulness. Roy has several Enemies among those he's helped send to justice.

Skills

Carousing-10, Clairaudience-15, Clairvoyance-15, Detect Lies-13, Precognition-11, Psychometry-18, Telekinesis-13, Telepathy-13, Writing-13.

pool fresh. Female young often stay with their mothers their entire life; males stay until they reach physical maturity (at about age 14) and reverse the direction of their migration.

The Banduch cannot lie and have almost no material needs, so it's not surprising they are never criminals. In isolated circumstances a Banduch has allied with other sentients in an activist cause, or even aided in a non-violent revolution, but such activism usually ill-suits the Banduch's phlegmatic personalities.

They have no formal religion, but appear to be pantheists. They frustrate dogmatically religious beings by their habit of agreeing with almost any theological theory put to them.

Ecology

The Banduch evolved towards the end of their planet's equivalent of the Cretaceous era, and were so marvelously suited to survival that they survived their larger, stupider brother reptiles. Now their planet is well into the age of mammals — fortunately, the planet is not given to ice ages. Scholarly opinion varies widely about how long ago the Banduch evolved. Theories range from as little as three million years ago to a long as 10 million years! At any rate, it is obvious that the Banduch are one of the galaxy's oldest sentient races. The race exists in a rather timeless continuum, never having needed to keep exact chronicles of their history. Their "literature," or remembered cultural heritage, goes back to the birth of Banduch sentience.

The Banduch have been known to galactic culture for about 300 years; however the first team to contact the race contained no telepathic sensitives, and the race's intelligence was seriously underestimated. Since their homeworld contains no remarkable natural resources, there was no further contact for almost a century. At that time the Banduch culture was finally fully perceived, and the race was welcomed into galactic society.

At first, when the Banduch seemed completely acquainted with off-planet cultures, it was assumed that they were reading the contact team's mind for the information (as indeed they were). Gradually, however, the Banduch revealed knowledge of certain things which *nobody* on the contact team knew. Investigation revealed that the Banduch had been aware of interstellar civilization for centuries — long before first contact, and had gathered information via seemingly impossibly long-range Telepathy, Clairvoyance, and Astral Projection. There is even some evidence that isolated Banduch have *physically* visited other worlds without recourse to technology — an almost unimaginably powerful feat of Autoteleportation.

Banduch are strict vegetarians. They must graze both land vegetation and shallow water plants to stay healthy; consequently their paths of migration follow major rivers, and generally end in swamps.

Banduch begin to age at about 55.

Culture

There is no government, and little social structure among the Banduch. After each migration they form into "herds" of 12 to 200 individuals, and live as a community until the next migration. There is absolutely no individual leadership except that provided by the linked minds of the community; while individuals have their own distinct personalities, none of them is in any way the "boss" or even "leader."

There are no Banduch schools. Young learn from the ambient thought of the community. The delicate Banduch minds mature more slowly than their bodies, and an individual's psychic powers are not fully realized until about age 25. At

that time the new adult formulates a “name” for himself and shares it with the community. A few Banduch have gone offworld to study in specialized fields, but it is not common.

Banduch appear to have never warred among themselves. They will not physically harm a fellow sentient for any reason. However, if threatened, they will use any special psionic skills that may be useful. Individuals with no defensive psychic powers are able to mentally call for help at a “volume” that it’s impossible to misunderstand or ignore. Since they are social beings that generally gather in herds, help is usually forthcoming. When threatened Banduch have been known to put the enemy to Sleep, stave him off with a PK Shield, Teleport him to another location, or knock him unconscious with a Mental Blow. In rare and very extreme cases the enemy has been completely Mindwiped back to infancy.

Although the military would love to recruit such powerful creatures, even as non-combatants, the Banduch absolutely refuse to have any but the most casual and temporary contact with any military or paramilitary organization.

Banduch are curious about other intelligences, but generally prefer to send out a few observers and mentally share their observations, rather than emigrate or visit in great numbers. At any time more than 99.99% of the galaxy’s Banduch remain on the homeworld, and those that do leave generally don’t stay away for more than a few years.

Politics

As might be expected, the Banduch stay aloof from galactic politics. Some have been known to accept brief terms on legislative or advisory bodies, but that is the limit of their activity.

Other than that, the race is best known as freelance, professional psychics. Many of the more powerful Banduch will sell their services to ethical, generous bidders, provided the job is not too strenuous and the time involved is minimal.

Banduch psychics are expensive. The pay itself is not exorbitant, but the fact that the employer must also pay travel fees (usually first-class) between the job site and the Banduch homeworld makes Banduch help more of a luxury.

Banduch professional psychics invariably claim that their (sometimes awe-inspiring) proficiency is dwarfed by other living Banduch who do not leave the home planet. Many dismiss these claims as boasting, but there is evidence (though circumstantial and vague) that such superminds do exist.

Banduch are seldom used for secret or highly sensitive work because of the popular belief that what one Banduch learns, every Banduch soon knows automatically. This is a misconception. It’s true that the Banduch cannot lie convincingly, and that new knowledge is customarily shared with the rest of the race, but Banduch can keep a secret. In fact, a secret is far safer with a Banduch than with most other races, for the race is capable of hiding it from other sensitives, and they can even make themselves forget a fact, if necessary.

There is a spaceport on the Banduch homeworld where several thousand non-Banduch live. Many of the permanent residents make their living locating powerful native psychics and brokering their services.

The Banduch are currently considering a plan to colonize a second planet, provided a comfortable world that won’t require extensive alteration can be found.

Banduch as Player Characters

It is difficult to play a Banduch in a 100-point campaign, but not impossible. The PC will find it difficult to significantly increase his stats, and any additional major advantages will be out of reach, but if the character takes the full 45 points of quirks and disadvantages he should be able to afford enough skills to personalize the character and make him useful to the party.

The GM is encouraged to allow players to trade off psionic points. Psychokinesis can easily be bought down to increase Telepathy or give a few points in ESP or Teleportation. However, most Banduch should keep at least three or four levels of Psychokinetic power to allow them to turn doorknobs and push buttons (actually, a Banduch could probably turn a doorknob with his mouth and push a button with his nose, if there aren’t too many other buttons around).

Of course, in campaigns of 200 points or more, the Banduch really comes into its own as a player character race. Their bizarre appearance and unique racial character make them excellent choices for cinematic campaigns.

Of course, as pacifists the Banduch are not appropriate choices for inclusion in a military or mercenary campaign. However they can be valuable additions to a scout, mercantile, or scientific campaign. Even in an espionage-oriented campaign the Banduch have their uses — their bodies are unwieldy, but their minds can sneak into places nobody else could get to.



TAMILE

The Tamile resemble even more amorphous versions of the terrestrial garden slug. They're 2 to 3 feet long with four stalked eyes. They can extrude pseudopods which they can use as fine manipulators. Their surface is smooth and glistening and brightly colored — green, blue, purple and red Tamile are known. A few Tamile are delicately patterned in different shades or even two colors. This race cannot wear clothes or most accessories.

Their planet is almost, but not quite, a greenhouse, with an temperature of 80° and a high-oxygen atmospheric pressure of 1.1. The gravity is .95 G.

Tamile in the Campaign

Tamile are worthwhile additions, if for no other reason than for local color. They are not troublesome, violent, argumentative or in any way dangerous. On the other hand, a quartet of singing slugs can add a distinctly bizarre air to a posh party, and it's nice to know what kind of race produced that strange and expensive art on the Patron's wall.

When the Tamile themselves are encountered, the overall impression should be of harmless innocence. The PCs should feel protective of NPC Tamile. Of course, they're an intelligent and sociable race and can also be charming, funny, and acute observers.

Tamile might also be encountered as retail store clerks, receptionists, low-level officials, and in similar innocuous positions. Most NPC Tamile are 25- to 50-point characters.

Tamile as Player Characters

The Tamile are not designed to serve as player characters. They're not physically tough, not particularly resourceful, and generally no good in a crisis. Of course, if the player thinks he can live with these drawbacks, there's no reason why he shouldn't play a Tamile; dealing with the physical disadvantages of the Tamile form can be an interesting challenge.

Tamile PCs will probably tend toward the light technical professions — computer operator or ship's communications officer.

Advantages and Disadvantages

The Tamile have ST -4 (-30 points), DX -2 (-15 points), and HP -4 (-20 points). They have the advantages Charisma (5 points), Decreased Life Support (10 points), Manual Dexterity +5 (50 points), Microscopic Vision (2 levels) 4× (8 points), Musical Ability +3 (3 points), Secret Communication (20 points), Sensitive Touch (15 points), and Stretching (15 points). Tamile racially learned skills are Artist at IQ (4 points), Sculpting at DX +1 (Manual Dexterity is also taken into account) (4 points), Singing at HT (Musical Ability is taken into account) (1 point) and Ventriloquism at IQ (4 points). Disadvantages are Code of Honor (-5 points), Combat Paralysis (-15 points), Invertebrate (-20 points), Primitive, -2 TLs (-10 points), Short Lifespan (-25 points) and Shyness (Mild) (-5 points).

It costs -6 points to play a Tamile.

Names

The Tamile (singular, Tamile) language is sung, not spoken. It is tonal and rhythmic, and does not have words; rather it has beats and pitches. It can be learned by non-Tamile, but it cannot be written (except in musical notation). A Tamile name is a short trill or obbligato. It is not difficult for individuals of other races with at least minimal musical talent to remember and sing Tamile names, and even common phrases, but because of the difficulty of writing Tamile names and incorporating them into regular speech (it is difficult for humans to break into song in mid-sentence), Tamile often adopt human use names. Many Tamile never travel among other races, and never need to adopt a spoken name. When use names are chosen, Tamile favor plants (particularly flowers) and artists — Pine, Rose, Poppy, Wyeth, Tennyson.

Tamile individuals will design an individual mark or sigil which they will use to sign letters and documents. Census records and other official documents also record the individual's true name in standard 10-line musical notation. Most names are one or two bars long in 7/4 time.

Psychology

The Tamile are an unassuming race devoted to aesthetic pursuits. The delicate, colorful and beautiful sculpture and painting of the Tamile is among the galaxy's most highly respected decorative art. The race's artistic pursuits range from clothing and interior design to the most highly respected fine artists.

Aboriginal Tamile art consists of the sculpting of soft clays which then are allowed to dry naturally, the weaving of supple twigs and vines, often without picking the plant, and painting with natural pigments on stones and bark. Native Tamile art is delicate and fragile in the extreme, making authentic examples rare

and very valuable offworld. Since joining galactic culture the race has mastered many other artistic media. Today Tamile even create in marble, sheet metal, and similar unyielding media. Although the actual work must be done by assistants of other races, the Tamile artist designs the work and oversees it minutely.

Less respected but equally popular are Tamile vocal musicians. The race's lovely improvised harmonies are pleasing and relaxing to most of the galaxy's sentient races. Tamile vocal music sounds more like an organ or string ensemble than human singing. They seldom sing alone (though a few notable soloists exist) preferring to harmonize in ensembles of three to seven individuals. Tamile vocalization is popular both as recorded and live entertainment. It's generally considered better suited for use as background music than concert performance.

On the whole, the Tamile are well thought of. Among most races, appreciation for their artistic abilities cancels the disdain for their primitive status. Some humans call them "Tamales," after a food item they somewhat resemble, but it is usually not a derogatory term. Many humans seem to think that's really their name . . .

The Tamile code or guiding principle is simple, but the members of the race are serious about it. It can be expressed; harm no one, and leave the universe a more beautiful place than it was when you entered it.

Although non-aggressive, the Tamile will resist if being threatened or taken advantage of. They are not well suited to violent situations — a racial instinct compels them to curl up into a ball and freeze when threatened. However, they will argue for their rights, and they do not hesitate to avail themselves of the protection of races better suited to violence. They have even been known to meet a known violent enemy with a well-planned and highly effective ambush.

Tamile crime is extremely rare, because the race is naturally orderly and unassuming, and also because they are slower and weaker than most other races and know it. Tamile are often involved in activism, but seldom to the point of civil disobedience and never to the point of violence. Tamile deal with criminals among their own kind through the practice of *shunning*. The convicted individual is allowed to live among the community and partake freely of the necessities of life, but he is completely ignored by the other Tamile. He is not spoken to, looked at, or referred to at any time. Shunning can go on for a day or a lifetime, depending on the seriousness of the offense.

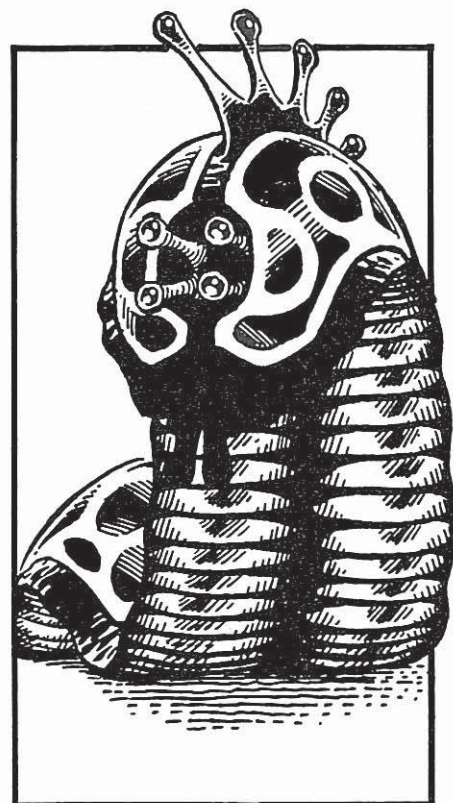
The Tamile are an intensely religious and mystical race. They believe in a benign god who created an imperfect universe so that intelligent beings could have the privilege of beautifying it. They believe that entropy is the ultimate gift of the supreme being, because it ensures that universal beautification will never be completed, leaving intelligence without a purpose. Their word for "sin" can also mean "uglification." Sin occurs when a sentient being destroys something beautiful — be it a work of art, a natural phenomenon, a positive emotion or a living soul.

They do not seem to have the concept of an afterlife, although some seem to believe in perpetual reincarnation.

The Tamile are not strident about their beliefs and they do not proselytize. However, belief seems to be effectively universal, and Tamile are not open to other races' doctrines.

Ecology

The Tamile homeworld is a lovely, young forest world. The Tamile are far and away the highest form of life — no other native animals have evolved even rudimentary intelligence. The Tamile have no predators. They are omnivorous, but their digestive systems are extremely simple and they are unable to process any animal or vegetable protein more highly evolved or complex than that of their homeworld.



Tamile Adventure Seeds

Escort

The famous Tamile portraitist Poppy (see p. 39) is traveling to a major world where one of the galaxy's leading galleries is opening a show of her work. The PCs are hired to escort and protect her. The artist is small, soft, and nervous. Her fans are boisterous, large and insistent. The PCs are supposed to keep contact between them civilized. Add to this the fact that Poppy is a remarkably neurotic, generally difficult individual.

In addition to over-affectionate fans, the PCs can expect to deal with: nosy, flash-popping paparazzi; rude, pushy promoters who want Poppy to endorse some product or make a personal appearance; and the officious curator who expects the guest of honor to be everywhere and meet everybody.

Missing Victim

A different but equally well known Tamile has been kidnapped, either for ransom or because the kidnappers want him to produce art they can sell in less civilized parts. The kidnappers' lair has been located, and rather than involve the Patrol and make everything public and complicated, the PCs are hired to go in fast and bring the artist out in one piece.

For an added twist, the GM can have the supposedly helpless victim effect his own successful escape just before the PCs go in. Of course the party won't know the quarry is safe — they'll just know he's not where he's supposed to be.

The Tamile are the youngest of the galaxy's major sentient races. They evolved less than a half million years ago. Their artistic propensities evolved quickly — archaeologists have discovered Tamile cave paintings dating back almost 300,000 years.

When discovered the race had produced no artifacts beyond the early neolithic level. Xenologists actively debate whether the race, if left to itself, would have eventually developed a technology. Some say the race is too physically soft and weak to ever produce complex, enduring, technological artifacts; others say Tamile cleverness would have eventually transcended their physical handicaps.

The Tamile often produce powerful psychics, and it has been suggested that the race was well on its way to developing a psychic civilization akin to that of the Banduch. Certainly the Tamile have adapted to interstellar society with a rapidity and elan that seems incredible for a race barely out of the Stone Age.

The Tamile speak and sing by vibrating certain parts of their bodies. This leads to a pair of interesting abilities. First, the Tamile are excellent ventriloquists; second, two Tamile in physical contact with one another are able to carry on a conversation which no one else can hear or see (instead of vibrating the air, they vibrate directly to one another through conduction). Even a third Tamile cannot know for sure whether two touching individuals are communicating.

The Tamile either have four or five sexes, depending on which biological opinion is accepted. The difference, as the joke goes, is only important to the Tamile. A vastly simplified overview of the Tamile reproductive cycle: an individual produces eggs which are fertilized by another, then laid. A third individual assumes and carries the eggs, which are fertilized again, and the young are born live. The debate over the number of sexes stems from the fact that certain individuals (but not all) appear to be able to fulfill different reproductive functions. Some frustrated biologists have proposed upwards of a dozen distinct Tamile sexes, but consensus currently favors four or five.

The Tamile are not fertile, as might be expected from a race which has no natural predators or diseases. Births are single. Individuals reproduce no more than three or four times in a lifetime. Many Tamile never mate at all.

The young are tended by the final "mother." She stays with the child at all times, continually singing to it. Food is provided by the rest of the tribe. The mother processes the food and regurgitates it for the infant.

Children become independent of the mother after about a year. At about age 14 they achieve their full mental and physical development. Tamile grow throughout their life. The oldest known individuals have reached a length of more than 4 feet, unextended.

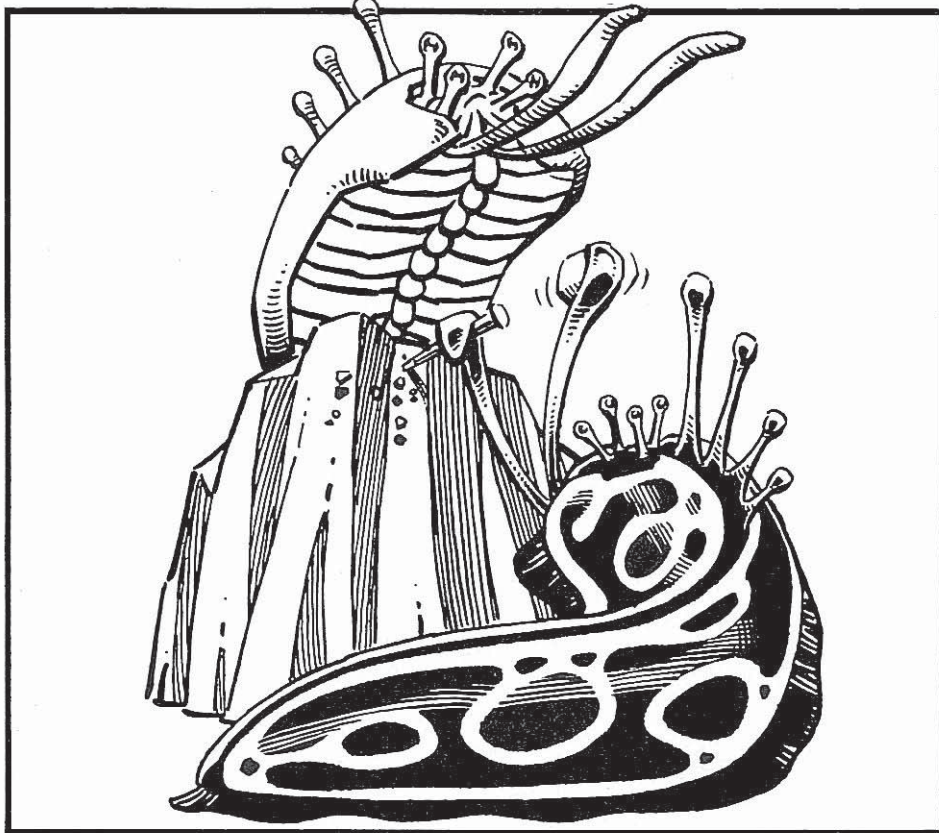
Culture

Tamile culture is still tribal, and the race is able to live comfortably as hunter-gatherers. The Tamile typically migrate in an annual pattern, usually within a radius of 30 to 60 miles. The migration usually includes rendezvous with several other tribes, and individuals often transfer between tribes, a practice which keeps the gene-pool healthy. 25 to 100 individuals make up a Tamile tribe, depending on the availability of natural resources.

Tamile communities are a simple geritocracy. The older individuals tell the younger what to do, and the younger obey. Since size and age are inseparable traits among the Tamile, a naturally large individual can often dominate those of the same age or slightly older. This appears to be purely a response to cultural conditioning to respect the oldest (and therefore largest) individuals, rather than a matter of physical intimidation.

The Tamile have no native form of social status other than age, but alien concepts appear to be making inroads among the Tamile and a gifted and versatile young artist now has more respect among his fellow Tamile than formerly.

Most of the Tamile still live on the race's homeworld, and follow the aboriginal culture. However, some permanent settlements have been established, supported by the trade of authentic art offworld. There appears to be a growing tide of discontent among the younger Tamile, supported by migration. In addition to the entertainers and artists that have defected to galactic culture, there is a growing tendency among the Tamile to look for offworld employment as non- or semi-skilled labor, usually as retail clerks, secretaries, and file clerks. So far the sponsoring government has been able to procure jobs in advance for emigrating Tamile and guarantee the return of individuals who are not able to make it in the outside world. However, if the rate of emigration continues to accelerate, the government will no longer be able to provide such protection.



Politics

At the Tamile's request, the sponsoring government provides non-Tamile tutors who teach the young to speak, read and write the galactic lingua franca, and the rudiments of interstellar culture and history. A typical tutor serves several tribes.

Many Tamile have gone offworld for secondary and higher education, and many more want to. Tamile often study on fine arts scholarship.

Tamile are, of course, completely unsuited for military or security service. They do not yet sit on any legislative body, although they're expected to be invited soon.

There are no Tamile space crews — the race is almost never found in space except as passengers, although they seem well enough suited to space travel, and there are experiments underway to recruit and train Tamile for the space professions.

There are no Tamile colonies, although a few of the more environmentally benign colonies have invited the Tamile to settle in their own enclaves or reservations.

Character Example

Poppy

Poppy (her real name sounds a little like the first seven notes of Haydn's "Surprise" symphony) is the galaxy's most popular living portrait painter. She has painted all the great galactic leaders, captains of industry, and media stars. Poppy is intensely empathetic, and her rather impressionistic paintings are able to capture not only the person's appearance, but also their innermost personality. This is not always flattering, and many subjects have come to wish they'd never commissioned Poppy. Especially since her standard contract demands that her pictures either be displayed or sold back to the artist.

Poppy is also a fine sculptress (though it doesn't approach her portrait work). Her sculptures are bizarre, often reflecting a theme from myth or mysticism — Poppy is intensely fascinated by the mystic lore of other races. She enjoys singing and writing poetry, but has no remarkable talent for either. Sharp, unexpected noises can send her into a complete physical withdrawal for hours.

She is high-strung almost to the point of neurosis. Nervous and foul-mouthed, she tends to make those around her as miserable as she seems to be.

Her most bizarre characteristic is her irrational belief that her art is actually inferior, and some day her public will realize she has no talent. She hoards her money against the day she can no longer sell her art, and has gone so far as to enroll in a correspondence course in accounting to prepare for the time when she has to work for a living. Poppy is a 100-point character.

Stats

ST 6, DX 10, IQ 12, HT 9/5

Advantages

Charisma, Decreased Life Support, Empathy, Manual Dexterity +5, Microscopic Vision 4x, Musical Ability +3, Secret Communication, Reputation +2, Sensitive Touch, Social Status 1, Stretching, Wealth (wealthy).

Quirks

Insomniac; Foul-mouthed; Hates popular entertainment; Will only hire humans; Doesn't do interviews.

Disadvantages

Absent-Minded, Brontophobia (mild), Code of Honor, Combat Paralysis, Delusion — that she has no real talent (minor), Invertebrate, Miserly, Short Lifespan (1 level), Shyness.

Skills

Accounting-10, Artist-28, Literature-14, Occultism-16, Poetry-12, Sculptor-19, Ventriloquism-12.

MEMER AND SARET

Memer and Saret in the Campaign

Memer and Saret should become a constant part of the background in any spacefaring campaign. The tramp steamers of the future, their ships and crews will be present at every port of any size, and most of the tiny ones. PCs with a freighter will often find themselves in direct competition with the Memer, scrounging for the few cargoes that are too fragile to be trusted to that race.

Although the Memer are omnipresent around spaceports, they are not well liked among spacers of other races — they are weird and unfriendly, and they take jobs away from more “normal” crews. Friction is generally kept minor by the port authorities and by the Memer’s natural reticence, but minor conflicts — sometimes violent — do occur.

The players may have occasion to contract the Memer’s services. After a successful adventure they may need to get the acquired item to their patron or employer, and either lack a ship or don’t plan to go in that direction. They may even need to depend on the Memer to transport the party in (gulp!) cold storage.

The players will probably have little extended or intimate contact with the Memer, but they are always there, handy when the GM needs them.

Note on play: The Memer’s occasional communication with the Saret is represented by the Intuition advantage — i.e., occasionally, when the Memer is confused, his Saret will helpfully suggest a course of action that makes most sense to them.

Most NPC Memer (spacers) are 30- to 40-point characters.

The Memer and the Saret are two completely symbiotic sentient races. The Memer are the active members of the symbiosis and by far the larger. They are a small arachnoid race about 18 inches high and 3 feet long. They have two stalked eyes and two long, feathery antennae, and a mandibled mouth. Their body is broad and well-armored and resembles a terrestrial beetle. The Memer walk on eight long, thin legs and have a pair of even longer “arms” that end in a pair of claws. Although the limbs look fragile, they are quite strong and sturdy. The Memer are colored a pale green.

The Saret resemble barnacles and hang from the Memer’s belly. They have no visible features and cannot move independently. They do not speak and have no manipulators. They’re just a collection of rocky bluish-gray lumps. A couple of dozen living Saret are attached to any adult Memer at any time. The Saret have a much shorter lifespan than the Memer, and very old Memer can have dead Saret completely covering their underbelly.

The Memer are native to a cold rockball world with an average temperature that fluctuates between 10° and 70° almost daily. It has .85 Gs; its atmosphere is mostly nitrogen and carbon dioxide, with traces of oxygen and water vapor, at a pressure about .2 that of Earth’s.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Memer have ST -2 (-15 points), DX -1 (-10 points), IQ -1 (-10 points), HT-1 (-10 points), and eight legs (15 points). The racial advantages are DR +2 (10 points), Decreased Life Support (10 points), Intuition (15 points), Temperature Tolerance (2 levels) (20 points), Universal Digestion (15 points), and Vacuum Support (60 points). Disadvantages are Deafness (-20 points), Duty (-10 points), Miserliness (-10 points), Reputation (-2 reaction from most other races, as crawling oddballs; -10 points), Short Lifespan (one level) (-25 points), Stuttering (-10 points) and Teratophobia (a fear of most other sentient races — mild) (-15 points).

The Memer have good vision, but it is all in the infrared. Thus, they can “see in the dark” in warm temperatures, but can’t see well, even in the light, when it is cold. Their color sense is totally different from humans’. Since this is just a “different way of seeing,” they are not given points for Blindness or charged for Infravision.

It costs 0 points to play a Memer.

Names

The Memer have a sign language, and do not communicate verbally. Among verbal races they are dependent on mechanical devices for communication (though communication by sign language is possible, the Memer language does not lend itself to bipedal physiology).

Unlike most other non-verbal races, however, the Memer do not adopt use names. Instead, they prefer numerical designators. These designators are usually six figures in a number-letter-number letter-number-letter pattern, such as 9F4 K7N. If further designators are needed the Memer also assign serial numbers to their colonies, communities and spacecraft, which an individual can append to his own name. These serial numbers can range from four figure for a major colony or city, to 10 for a small starship. Both letters and numbers are used; recognizable words in any language are avoided.

Memer numerical designators are not random, but their exact meaning is complex and of no interest to the average person.

Saret have no names apart from their Memer.

Psychology

Memer and Saret are completely and authentically symbiotic. Neither race can survive without the other except under total life support. The Memer are the active and social component of the symbiosis.

The Saret do seem to be both sentient and aware, although it's hard to tell, as the race is psionically resistant. There seems to be some sort of psychic communication between a Memer and its Saret. The Saret are dependent on the Memer for most of their perceptions of the outside world, and occasionally they will influence the Memer's behavior if it seems to be involved in a dangerous or foolish course of action. Although the Saret seem to have constant access to the Memer's perceptions, the Memer only infrequently get guidance from their Saret. Even the Memer don't claim to know anything about how a Saret thinks. It is commonly believed, however, that all the Saret on a given Memer share a single personality.

Hereafter this discussion will confine itself to the less enigmatic Memer.

The Memer are a simple and ambitious people, among the galaxy's hardest workers. The entire race is supported by one industry — the Memer provide cheap freight for non-perishable goods between the worlds.

The Memer are able to undercut other races because they need almost no life support. They do not need to breathe. More accurately, the Memer breathe carbon dioxide and exhale oxygen; the Saret breathe oxygen and exhale carbon dioxide. Over millennia of symbiosis this convenient relationship has evolved into a closed system, with each race secreting the necessary gas directly into the other's circulatory system. Furthermore the Memer need little food, are comfortable in extremely close quarters and can survive at temperatures approaching absolute zero. A dozen Memer can survive in a space necessary to support a single human (and his necessary life support equipment) in similar comfort.

Although vital to the galactic economy, the Memer are not a sociable race. They are intensely uncomfortable among other races, who they consider hideous, barbaric and unpredictable. Memer can force themselves to deal face-to-face with other races, but prefer to keep such contact to a minimum. Whenever possible they prefer to deal indirectly, through written or radio communication.

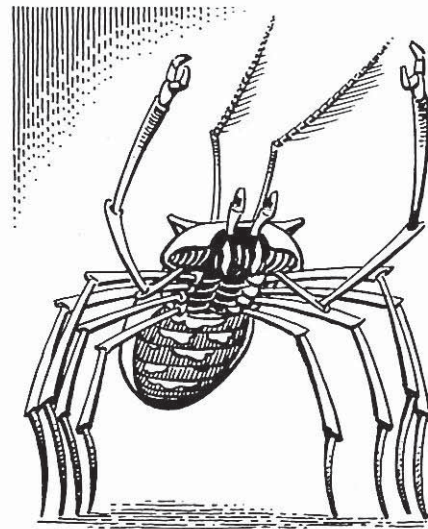
Memer feel little compunction about breaking the laws of "monster" races, if they don't think they'll get caught. However this seldom goes beyond the occasional fudged port authorization or a little light smuggling — the Memer lack the imagination to make really good criminals. Occasionally a crew of Memer will go completely renegade, becoming singularly inept space pirates.

If the race has any aesthetic component to their personality, anything from an appreciation for art to a sense of humor, it is not readily apparent to other races. Likewise the race seems to be completely pragmatic and materialistic, with no psychological need for religion or mysticism of any sort.

Ecology

The Memer and the Saret evolved late in their planet's life cycle, at a time when the oxygen/nitrogen atmosphere was beginning to thin and the oceans were drying up. This explains their gift for survival in the harshest of circumstances.

The race(s) have been sentient for about a million years. Literacy only recently developed, however, within the last 2,000 years. Archaeologists have determined that at least two other sentient races arose on the Memer homeworld and vanished before the Memer evolved. It is believed that both these races attained a highly advanced civilization, and a few xenologists have theorized that



Memer as PCs

Although the Memer and Saret were primarily designed as an NPC race, Memer can actually make very good PCs. Their knack for survival in deep space and their low racial cost make them particularly attractive. The Memer and Saret are an excellent choice for players who want to play a really *alien* alien.

A PC Memer will need a good reason for abandoning his people to live among the "monsters." Perhaps he's a fugitive, or maybe he's a spy sent out to study non-Memer ways. He may have acquired the enmity of any other Memer he happens to meet, for having abandoned his people and stepped outside his caste. At the same time he should be suspicious and ill at ease among his new allies.

Most PC Memer will tend to be general spacehands, mechanics or technicians. Though any specialization is technically possible, GMs should feel free to disallow such unlikely careers as human surgeon, baseball player, or stand-up comedian. Remember, the GM can declare any skill or advantage off limits to a given race, at any time and for any reason!

Memer and Saret Adventure Seeds

Back Street Brawl

A group of six or seven unarmed Memer have been cornered in an alley by a like number of spaceport ruffians who don't like Memer. The ruffians are armed with clubs, chains, knives, broken bottles, etc. The PCs happen upon this display of neighborliness and have to decide if they're going to step in, and on which side.

Pirates!

If the PCs possess a small and lightly armed vessel, they're likely prey for a gang of renegade Memer pirates. Memer pirates aren't very good — they're unimaginative and physically inferior to humans. On the other hand the Memer will outnumber the PCs and they will all be (cheaply) armed.

If the players bail out in a shuttle of lifeboat the Memer will let them go. But if they stay and fight they'll have to kill more than half the Memer before the pirates give up, and if the party loses they will be unceremoniously executed.

Privateers

If the party's ship is better armed, they may want to go pirate hunting.

Memer freighters are disappearing from one of the race's remoter trade routes. It's beyond the range of the Memer navy and even the Patrol has decided it's out of their jurisdiction or too remote to mount a coordinated mission.

So the Memer are advertising for privateers — private vessels to go out and find and destroy the pirates. The privateers get to keep the spoils and salvage from the pirates, plus a modest bounty.

The GM decides if the pirates are renegade Memer, some other race, or just some natural hazard that makes ships vanish. At any rate, the adventurers may soon find that their fellow privateers are as big a threat as any pirates.

Used Starship — Leaks Slightly

The Memer liaison office at the local starport is auctioning off a few decommissioned Memer freighters. All working weaponry has been removed, but the hulls are intact and the drives still work. If the PCs need a ship here's their chance to get one ridiculously cheap. Now all they need is enough money to make it air tight, install living quarters, climate control, new weapons, light sources . . .

the Memer and Saret are biological constructs of an earlier race. There is little hard support for this theory, however, other than the remarkable efficiency of the Memer/Saret symbiosis.

The Memer are remarkably omnivorous, being able to obtain nourishment from almost any biological protein. They process their food with almost total efficiency and only need to eat a small amount of food every couple of days. Their need for water is proportionately light. The Saret are dependent on the Memer for all their nutrition and moisture needs.

The Memer are city builders. With the aid of offworld technology the Memer have found themselves able to build bigger, stronger cities than ever before. Currently Memer on the homeworld are concentrated in about six major metropolises, each with a population of over a billion.

At the time of their discovery the native Memer technology was equivalent to Earth's early bronze age, mostly due to the homeworld's depleted natural resources. When contact with interstellar technology produced an influx of readily available raw materials, the Memer soon proved themselves gifted, dedicated and versatile (if not creative) technicians.

Memer begin to function as adults at about age 10. Most then begin their life-long work of unskilled labor, though a few spend one to five years studying specialized, highly technical fields. They begin to age at 25.

Culture

The Memer are ruled by an iron-clad caste system. An individual is defined by his function in society, which will be the same throughout his life. There is no possibility of an individual changing his station.

The race is under the control of a small, hereditary ruling class. As often happened with similar governments on Earth, the ruling class tends over time to become inbred, ineffectual, and alienated from their subjects. The Memer deal with this through revolution. Most recently, within the last century, the former rulers were swept away by a junta of the most powerful space captains, who are so far providing ordered and visionary leadership. During these periodic revolutions the former ruling class is customarily exterminated.

Other than at the very top, though (and there rarely), there is little class strife among the Memer. The race seems to largely lack the psychological capacity to rebel. Also, though the ruling class controls all wealth, the race is not by nature extravagant or excessive, and most of the race's resources are actually used for the support of the common people.

The Memer cannot hear and they see only in the infrared. Their primary sense is touch. This results in a racial tendency to scuttle over every inch of an unfamiliar object, a sight which humans tend to find unsettling, particularly if they happen to be the unfamiliar objects.

Memer have two sexes. They mate as ordered — members of the supervisory classes decide when their inferiors will produce offspring and with whom. This role is currently in the process of being turned over to a fledgling class of eugenicists. Xenologists speculate that this racial eugenics project could lead to biological specialization over several generations, and eventually to the emergence of several distinct sub-species.

Young are born in litters of 4 — 10. Eggs are laid on the mother's underside, among the Saret. When the young hatch they continue to cling to the mother's belly. In the meantime the Saret (which reproduce asexually, by fission) accelerate their reproductive cycle, in response to hormonal cues from the Memer. The new Saret attach themselves to the young Memer; when an infant Memer has enough Saret to survive it detaches from the mother. The children are raised communally by the child-rearing caste. The genetically deficient are mercilessly

culled. At the age of 10 the young Memer is assigned to a caste — which is almost always the caste of its parents — and begins work or technical training.

Status is tremendously important to the Memer. Normal status ranges between -1 (most of the population) and 7 (the current rulers). By fortunate coincidence the spacers (the class other races normally encounter) are regarded as about equal in Status by both the Memer and other races — status 0 for ordinary hands, 1 for supervisors, and 2 and up for commanders.

A Memer of higher status can and will order a lower-status individual to do anything for any reason, to the point of suicide. The ruling class represents about a millionth of the population.

Before contact with other races the Memer were divided geographically, and cities would sometimes clash in territorial squabbles. The current rulers, however, have consolidated the whole world under their regime, and there has been no inter-Memer military conflict since the last revolution. The military caste has been divided into planetary defense forces and starship security.

Politics

The Memer are unsocial, but not antisocial. They fill a highly useful function in galactic society. All they seem to ask in return is for their privacy and integrity as a race to be respected.

Memer freighters run throughout the known galaxy. They are particularly useful in the colonization process, where they can deliver necessary items almost as cheaply as an unmanned drone, and far more reliably (in fact, Memer are often less expensive than drones, because their ships are able to carry more and make more than one stop on a run).

Memer ships leak like sieves. There is no attempt to pressurize them. Heating is almost as non-existent. That's why the Memer carry nothing but non-perishable (or very expensively packed and protected perishable) cargo. This accounts for the reason why the space trade has not been completely monopolized by the Memer. Passengers, likewise, are out of the question (although a few Memer ships will carry passengers in cryogenic suspension — at the cargo's own risk).

Memer spaceships are all built on the Memer homeworld. They are slow and ponderous but reliable. Spacers on a budget have been known to buy a used Memer freighter and convert it piecemeal for use by air breathers. But by the time the frugal Memer are willing to discard a ship, it is in *bad* shape.

All Memer work for the ruling class. There are no corporately sponsored Memer fleets.

There is some resentment among other races towards the Memer. They accepted extensive technological aid from other races when first discovered, used that knowledge to completely monopolize a major portion of the space trade, then isolated themselves from the rest of the galaxy. The genuine service that the Memer provide, however, and the race's general reliability and efficiency, tend to counterbalance such negative feelings.

Memer do not take part in any government or diplomatic agency that does not directly involve the Memer. They do not sit on counsels or legislative bodies. There are Memer liaison offices at all major starports and consulates on major galactic capitals.

The Memer themselves have only one punishment for major offenses — death. Minor offenses are sometimes answered with warnings or beatings, unless they become a habit, in which case the individual is culled. Offworlders who commit some offense on a Memer world are taking their lives in their hands.

The Memer keep a small planetary navy and planet-based defense force, neither of which have yet been tested in an interplanetary conflict. The race has established several colonies; more are projected. The Memer are happy with the fact that they are most comfortable on planets that no other race wants or can use.

Character Example

Captain 1J6 C4P

1J6 is a grizzled space-veteran of many years' experience. He's about 26 years old. He commands his first-class Memer freighter, the WJ33-5G8K, with an iron hand. His crew is crack and his orders are never questioned. He's greedy and tight-fisted and a merciless commander, but he's earned his reputation as a top space-hand and reliable, discreet, reasonably honest businessman.

1J6 has several peculiar habits which have made him a well-known figure around spaceports. First of all, he has a taste for beer, and sometimes visits portside taverns for a drink. While out, he often buys for any Patrolmen present — the Patrol saved his first command from renegade Memer pirates. Unlike most Memer, the Captain is not afraid of humans. Less common races still make him a bit nervous.

He also keeps a pet — usually a mammal — in a pressurized terrarium in his cabin. Currently he owns a rather miserable ferret. When in port the animal is put on a leash and walked by the Captain or one of the crew . . . a truly surreal sight.

Finally, the Captain has cultivated what he fondly believes is an accurate imitation of a human laugh, and uses it to loosen up his business contacts. It's a truly chilling sound.

1J6 is a 150-point character suitable for use as an NPC or PC.

Stats

ST 10, DX 9, IQ 11, HT 9.

Advantages

Charisma +2, DR +2, Decreased Life Support, Intuition, Reputation +1, Status 2, Strong Will +2, Temperature Tolerance (2 levels), Universal Digestion, Vacuum Support, Wealth (Comfortable).

Quirks

Likes beer; Likes Patrolmen; Keeps pet; Neat freak; Thinks he can laugh like a human.

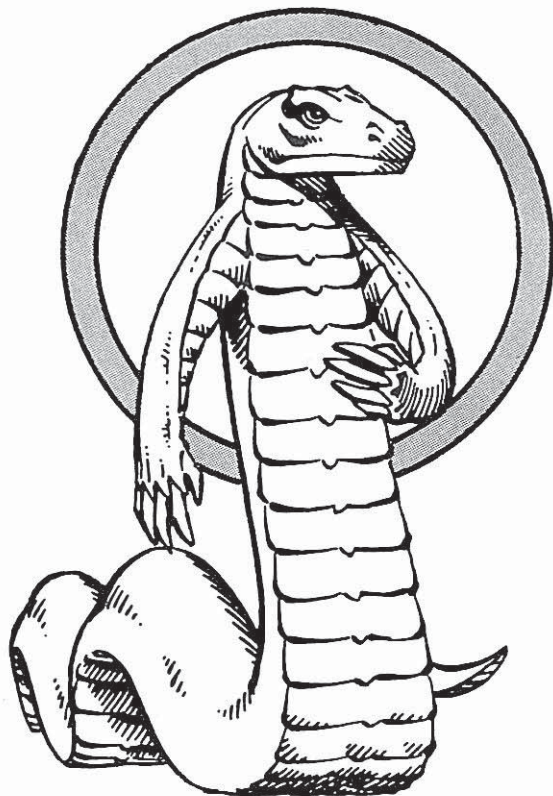
Disadvantages

Bully, Deafness, Duty, Greed, Miserliness, Short Lifespan (one level), Stubbornness, Teratophobia (mild).

Skills

Administration-13, Astrogation-16, Beam Weapons-11, Brawling-11, Computer Operation-13, Electronics Operation (Communications)-12, Electronics Operation (Sensors)-14, Gunner-10, Leadership-13, Mechanic (Stardrive)-14, Merchant-14, Packing (Freight Handler)-13, Piloting (Large Spacecraft)-15, Streetwise-12.

KAA



Kaa in the Campaign

Kaa are the master villains of the campaign: the evil empire that freedom-loving PCs can butt their freedom-loving heads against . . . the source of the Galactic drug trade . . . the implacable enemies obsessed with vengeance . . . the mysterious raiders lurking at the fringes of known space. In short, the bad guys.

Kaa are smart, rich and ambitious. They're just the sort to stick their scaly noses into every shady deal from here to Andromeda. Start with the local pimp or street corner pusher, work your way up the ladder of the Organization step by step; chances are you'll eventually find yourself in the Kaa imperial throne room.

If there's a war, Kaa are probably the enemy. They're Machiavellian and hate to put themselves on the front lines, so the GM can mix and match baddies. The Kaa might make a secret alliance with the Markann, then seed the galaxy with Rider and Metamorph sleeper agents. Eventually they hire up all the Gormelite and Kronin (and turncoat human) mercenaries on the market, then "liberate" the world of the Crystal Computers. Now they're ready to soften up the galactic capitals by dropping ships full of Verm and Gloworm shock troops, just prior to the all-out invasion. Presto! Total war!

Continued on next page . . .

The Kaa are "snake men." Their bodies are 12 to 15 feet long and flexible, like that of an earthly snake. They have two flexible arms ending in formidable claws, but they have no legs — they move via undulation, or "slithering." Their reptilian heads thrust forward, and they normally keep the forward half or third of their bodies erect. Kaa can be any number of colors, with vivid green being the most common.

The Kaa have no nudity taboo, but they often wear clothing and jewelry on their upper bodies for decoration, including vests, smocks, necklaces, torcs, armbands and head dresses.

They are native to a very dry 1.2-G world, with an average temperature of 85° and a somewhat low-oxygen atmosphere at .85 pressure.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Kaa have ST +1 (10 points) and one Extra Hit Point (8 points). They have the advantages Ambidexterity (10 points), Claws (15 points), Constriction Attack (15 points), DR +2 (10 points), Extra Flexibility (see p. 21 — 10 points), Venom (poison, 1d damage) (15 points) and Voice (10 points). They have the racially learned skill Hypnotism at IQ +1 (6 points) and +1 racial skill bonuses in Strategy (4 points) and Interrogation (2 points). Kaa racial disadvantages are Bad Sight (-10 points), Bully (-10 points), Code of Honor — avenge all insults, slay all enemies (-15 points), Cowardice (-10 points), Delusion (gaudy display impresses everyone) (-10 points), Odious Racial Habit — will eat sentients (-10 points), and Reputation -2 (-10 points).

It costs 40 points to play a Kaa.

Names

Kaa do not have names so much as they have titles. A Kaa is known by his station in life and his position in Kaa society. These are usually translated for the benefit of creatures who use other languages. Kaa titles, rendered into English, include Slave (non-Kaa servant) (Status -4), Serf (Kaa servant) (Status -3), House Servant (Status -2), Overseer or Gladiator (Status -1), Warrior (Status 0), Officer (appropriate military rank is used) (Status 1), Knight (Status 2), Chevalier (Landed Knight) or General (Status 3), Baron (Status 4), Count (Status 5), Duke (Status 6), Archduke, Prince (Status 7), Emperor (Status 8). The individual is further identified by his function or location, i.e. General of the 66th Light Armor Regiment, The Duke Imperial Chamberlain, The Count of Aliaa. Kaa are expected to address superiors by their full titles or with the honorific *Ssembudaa*, meaning "Exalted Lord." Nobles can be addressed by their superiors by their simple titles — Count, Baron — or by the word *Budaan*, meaning "Sir," or "My Lord." For a noble to address another noble as he would a commoner — i.e., without title or honorific — is a great insult that requires the insulted party to declare blood feud. Disrespect to a superior, of course, carries the death penalty.

Personal names are only used at rank 0 and lower, where several persons are liable to have identical positions. Such names are usually monosyllabic and meaningless — Private Jaa, 4th platoon, 1st company; Poo the Sewer Cleaner.

The human press and military are prone to giving derogatory nicknames to important Kaa. The Emperor is customarily referred to as "The Slimebutt," a corruption of the Kaa title *Ssembuddach*, "Supreme Exalted Lord."

Psychology

The Kaa are the most numerous and politically powerful of the Galaxy's slaver races. They are an arrogant people, certain of their race's superiority to all others and manifest destiny to rule the universe. They are also subtle and persuasive, with a genius for the back stab and the double cross.

In person the Kaa are charming, formal and eloquent. They are shrewd businessmen and impeccable hosts. With the proper safeguards the Kaa can be dealt with pleasantly and profitably, but the being who lets his guard down among the Kaa may lose his life or his wealth, if not both.

The Kaa nobility are greatly given to ostentatious display. The home of a wealthy Kaa is characterized by cavernous halls of hewn stone overlaid with precious metals, intricately and expensively worked, rare carved woods, and loud and ostentatious bejeweled *objets d'art*.

Crime among the Kaa can be loosely defined as "getting caught doing something your superiors won't like." In fact, it is not even necessary for a superior to make a formal accusation of wrongdoing before having an inferior tortured or killed. Dishonesty is a way of life among the Kaa, and taking from those weaker you is considered a fundamental perk of rank. Treachery is only dishonorable when it fails. There is no word for "justice" in the Kaa language.

As previously mentioned, the Kaa's taste in art runs to the extravagantly gaudy. Many critics charge that the race has no artistic taste whatsoever — that anything is art to a Kaa as long as it has enough jewels stuck to it. This is probably an exaggeration. There is an undeniable barbaric power in the work of the finest Kaa craftsmen.

The race has no ear for music whatsoever, but they do have ancient and formalized traditions of dance and drama. By far the most popular performance art, however, is extended public torture. The most prestigious diversion among the Kaa upper classes is a "Ten-Night Festival." While the guests are extravagantly fed, a master torturer torments the same few victims for two to four hours a night, for nine nights. On the 10th night, the victims are killed and eaten. The torturer is extravagantly rewarded by all present, unless one of the victims dies prematurely, in which case he's added to the menu.

As might be expected from the above, gladiatorial combat and other blood sports are the preferred diversion of the lower classes. The race also produces wildly decadent poetry and a sophisticated, if hard to stomach, literature. The Kaa have several philosophical classics which define and defend the race's culture of treachery and cruelty. These works make fascinating, though unsettling, reading for any race.

They are polytheists, with a pantheon of about 200 gods ruling different aspects of Kaa society and culture. The Kaa religion is curious, however, in that it defines the ruling Emperor as the supreme being, with the other gods as his servants. The Kaa believe in an afterlife, where the individual will continue to do more or less what he did in life for all eternity (dead emperors occupy a station just below the gods). In order to ascend to the afterlife, however, the body must be burned or buried. If an individual's body is eaten, his soul is also consumed. The Kaa believe that the more souls one consumes during life, the stronger one's soul will be afterward.

Ecology

The Kaa are descended from tree-dwelling warm-blooded pseudosnakes. Their evolutionary history is remarkably similar to humanity's — the Kaa's ancestors began to develop arms 25,000,000 years ago; the modern Kaa race appeared about 300,000 years ago, and developed writing and agriculture about 10,000 years ago. The Kaa even developed star travel within a century of human-

Kaa in the Campaign (Continued)

On a smaller scale, the Kaa make great Enemies. Foiling a Kaa plot would be a great insult to the noble who organized it, and the Kaa always avenge an insult . . . always.

If fighting the Kaa is fun, it might be even more entertaining to force the PCs to accept them as Allies. If the Kaa have something the PCs need, and there just happens to be some small service the Kaa require, well, maybe a deal can be reached. The adventurers just need to remember never to turn their backs on their newfound friends, even for a second.

A criminal party might even be able to find a Kaa noble, who wouldn't mind having a shipload of desperate PCs in his pocket, to take them on as a patron.

Kaa as PCs

The Kaa make great PCs, particularly in an unscrupulous party. Of course they have a racial reputation have for being cruel, vicious backstabbers — that might get in the way of the party's making friends and influencing people. And the rest of the Kaa might not approve of one of their own running around enemy space with a bunch of inferior animals . . . but little complications like that are what makes roleplaying so fascinating. And the Kaa are tough, versatile, and fascinating personalities.

Even in a law-abiding, moral group of adventurers a Kaa might well fit in. Remember, Kaa, like (almost) every other race, are individuals. Not all of them are rotten. And a Kaa who wasn't a bully, a coward and a sadist would probably soon find himself forced to move along. Of course nice Kaa will face the same problems with reputation and prejudice that the nasty Kaa face.

A Kaa PC will be rather limited in a 100-point campaign, with only 40 to 85 points to spend on personal development, but they can still be viable as warriors, specialists or crew.

A Kaa will find the most freedom in a freelance adventurer campaign. They will find themselves severely constrained by security procedure in a Scout, Patrol or Military campaign (these constraints can be a good justification for taking the Social Stigma disadvantage).

On the other hand, if the GM decides he wants the Kaa to be bad guys, not party members, he can simply declare them off-limits to PCs — a prerogative that GMs can exercise with any race.

Kaa Adventure Seeds

The Kaa Connection

There's a new drug on the street. Cheap and totally addictive, it's simultaneously appeared on many major worlds, as if from nowhere.

The adventurers discover, either through investigation or luck, that the Kaa developed the drug and are financing its distribution. All the PCs have to do is tell the Patrol what they know — easy . . . as long as the Kaa don't know the PCs know.

Of course, rash PCs might decide that they can close down the Kaa Connection all by themselves. Such stupidity deserves what it gets.

The Archenemy

On an earlier adventure the PCs (perhaps unknowingly) foiled some Kaa plot. Now they're on the bad guy's list, there's a huge price on their heads, and all of a sudden it seems like the whole galaxy is trying to kill them.

The Kaa Connection (above) will work for the foiled scheme (although it might be more fun if they have no idea who's trying to kill them or why), and The Count of Aliaa (below) would work for the enemy.

The Arena

The party is captured and enslaved by the Kaa. They're offered a choice between the plutonium mines and the arena. If they can survive one year's worth of combats they will be granted special privileges and perhaps offered a place in a special Kaa military unit — either way offers a better chance of stealing a ship and getting home. The Kaa, however, don't like to see other races defeating Kaa in battle — even when it's slaves vs. serfs.

Busted

The PCs are hired as couriers to the Kaa. They are to take a certain message or small item to a minor Kaa noble. It's all honest and aboveboard and all the party's papers are in order. The deal is concluded amicably (and profitably). However, on their way back to the ship the entire party is arrested for some blatant and horrid infraction of the fundamental moral principles that govern all civilized societies (spitting on the sidewalk, illegal parking, chewing gum . . .) and tossed in the local lock-up. All the PCs have to do to walk free is sign over every scrap of profit from the current deal to the Kaa officials. The Kaa will have to keep the PC's ship, of course, but they'll kindly throw in a cold-storage passage almost all the way back home. Of course the group can try to escape. In the meantime they're enjoying the manifold delights of the Kaa penal system.

ity, though they did not encounter other races for several hundred years. Some xenologists have theorized that this parallel evolution between humanity and the Kaa has led to a parallel psychology and society as well. Both races find this thought abhorrent.

Kaa are carnivores with a strong preference for the meat of races with high IQs, due to a cultural belief that the devouring of higher animals and sentient races adds to the individual's status in the afterlife. The Kaa's life cycle is identical to humans'.

Typically Kaa have one spouse of approximately the same status, and any number of low-status concubines. Both male and female Kaa have concubines. Male concubines are typically sterilized.

They are oviparous, and typically lay clutches of seven to 20 eggs. The first and strongest young to hatch devour their siblings. About one in four Kaa survive hatching.



Culture

Although rigidly stratified, Kaa culture is curiously egalitarian. Theoretically, a sewer worker who murders the Emperor can himself become Emperor. In practice, lacking the proper power base, such an individual would be immediately murdered by a noble who coveted the throne for himself, long before any possibility of a coronation. Step by step, however, it is possible to better one's lot drastically in Kaa society. At least one racial hero is said to have ascended in his lifetime from common field hand (Status -3) to Archduke (Status 6). And this individual's son ascended to the throne, spanning the entire Kaa social spectrum in two generations.

Cannibalism is perhaps the linchpin of the Kaa culture. It is considered a great honor to devour an enemy's flesh. When a Kaa dies, his family or supporters burn the body immediately, in order that the deceased's flesh cannot be eaten (although

it is not unknown for a relative to poison the deceased's flesh and leave it where a family enemy can find it). The dinner table is the final destination of all serfs, slaves and prisoners. Formal declaration of blood feud is made with a phrase which translates "I will eat your eyes." An oath of fealty ends with the words "I will serve you in all things and burn your meat when you die."

Almost as important to the culture is the institution of blood feud. A Kaa is honor bound to let no insult go unavenged and to pursue vengeance to the death. Countless powerful Kaa have ruined themselves in a futile effort to get vengeance on a powerful enemy. Such feuds needn't be publicly declared, however, since treachery is considered a high art among the Kaa. A wise Kaa will cultivate an enemy, establishing himself as a trusted ally, then strike when his foe least expects — sometimes years later — taking not only the enemy's life, but also, with luck, his position and wealth.

The only rule governing blood feud is that an individual's feuds are secondary to his lord's. Two feuding vassals are expected to cooperate when called to war by a common overlord. Of course, many unfortunate accidents happen in wartime . . .

The Kaa are a warlike race who have, at one time or another, taken on most of the known races of the galaxy. They are physical cowards, however, and do not favor direct assaults. Instead the Kaa use a guerrilla strategy, striking from hiding and vanishing, never letting the enemy see them. Other favored tactics include saturation bombing and biological warfare.

Free Kaa increase their status through assassination and power plays. But for a Kaa slave there is only one door to freedom — the arena. Any Kaa slave can submit himself to the arena for one year. About 5% survive. At the end of each year, about 2% of the best surviving gladiators are admitted to the military, becoming free warriors with Status 0. The rest of the survivors may stay in the arena for another year or return to their former master. Wounded or maimed gladiators are returned to their former masters, and usually eaten. Cases are known of a slave being adopted into his master's family, but this is extremely rare.

Kaa warriors serve beginning at age 15. Technicians, specialists and professionals are considered warriors in the service of their overlord. The Kaa have excellent universities, attended by both specialist warriors and the scions of the nobility. After 20 years of service, a Kaa warrior may retire and become a free farmer or a merchant. However, many choose to remain in the military or the overlord's service.

A free Kaa may name any of his offspring, male or female, heir to his property and title. He may also bypass his blood relations entirely by adopting an heir — but this usually precipitates a feud.

Politics

Kaa politics can best be described as confrontational. At times they have been powerful members of the galactic community at large; at other times they have been at war with literally everybody else in the galaxy.

They have extensive fleets and ground forces, as well as the industrial base to support them. They also make extensive use of Kronin, human and Gormelite mercenaries, and whatever slave troops they can collect. There are rumors of a secret project underway to train captured or slave-bred Verms for use as shock troops.

Anyone traveling to a Kaa world without diplomatic immunity is subject to Kaa "justice." However, the tourist's life is not in serious danger until the graft money is completely gone.

Kaa have numerous worlds under their control, both via colonization and conquest.

Character Example

The Count of Aliaa

The Count is a medium-level politician from an ancient Kaa family. He's a combination gangster and financier, with numerous business interests within the Kaa sphere of influence, and a multitude of extralegal ventures going on among other races. His concerns include drugs, vice, smuggling (a big one), contract killing, fraud and blackmail, all conducted from the safety of his little fief deep within Kaa territory.

Currently in his physical prime, the Count is a thoroughgoing sadist. He carries a huge, vicious whip with him at all times. A consortium of Cidi businessmen have put a multi-million dollar price on his head because of a rather extravagant entertainment he staged involving 24 Cidi children. He fancies himself a military man, and often wears a pilot's uniform. He actually is a competent fighter pilot, though he's never exposed himself to combat.

The Count could easily become one of the most powerful Kaa in the Empire, but so far he's been unable to make that one big score. Sometimes he simply overreaches himself, and the plan collapses under its own weight. Other times his plans have been upset by the most bizarre circumstances — like the interference of a small band of unremarkable aliens.

The Count has many enemies and is currently involved in several blood feuds, both open and clandestine.

He is an experienced character built on 150 points, suitable for use as an Enemy or Patron.

Stats

ST 11, DX 10, IQ 12, HT 10/11

Advantages

Ambidexterity, Claws, Charisma +1, Constriction Attack, DR +2, Extra Flexibility, Status 5, Venom, Wealth (Filthy Rich).

Quirks

Always Carries a Whip; Likes to Wear a Pilot's Uniform; Dislikes Tamile Art But Buys it Anyway; Especially Fond of Cidi — For Entertainment and Dining.

Disadvantages

Bad Sight, Bully, Code of Honor, Cowardice, Delusion, Greed, Odious Racial Habit, Reputation -2, Sadism, Unluckiness.

Skills

Acting-13, Administration-12, Beam Weapons-13, Brawling-12, Carousing-12, Detect Lies-13, Economics-12, Fast-Talk-13, Free Fall-11, Hypnotism-13, Intelligence Analysis-11, Interrogation-15, Leadership-11, Merchant-12, Piloting (Fighter)-14, Poisons-14, Politics-15, Savoir-Faire-13, Strategy-13, Vacc Suit-12, Whip-12.

KRONIN

The Kronin are tall, powerful, hairless humanoids. Their heads are their least human features — their skulls are elongated, and their noses and ears are slits that do not protrude from the heads. Their pupils are vertical, like a cat's. Their limbs end in six digits. Kronin average 6 to 6½ feet tall. Their skin is usually of a metallic tint, from silvery white to leaden gray to reddish or golden bronze.

Kronin in the Campaign

The Kronin are the “noble enemy” race. Honorable and forthright, they can be talked to, dealt with and even trusted to keep their word. Nonetheless, when encountered, they will usually be trying to kill the party.

The GM should not forget about the Kronin's psychic ability. While not spectacular, this can add just that little edge that makes a hostile encounter memorable.

Kronin will often be encountered as mercenaries and guards (heavily armed guards with Telepathy and Danger Sense). But they can also show up as starship passengers, official envoys, and even tourists. These casually-encountered Kronin are, on a one to one basis, even more dangerous than on-duty soldiers, because the lone Kronin knows he's alone amongst barbarians and expects to be forced to defend his honor at any moment.

Affluent parties may wish to hire Kronin. When this happens the GM should really play up the Kronin code — if the characters do *anything* dishonorable, whether they knew they were being dishonorable or not, the entire mercenary army could pack up and go on a moment's notice. Likewise, visitors to a Kronin base will have to be alert at all times to avoid giving offense. A common crime would probably simply result in an uncomfortable trip home, but careless remarks (or thoughts!) about Kronin patriotic art, the local females, or the military dignity of the unit could well prove fatal.

The GM should feel free to design extra-formidable Kronin with 300 to 500 points. Such super characters might include a renowned general, a hot-headed young champion, or an extra-powerful psychic. Even the common Kronin soldiery should be built on 100 points, and the slaves should get at least 75.

Kronin customarily dress in military uniform: tunic, breeches or kilt, and boots. They customarily go armed, favoring wrist-mounted energy shields and hand blasters for day-to-day wear. Archaic bladed weapons are often worn for formal or ceremonial occasions. The shield arm is customarily kept bare.

The Kronin homeworld is large, cold and dry. Its average temperature is 60°. Gravity is 1.3 G, but atmospheric pressure is only .81 of Earth's. Kronin suffer no ill effects from carbon dioxide; it is a large constituent of their homeworld atmosphere, and though they cannot breathe it, it does not poison them.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Kronin have DX +1 (10 points) and the advantages Danger Sense (15 points), DR +1 (5 points), and Telepathy Power 8 (40 points). Racially learned skills are Beam Weapons at DX +1 (2 points), Broadsword at DX (2 points), Force Shield at DX +1 (1 point), Karate at DX (4 points), Mental Blow at IQ (4 points), Mind Shield at IQ (4 points), Telereceive at IQ (4 points) and Telesend at IQ (4 points). The Kronin's Disadvantages are Bloodlust (-10 points), Code of Honor (-15 points), Fanatic (-15 points), Honesty (-10 points), and Sense of Duty (-10 points).

It costs 35 points to play a Kronin.

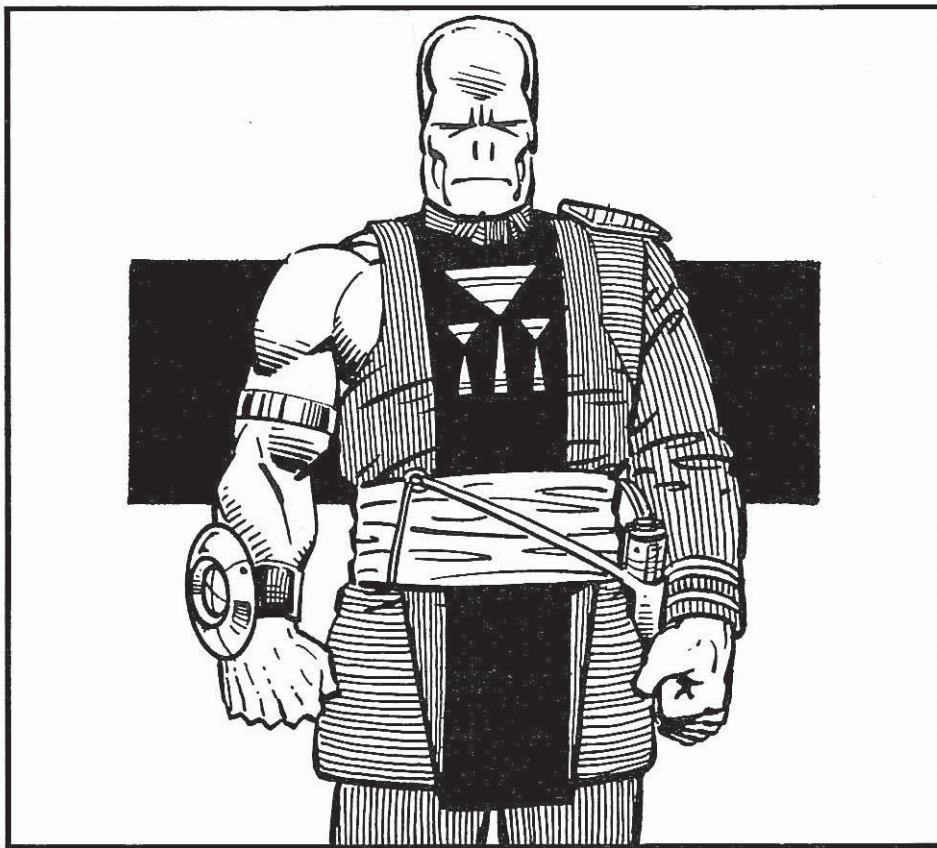
Names

Kronin (singular, masculine Kronur, feminine Krona) names typically begin with the individual's military rank, followed by family name, personal name, and father's name compounded with the possessive *yi* — Force Leader Obolo Maru yiHenu, Captain Rebajan Hido yiMalal. This last could be shortened to Captain Rebajan, or, among friends and equals, Captain Hido. It is a very grave insult for anyone except a mother or spouse to omit proper military rank when addressing a Kronin soldier. Even small children generally address their fathers as Group-Second Daddy or Staff Researcher Father.

Children and non-military females are identified by their personal names and the family names of their husbands or fathers — Azzu yiRebajan. Wives can be more respectfully addressed by appending their husband's rank to their names — Azzu yiRebajan-Colonel.

Psychology

The Kronin are grim militarists driven by a fanatical commitment to their warrior's code. That code mandates that the Kronin be fearless in battle and that they destroy the enemy utterly, that they be eternally loyal to their unit and comrades, that they not use force against non-warriors except in necessary self-defense, that they be honorable in all dealings and keep their word, that they avenge all insults and defeats against themselves or their units. They are also subject to a number of ceremonial laws and rules and a complex system of military courtesy.



Kronin society is patriarchal. The men are warriors, and the women make warriors. There are, however, many Krona in the military, some as combatants. A Krona soldier must confine herself to the support services, however, if she wishes to marry or bear children.

They are one of the Galaxy's few naturally telepathic races. All Kronin are telepaths, and many of them have strong powers in other disciplines as well. This psychic talent makes the race even more dangerous in battle.

The Kronin are completely devoted to the perfection of the military arts (among which they include psychic skills). Every adult male is a highly skilled combatant, even those who don't qualify for the military.

Every adult Kronur is either a soldier or a slave. Even industry and food production are organized among military lines. Social status is directly related to military rank. Ranks 0 and 1 are status 0, ranks 2 and 3 are Status 1; after that Rank and Status increase at a 1 to 1 ratio.

The Kronin lifestyle is Spartan, with few luxuries. The Kronin eat simple food, live in barracks-like apartments, and spend their free time either practicing their martial skills or bathing — the Kronin bath is a social event which involves alternate plunges in near-freezing and near-boiling pools, ending in a brutal, pounding "massage" with two rods like oversized drumsticks.

Robbery, murder and similar crimes are against the warrior's code. All breaches of the warrior's code are punishable by death, though a first minor offense can be mitigated to beating or slavery by the presiding officer.

Kronin art and literature is patriotic, didactic, martial and generally considered unendurably tedious by all other races. A few notable artists have emerged, and Kronin popular fiction is entertaining to some, particularly those who are fascinated by military minutiae.

The racial religion is ceremonial and has little impact on daily life of the Kronin. It's a form of ancestor worship, with a few legendary heroes who exemplify the racial ideals held up for particular veneration.

Kronin Adventure Seeds

The Duel

In a major city, the most physically fit member of the party is accosted and insulted by an elderly Kronur in civilian garb. If the PC responds in kind, he is challenged to a duel.

The Kronur is a retired officer searching for final adventure and death in battle. If the PC refuses to duel the Kronur will call him a coward and leave (he doesn't want to go to jail). If he accepts, he's given his choice of weapons and an assignment is made.

If the PC duels and loses, the Kronur will not kill him if it can be avoided. He will hold his hand if his opponent goes unconscious, and give him a choice between surrender or death if he's disarmed.

If the player defeats the Kronur, the old warrior will accept no mercy. If the PC refuses to kill him the Kronur will follow the party and attack them all at once, hoping to take a few more enemies' lives and then return to his ancestors. However, if the party invites the old gentleman to join them, he may accept, if traveling with the party sounds dangerous and honorable enough. He will prove a loyal and fearless, if suicidal, companion. He will not purposely place the rest of the party in danger in his quest for an honorable death.

The GM can play the Kronur as a valiant old lion, cagey and still deadly, or as a doddering fool on his last legs.

Free Company

The party gets caught up in a raid by a free company of about 60 Kronur on a small colony or industrial asteroid. Along with many other captives, the adventurers are enslaved. The Kronin have several other objectives to reach before they can return home, and in the course of one combat the slave hold is breached. If the party attempts to escape and fails, or tries sabotage against the Kronin, they will be bound hand and foot and sold to a major Kronin base as soon as possible — and then they have *serious* problems.

On the other hand, if the PCs prove useful in the battle and aid the Kronin, they will be freed . . . or, if they seem competent and honorable enough, they may be offered a berth among the free company.

Ecology

The Kronin are descended from anthropoid apes. The race is about 250,000 years old, with a written history of only about 4,000 years. They had achieved TL6 when the first alien visitors landed on their world.

Kronin are omnivorous, though the Kronin code prohibits the eating of red meat. Most Kronin dishes are boiled grains mixed with bits of vegetable, eggs, fish or fowl.

Kronin mate for life. Because of the high mortality rate among the Kronur, most males have two to five spouses. Kronin births are always single. Many females bear seven or more children. Widows of childbearing age are expected to remarry; older widows are supported by their husband's unit. Kronin reach majority at age 15, and begin to age at 50. Elderly Kronin are excused from duties and housed and fed at the expense of their units. Retired warriors often submit themselves to public gladiatorial combat with other aged Kronin, in order to win further glory and, eventually, an honorable death in battle.

Culture

Kronin culture organizes itself into independent military units, generally of brigade size and up. There are a number of "free companies," with as few as 20 soldiers, but the normal independent unit is more like a community, with provisions for families, medical care, and care of the young and elderly. Some industrial units are independent, selling their wares to whoever can pay; others are components of larger units. Some units are very large; one colony world is organized as a single unit. Naval units are usually technically independent of ground troops, but many of them are bound by treaty and tradition to a certain ground unit, with shared or nearby headquarters.

Promotion among the Kronin is entirely merit-based. A father can leave his wealth and property to his sons, but not his position (of course, academy administrators will be understandably reluctant to fail all but the most inept scion of a powerful or respected officer).

Kronin children begin their military education at age 3. They live at school for their entire childhoods, with only short annual visits home. It is a great honor to be accepted to an elite academy, and parents will send their children several systems away to attend a good school. Children who are unable to meet even the minimal requirements of their education are enslaved (if male), or sent home (if female). It is a profound disgrace for a family to have a son enslaved, but a greater disgrace to shelter an incompetent! At age 15 the young Kronin is considered a soldier, and either becomes a private or goes on to technical school or officer's training. There is no particular stigma attached to failing tech or officer's school (unless the individual's father is an officer with an eye to family tradition) — the failed candidate is simply sent back to the ranks. An experienced soldier is also allowed to put himself in for officer training, but only after he's been proven in battle.

A Kronur is recommended for promotion by his immediate superiors, and the promotion must be approved by at least three more rungs of the chain of command. Of course, in very small units and at the highest levels this is sometimes impossible. Kronur of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and above are expected to know everybody who stands between them and supreme command.

Although there are female Kronin soldiers, there are no mixed units. Female units are often support or industrial in na-

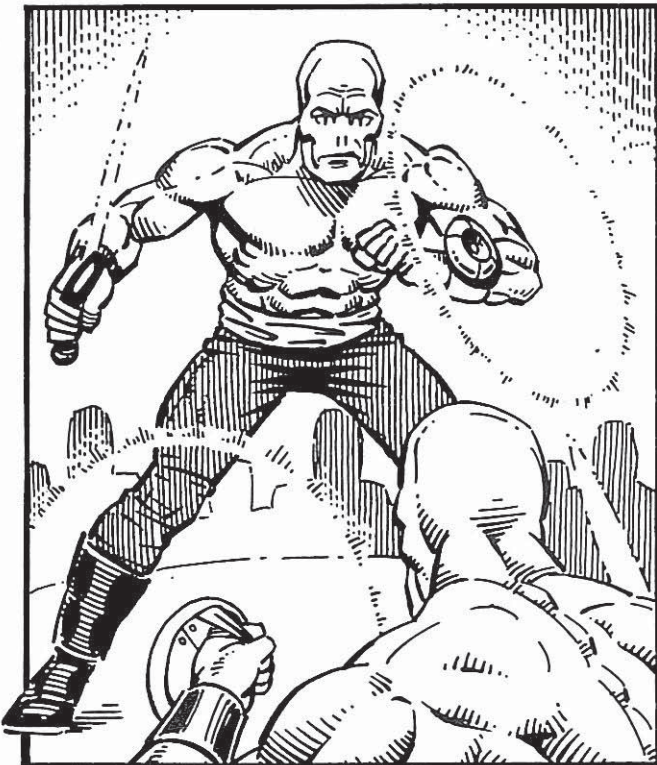
Kronin as PCs

Players of a particularly martial bent will enjoy playing a Kronin. The moderate racial cost leaves plenty of room for development, particularly if the player merely expands the character in the directions the race is already pointing — enhancing combat and psionic skills.

A Kronin PC can easily become the linchpin of the party in combat situations, always taking point, leading the charge, and giving the orders when the blasters start blazing. They also can be ideal for a player who wants a psionic race, but would prefer something less ponderous than the Banduch.

Players who might fancy a Kronin technician, doctor, or pilot may find points a bit tight at the 100-point level. It can be done, however, with care and economy.

Expatriate Kronin would feel comfortable in a military unit or a party of freelance adventurers. In the Patrol a Kronur would find a discipline and camaraderie very much like his own people. They're less likely to appear in a Scout or Scientific campaign, but might come along as chief of security.



ture, but all-Krona combat units do exist, and have distinguished themselves in battle. Female combatants must remain single and may not bear children. A Krona fighter who wishes to marry may either give up her career entirely or transfer to a support unit.

The Kronin have a remarkably high racial mortality (and fertility) rate. It is an honor for a Kronur or Krona to produce many soldiers for the units.

The largest Kronin units are states in their own right, holding territory and constantly seeking to expand. Many of the smaller units, however, are mercenary in nature, hiring themselves out to larger Kronin units or other races. It is not uncommon for a unit of Kronin, hired by non-Kronin, to face in battle another Kronin unit, hired by a third race, with both parties using weapons they bought from the same independent industrial unit.

The tiny Free Companies form almost a separate caste of Kronin. They are loosely organized by Kronin standards, and all contribute to a fraternity of independent support groups that sees to the physical and social needs of the Companies' troops and their families. Larger Kronin units consider the companies wild, dangerous and unpredictable. Most have their own transports. Their services are not cheap.

Of the four slaver races, the Kronin are the most humane. Slaves are never eaten, and cannot be beaten or killed without cause. They may marry, and may even own money and property with their master's permission. The most important concession to slave's rights, however, is the fact that slaves' male children are sent to school along with freeborn children. These schools are of the lowest quality, and the slave child will have an unspeakably hard time from his peers and instructors, but if he makes it, he's a free man. He even has the right to buy back his parents and siblings as soon as he earns the money. Many children of slaves have become respected officers and even commanders, hardened by their extra-tough early training.

This privilege is even extended to slaves of other races, and there are several units of "Kronin" soldiery actually made up of other races — from humans, An Phar, Irari and even Cidi — the children of individuals enslaved by the Kronin.

Politics

Kronin exist on the fringe of Galactic politics. Though they often work for other races and even live among them, their lack of a unified racial government and their mercenary loyalties, as well as their refusal to eschew the practice of slavery, keeps them from taking their full share of the privileges and responsibilities of running the galaxy. Most large Kronin headquarters have consulates for most of the galaxy's races, and several have even established embassies in the major capitals.

Many would like to see the Kronin join the interstellar community — the race is honest, dependable, formidable and technically proficient. Thus, most races would prefer to think of the Kronin as "us" and not "them."

The Gerodians, in particular, take an interest in the social evolution of the Kronin. Many of them have traveled to live among the units. The Kronin tolerate the Gerodians for the medical expertise, but forbid them to discuss their racial philosophy with any except senior officers. This is fine with the Gerodians, who prefer to teach by example anyway.

Non-Kronin common criminals are usually extradited for trial among their own, unless suspected of spying or subversion, in which case they are summarily executed.

There are Kronin colonies, but the racial temperament is not suited to settlement and wilderness taming. Most Kronin expansionism is accomplished through conquest.

Character Example

Lieutenant Aram Sergo yiDarran

Lt. Aram is the fresh-faced young leader of an armored infantry platoon. His father is a major on one of the large bases, but Sergo has joined a free company on the theory that it's easier to get noticed in a smaller crowd.

Newly graduated from the academy, Sergo has a lot of theoretical knowledge, none of which he's ever actually used yet. He believes everything he learned in the academy, and would put himself and his men in danger rather than violate "the book." This, combined with a tendency to go off half-cocked, mean that Sergo's superiors need to keep a close eye on him.

He is, however, loyal, brave, dedicated and physically able to take it, and someday he'll make a fine lower-echelon officer . . . if he lives long enough.

Sergo loves the ladies (he has a rather perverse fascination with human females), but he's not good at meeting people. On social occasions he usually hides behind a facade of profound military dignity that most people find hilarious. Because of his difficulty with strangers, he has a tendency to get overly familiar with the men in his command.

Lt. Aram is a 100-point character suitable for use as an opponent, NPC, or PC.

Stats

ST 10, DX 12, IQ 10, HT 11.

Advantages

Acute Vision +1, Danger Sense, High Pain Threshold, Military Rank 3, DR +1, Status 1, Telepathy Power 8.

Quirks

Very friendly with his troops; Attracted to human females; Collects a never-ending series of military adventure novels; Runs several miles every day; Loves parades.

Disadvantages

Bloodlust, Code of Honor, Fanatic, Honesty, Impulsiveness, Lecherousness, Overconfidence, Sense of Duty, Shyness (mild).

Skills

Administration-9, Armory (Battlesuit)-9, Battlesuit-12, Beam Weapons-14, Broadsword-12, Demolition-9, Driving (ATV)-11, Electronics Operation (Shields)-9, Fast Draw-13, First Aid-10, Force Shield-14, Free Fall-12, Gunner-13, History-8, Intelligence Analysis-8, Interrogation-9, Karate-13, Law-8, Leadership-9, Mental Blow-10, Mind Shield-10, Running-11, Survival (Jungle)-9, Tactics-10, Telereceive-10, Telesend-10.

MARKANN

The Markann resemble giant bipedal spiders. They stand an average of five feet tall and average 20 pounds lighter than humans of the same height. Their bodies are divided into thorax and abdomen. Eight limbs extend from the thorax. The bottom pair serves as legs; the next pair is slightly elongated and known as "strap hands," and are used when the Markann is hanging upside down. The third pair, the "major arms," serves as a strong pair of arms ending in large four-fingered hands. The uppermost pair, or "minor arms" are much weaker, ending in eight-digit fine manipulators. The abdomen also contains the breathing apparatus.

Markann in the Campaign

The Markann must stay in the shadows. The most fascinating thing about the race is that nobody knows they exist. A whole campaign could be built around the characters slowly unraveling the Markann conspiracy piece by piece.

The GM should have fun playing the Markann. They're insane, but coldly logical and horribly efficient. They're sadistically cruel, but in a cold, detached, objective kind of way.

The Markann are also a good way to throw the PCs up against higher-level technology. The Markann's overall tech level should stay at least two levels higher than the mainstream of the campaign, and occasionally even higher. If the party actually comes to blows with the Markann they will be hard-pressed by the race's ultra-tech weapons, but if they win, the prizes could be rich indeed — an arsenal of super-tech weapons, or even a Markann spaceship (of course such devices were never intended for non-Markann use, and anybody trying to refit won't really know what all that stuff is for . . .).

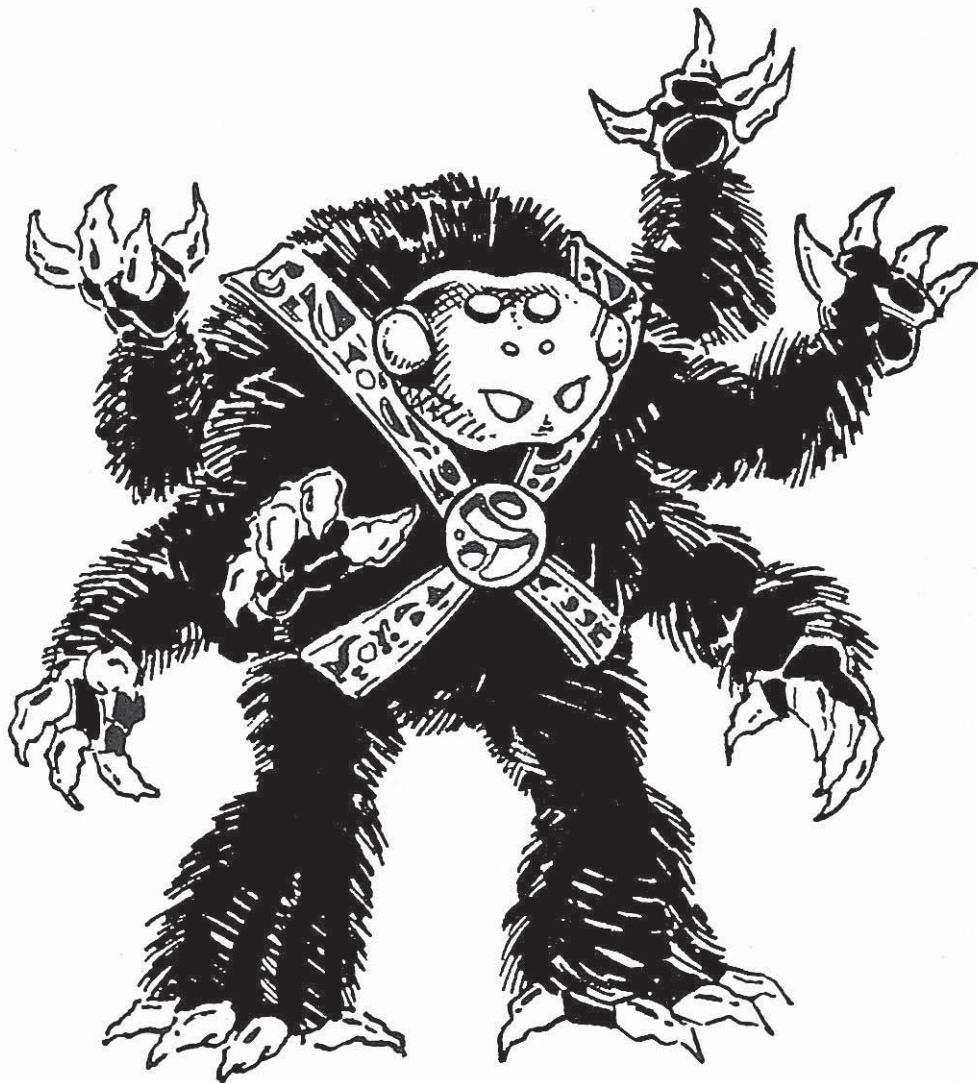
Markann "Grunts" should be built on 50-75 points, leaders on 100+ points.

The Markann originally appeared in *Flight 13*, an adventure for *GURPS Horror* and *GURPS Space* by W. G. Armintrout. This adventure details a Markann experiment that involved the exact duplication and distortion of an entire city.

The thorax contains the brain, and holds the Markann's two pairs of eyes. The larger pair is multi-faceted and is mostly geared to spotting motion at a distance; the smaller pair functions as normal, somewhat nearsighted human eyes. Markann mouths are mandibled.

The Markann are entirely covered with stiff, purple-black fur. They do not wear clothes, apart from equipment harnesses.

Their homeworld has .8 Gs and a standard Terrestrial-type atmosphere at .93 pressure. Its average temperature is 80°, but with the wide Markann temperature tolerance, they can live anywhere a human can.



Advantages and Disadvantages

Markann have DX +1 (10 points) but HT -2 (-20 points). They have the advantages Acute Smell and Taste +2 (4 points), two Extra Arms (can't strike) (20 points each), Double-Jointed (5 points), High Technology (+2 TLs, 50 points), Night Vision (10 points), Peripheral Vision (15 points), and one level of Temperature Tolerance (10 points). Their disadvantages are Color Blindness (-10 points), Major Delusion — that the Markann are the universe's most evolved race (-10 points), Fanatic — to the Markann Quest (-15 points), Intolerance (Lower-TL races) (-5 points), Odious Racial Habit (cannibalism, vivisection, sadistic experimentation, etc.) (-15 points), Overconfidence (-10 points), Reputation -1 (-5 points), Sadism (-15 points). Markann racially learned skills are Climb, Pilot (Contragravity) and Stealth all at DX (2 points each).

Cost to create a Markann character is 55 points.

Names

It is difficult, but not impossible, for a normal mammalian palate to pronounce the Markann language. Most Markann words, including names, begin with either a hard click, written k', or a harder click, written kk'. The language uses few vowels — many words have no vowel sounds at all. Examples of Markann names include Kk'krit, K'kra, K'nregg, and the planetary name K'ssg. Racial status indicators among the Markann are usually translated as military ranks — Major Kk'krit, Colonel K'kra.

Psychology

The Markann are a race of mad scientists — callously cruel, logically irrational and consumed by dark obsessions.

The Markann race has always been unshakably certain that it occupies a special place at the pinnacle of creation. All other races, no matter how content, prosperous or technologically advanced, were regarded by the Markann as mere meat and plunder — happy barbarians, unknowingly waiting to be claimed by their Markann masters.

Millennia ago, only a handful of years after perfecting starflight technology, the Markann race all but obliterated itself in a massive interracial war. Only a few individuals survived on scattered fortress/outposts. At that time, what had been merely an arrogant and aggressive race went utterly mad. The surviving Markann felt betrayed by their ancestors and became obsessed with a single question — how could the Markann race have destroyed itself when so many lesser races survive and thrive? It was not acceptable to suppose that the Markann had been less wise or more shortsighted than other sentients . . . the answer *must* be more subtle than that.

So was born the Markann Quest. The remnants of the race pulled itself together to seek out other sentient races and search for that elusive and mysterious quality which allows them to succeed where their betters had failed.

Normal Markann research procedure when a new race is discovered is to secretly begin observation of the homeworld, recording every detail of the race's environment, physiology, psychology and society with a degree of detail that is difficult for humans to comprehend.

Then the Markann begin their experiments. On a primitive world, they simply move in and take over; when dealing with more formidable races, they kidnap victims by stealth . . . some for direct experimentation, some to form breeding colonies for further generations of victims. Markann technology even allows *duplication* of sentient beings. Some subjects are tested to destruction; others are altered in peculiar ways and tested, in hopes of finding that *something* the Markann are looking for.

Markann Adventure Seeds

The First Clue

If the GM wants to build a campaign around the search for the Markann, he can begin with either of the following scenarios.

The party comes upon a dead world. All tests suggest that the planet should be young and fertile, but it looks like it's been demolished. Not destroyed by war or mishap, but deliberately and slowly tortured to death. If the PCs investigate deeply, they may find a mysterious artifact of advanced design and recent construction. What happened here? Has anything like this ever happened before?

More dramatically, the adventurers might answer a deep-space distress call, and pick up a lifeboat full of half-mad castaways with a wild story about a world gone mad and half-glimpsed spider-men orchestrating the horrors. Within a few hours of planetfall the escapees will disappear, without a trace, from right under the party's noses.

A Chase

The characters happen upon a space battle between a Patrol cruiser and a tiny ship of unknown origin. The cruiser was testing an experimental sensor array, and through sheer luck managed to spot a Markann spy ship. The tiny ship cripples or destroys the huge cruiser, but the Patrolmen actually manage to damage their high-tech antagonist before it makes its getaway.

If the PCs follow, they'll have a long chase and a vicious fight on their hands. They'll have to play brilliantly to capture the spy, because the Markann pilot will kamikaze his ship into theirs rather than allow himself to be captured.

Experiment

The PCs are snatched by Markann and inserted into an ongoing experiment on a world identical to one of their homeworlds, only with horrid, homicidal alterations. The PCs' first job will be to survive, then to discover what's going on and who's doing it, then to escape — each task is harder than the last. (Note: This is a greatly simplified summary of the plot of *Flight 13*. GMs who like the idea of the Markann should get that adventure.)

The Master Law of the Markann is secrecy. Markann will never risk revealing themselves to a race that stands any chance of threatening the Markann or interfering with their researches. They raid primitive races ruthlessly, but are very cautious with any civilization which has starflight. They are constantly looking for “safer” ways to experiment, and they will ruthlessly destroy anyone who threatens their secrecy.

However, there are always radical elements among the Markann who believe that a little less secrecy would allow better and more interesting experiments. If an entire colony-world is found devastated, for instance, it would probably be these Markann who were responsible.

Markann experiments are typically cruel and bizarre to the point of irrationality. Most Markann are not actually studying the subject races (if they did, they would have to face the fact that their race was not, after all, flawless and superior), but are merely torturing their victims, taking out their feelings of racial inadequacy on harmless, primitive races. No one knows how many developing sentient cultures have been wiped out by Markann experimentation.

Among themselves the Markann are cooperative and efficient. The orders of a superior are seldom questioned and never ignored. Social status among the Markann is based on a combination of genetic stock and accomplishment. The lower classes are frequently even more unbalanced than their leaders. The only crime ever deliberately committed by Markann is pursuing forbidden lines of research. Research might be forbidden because it might violate the master rule, but experiments which would too rapidly deplete the available stock of victims, or those which might endanger Markann, are also forbidden. Any researcher who actually makes a concrete discovery relating to the Markann Quest is usually quietly disposed of and his genetic material purged, since such discoveries are seldom in line with the racial delusions.

The Markann use the advanced science of their ancestors (TL12, or 2 TLs above that of the campaign, with a few leftover “miraculous” devices). Modern Markann are no longer developing useful new technology. Their new “inventions” tend to be bizarre to the point of the surreal, and highly destructive.

The Markann have no art, literature or religion. The entire race is completely consumed by their racial obsession.

Ecology

The Markann are descended from arboreal carnivores. Because of their origin in the treetops, the race prefers to hang suspended when traveling or at rest. They usually move under suspended walkways or hang from contragravity platforms.

Only the Markann know anything about their own Markann’s evolutionary history. A now-dead group of Markann researchers once suggested that they are an extremely young race whose technological knowledge raced far ahead of their social development. This accounts for their racial instability. This heretical idea was, of course, purged!

One of the strangest results of the final war of the Markann was the complete extinction of the female sex. The race now perpetuates itself entirely by duplication and clone technology. Not all Markann are direct clones of earlier individuals — they make extensive use of genetic engineering to enhance the gene pool and create distinct individuals.

New Markann are incubated in a living host, which is devoured from within when the brood hatches. These hosts are usually drawn from subjugated races, but renegade Markann are also used, particularly those that violate the Master Law. It is a prolonged and agonizing death. Upon hatching, the infant Markann is transferred to a machine where he grows to maturity in a few months time. The individual is electronically educated while still in the “test tube.” About 30

Character Example

Major K'nregg

The Major is an experienced and important Markann leader. It's his job to plan and coordinate Markann experiments. In addition to his skill at designing elaborate deathtraps, the Major is also a skilled and dedicated vivisectionist, with the horrid habit of making amiable small talk with his victims as he eviscerates them.

K'nregg is actually a little bit crazier even than the average Markann. His personal phobia is a crippling fear of open places; consequently the Major usually monitors his experiment from his cabin in a Markann transport deep in an underground hangar. He has permanent hearing loss from an encounter with an experimental subject who looked catatonic. He likes to relax with a recreational hallucinogen, to which he is completely addicted.

Major K'nregg is a 125-point character suitable for use as a villain.

Stats

ST 10, DX 13, IQ 14, EN 8

Advantages

Acute Smell and Taste +2, Double Jointed, two Extra Arms, Night Vision, Peripheral Vision, Status 4, Temperature Tolerance, High Technology +2 TLs.

Quirks

Acts friendly to his victims.

Disadvantages

Addiction (totally addictive hallucinogen), Agoraphobia (Severe), Color Blindness, Fanatic, Major Delusion, Hard of Hearing, Intolerance, Odious Racial Habit, Overconfidence, Reputation -1, Sadism.

Skills

Administration-13, Beam Weapons-14, Camouflage-16, Climbing-13, Computer Operation-15, Computer Programming-14, Electronics Operation (Holograph)-14, Interrogation-15, Pilot (Contragravity Craft)-13, Pilot (Large Spacecraft)-13, Poisons-14, Psychology-15, Stealth-13, Strategy-15, Surgery-14, Traps-16.

years after decanting (unless anti-agathics are used), the individual begins to age normally. Euthanasia is commonly practiced upon the feeble and the senile.

The Markann will eat any meat. They are completely unconcerned with whether or not the source of the meal was sentient or not. They will not slaughter other Markann merely for their meat, but will not hesitate to eat the euthanized, or victims of mishap.

Culture

The Markann culture is diffuse since the destruction of the homeworld. The population is divided among several dozen test worlds where experiments are conducted and victim races are bred and developed. After about a century of Markann domination, a test world is completely used up, and the Markann efficiently exterminate any remaining natives and move on. Different Markann enclaves are effectively autonomous from one another. They customarily communicate via courier, to insure secrecy.

The normal divisions of the Markann hierarchy can be translated Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, Major and Colonel. A Colonel is normally in charge of a single world. Markann seldom change status more than once. Most individuals are assigned to a given station from the time of their decanting, based on their genetic heritage. If an individual is designed for a very high position he may spend several years at a lower status, learning from experience and waiting for a place to open up above him.

The Markann do not have a military or navy as such, but they do keep a large fleet of transports, courier-scouts, spy ships, freighters and a few fighters and destroyer escorts, all heavily camouflaged with stealth technology.

Politics

Although the Markann have been astonishingly successful at keeping their activities clandestine, evidence of their depredations has given rise to many rumors. Unfortunately, a factual report of a Markann experiment reads like a very imaginative horror story! And most eyewitness accounts are so extravagantly distorted that even someone intimate with the rumors would be hard pressed to recognize an actual Markann in the flesh.

The higher echelons of galactic government know something is going on, but are not sure what. They are aware of the rumors connecting sadistic spider aliens with certain unexplained disappearances, but this is only one of many possible explanations for these events, and not considered the most likely. More disturbing are the reports of unidentified spy ships that are occasionally spotted orbiting major capitals and successful colonies. The big brass would be very interested in hearing from anyone who has hard proof of the Markann's existence or a detailed account of their *modus operandi*.

The Markann Quest requires a tremendous amount of raw materials, and the Markann are utterly nonindustrial. Slave labor and super-science can account for some of the Markann's needs, but the scope of Markann experiments is so ambitious that it seems to imply the cooperation of at least one more advanced, sane race. The Kaa would undoubtedly be delighted by the opportunity to trade raw materials in exchange for high technology and a promise that Kaa worlds will be exempt from experimentation. The Markann could even be dealing with a few isolated but resource-rich Kaa lords, and the Imperial court need never know of the Markann.



Markann PCs

The big problem with a Markann PC is that it will completely ruin (or at least drastically alter) the race's usefulness as villains. The GM will probably want to keep the Markann an enigma for as long as possible, and so should not make them available to the Players as a PC race.

Once the cat's out of the bag, of course, it's all changed. A PC Markann will probably have to buy off at least 50 points worth of psychological disadvantages before he can associate with a non-Markann party.

VERMS



Verm in the Campaign

The important thing to remember about Verm is they're not *just* monsters, they're a highly intelligent, organized race. Keep the Verm versatile — if the PCs came up with a strategy that worked against Verm last time, chances are the next bunch they face will have heard about it and prepared for that contingency.

One Verm is more than a match for any one character, and remember, they usually attack in swarms of 100 to 1,000! No matter which side eventually wins, a Verm war means serious mayhem. A normal-sized party can be challenged by a few stray warrior-scouts, or a young Queen and her half-grown hive.

Just because Verm doesn't build machines doesn't mean they're not smart! They are very good at jobs like destroying power lines, reversing sewers, and detonating arsenals. Even though we don't understand them, that doesn't mean they can't understand our language (spoken and written).

Verm are just full of surprises. They will always strike at the weakest link, and never take the obvious line of attack. They are always coming up with new tricks like telepathic warriors, telekinetic queens, fanatical non-Verm cultists who serve willingly, and any other nasty wrinkles the GM can conceive.

Verm are squat, clawed creatures, somewhat resembling the Terran crab. They have a thick shell above and below their body. The top shell is studded with sharp, spiky ridges. The long forearms end in large, sharp claws and are backed with a line of saw-like ridges. The four eyes rest in a deep recess between the upper and lower shells, but glow faintly and can be seen in dim light. The mouth is an arrangement of three sharp-toothed jaws. Verm slaver constantly. They have four short legs. They wear no clothes. A typical Verm warrior weighs 400 to 600 lbs.

Young Verm queens look like warriors. Older ones look like *huge* warriors. Adult queens are immobile, amorphous masses with no limbs and no visible features except a mouth and an egg-laying organ. They weigh one to three tons.

The Verm homeland is unknown, but based on the type of world they infest most successfully, it must be basically Earth-like, with (probably) slightly heavier gravity.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Verm have ST +3, DX +2, HT +2 and Extra Hit Points +3. They have the advantages Claws (15 points), Combat Reflexes (15 points), Cutting Strikers $\times 2$, combined with arms (20 points), Damage Resistance +2 (10 points), Dark Vision (25 points), Deafen (15 points), Early Maturation $\times 3$ (30 points), High Pain Threshold (10), 4 Legs (5 points), Passive Defense +2 (50 points), Private Communication (20 points), Recovery (10 points), Silence $\times 2$ (10 points), Sonics — $2\times$ Damage (70 points). The race's disadvantages are Bloodlust (-10 points), Compulsive Behavior (must get guidance from queen, -15 points), Intolerance (-10 points), No Fine Manipulators (-30 points), Odious Racial Habit — cannibalism, enslavement, etc. (-15 points), Reputation -4 (-20 points), Short Life Span (-25 points). All Verm have the racially learned skill Stealth at DX -1 (1 point).

It costs 275 points to be a Verm. Most Verm are built on 275 to 300 points.

Verm Queen, larval stage

ST 4, DX 10, IQ 10, HT 10/5

Advantages: Clinging, Decreased Life Support, Metabolism Control, Silence $\times 3$, Dark Vision, Empathy, Racial Memory.

Disadvantages: Sense of Duty (to propagate race), Intolerance, Reputation -4.

Skills: Stealth at DX +1.

Verm Queen, fully adult

IQ 15, HT 20

Advantages: Telepathy Power 15, Dark Vision, Private Communication, Racial Memory.

Disadvantages: Intolerance, Sessile, No Manipulators, Odious Racial Habit, Reputation -4.

Skills: 50 to 100 points in Telepathy skills, including Telereceive, Mental Blow, Mind Shield, Mindwipe, and Telecontrol.

Names

Verm (singular: Verm) is short for the human word “Vermin.” As far as is known, this race has no names. In telepathic communication with slaves, queens refer to themselves as “I,” warriors as “units,” new queens as “children,” and other adults by their locations.

Verm warrior communication is an enigma. The race appears to have no communication skills more advanced than those of earthly baboons, yet the Verms are undoubtedly capable of planning and conducting tactically sophisticated, minutely coordinated assaults. Telepathic sensitives say that the race appears to share an empathic rapport, but can detect no sign of higher telepathic communication in the warriors. However, their coordination is so good that most xenobiologists believe communication is somehow relayed through the queen on some undetectable psychic band.

Culture

Verms are the single most feared race in the galaxy. These nightmare creatures have decimated whole planets and enslaved and exterminated countless sentients. Though they are non-technological, their cunning, physical prowess, commando tactics and the psychic powers of their hideous queens allow them to infiltrate and conquer races possessing even the most advanced technology.

Having no technology of their own, the Verms have become a race of slavers and pillagers, waging wars of conquest against less aggressive races, turning them into slaves and cattle, and eventually using their plundered technology to move on to new prey.

The Verms are not needlessly cruel, but they are utterly callous about sentient life — queens give little value to their own units’ lives, and none at all to that of other beings. Conquered races are regarded as a cheap resource to be used at will — whether worked to death or fattened and slaughtered.

The basic unit of Verm society is the hive (though the Verms don’t build, they will settle into other races’ honeycombed or warren structures — preferably underground — and establish their communities). Each hive is ruled by a queen — a gigantic, immobile, amorphous egg-producing machine with an advanced intelligence and strong telepathic powers.

The newborn Verm queen is tiny (about one foot long), quick, and a master of concealment. She has the ability to go dormant for long periods of time. A favorite tactic of the infant queen is to creep into a docked spaceship, find a secure hiding place in the hold, the ventilation system, or the electrical system, then go dormant until the ship arrives somewhere. After she’s relocated, she seeks out a suitable headquarters — spacious, private and easy to seal and defend. Then she locates at least 200 pounds of organic trash or carrion and cocoons herself and the food away. After about three months she shucks off the cocoon, looking like a 100-lb. warrior, and gets directly to the business of propagating the race.

At first she only has enough body mass to produce a single egg; Verm eggs weigh some 50 lbs. each! The newly-hatched warrior is fully formed, but only about 10% of his adult size. The young warrior immediately goes out to find food; if pickings aren’t good, the queen will hunt as well. At this stage, they will not molest sentients, but merely hunt small animals and scavenge what leavings they can find. This is when the queen is at her most vulnerable. Her psychic strength is, at best, a third what it will become, and if her single warrior is killed, she must hunt for herself or starve. If hunting is good, however, in a week or so she will have consumed enough to produce another egg. Then another. Soon provender enough will be coming in that she can begin to grow in size, and produce eggs at a faster rate.

Verm Player Characters

No. What a disgusting thought. Anyway, they have too many points. The only way Verm PCs might work is if the whole party was Verms, sent out by the queen for some kind of reconnaissance mission.

Verm Adventure Seeds

Infestation: Stage 1

The party is on board ship when passengers start disappearing. After several disappearances, someone makes an IQ or Xenology roll to recognize the clues: there’s a Verm warrior aboard that must be hunted and destroyed.

What the crew doesn’t know is that the warrior is on board to protect a hibernating larval queen. If the hunters just kill the warrior and then return to business as usual, they’re in for a nasty surprise sooner or later.

Infestation: Stage 2

The PCs stumble on a year-old Verm hive below a city or colony, or on a very large ship or station. The queen has about 100 points of Telepathic power and maybe 100 quarter- to half-grown warriors.

When the party sees the Verms, the Verms see the party. The adventurers will find the entrance blocked and be forced to fight their way out of the hive. Once they get out, the local authorities will be able to take care of the surviving Verms in short order.

Infestation: Stage 3

The adventurers are present at the eruption of a wholesale Verm assault. In a matter of minutes, the entire community finds itself fighting for its life against hordes of chitinous invaders. The PCs must help fight off the intruders, leading whatever elements of the populace they can save and organize. And if the invasion can’t be stopped, they’ll have to escape with whoever they can rescue.

Infestation: Stage 4

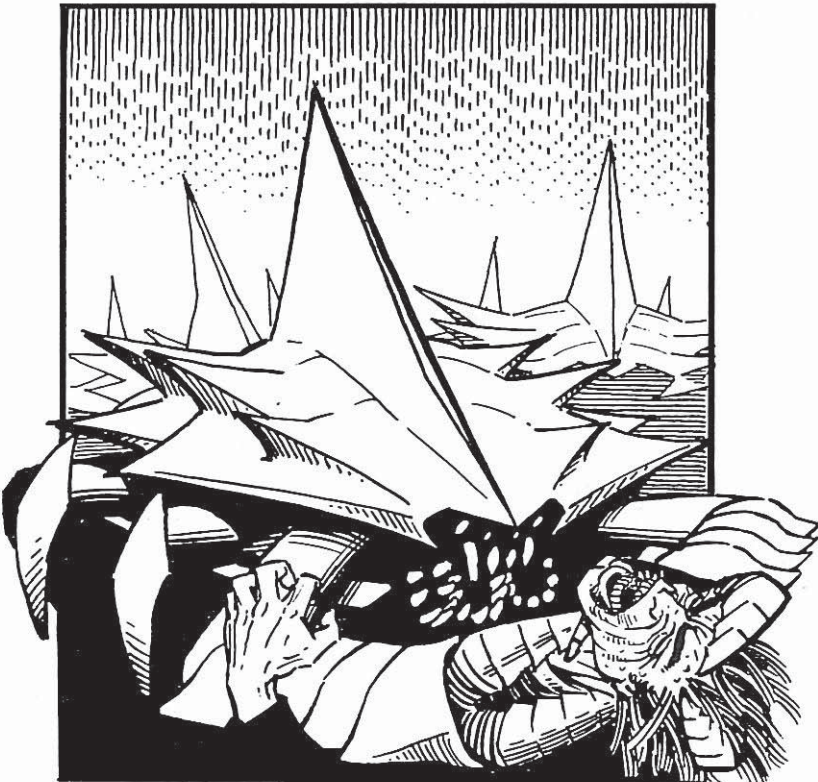
A remote colony has been completely overrun by Verms. The PCs are hired to help with the cleanup effort. If the party is heavily armed they’ll be assigned to seek and destroy Verms. If they’re more subtle, their job will be to sneak in, scout around, and escape to report to the counter-invasion’s brass.

After about a year the eldest warriors are half grown and the queen's psychic powers are fully developed. At this time the hive will begin to expand its territory, securing the area and scouting the surrounding non-Verm community. Occasionally a non-Verm will be telecontrolled by the queen to perform a delicate task or procure needed supplies, then eaten.

Two years later the hive numbers several hundred individuals, many completely or nearly grown, and it's time for the queen to make her move.

The Verm can't make devices, but they're endlessly inventive when it comes to destroying them. The community will soon find its power cut and communications down, then the Verm will emerge in force. The lucky victims will be slaughtered out of hand. The rest will find themselves in slave pens, waiting their new masters' convenience.

Though the Verm don't share human psychology, they understand and use it. In every conquered community, they will find those who will cooperate . . . to save their own lives, to save their loved ones, or even for the petty power that a slave-overseer has. With her telepathy, the Verm queen can find faithful servants, and she's hard to fool. Since Telecontrol doesn't give access to a victim's memories, a queen can't telecontrol the mayor of a captured village into being a mouthpiece . . . but she can intimidate him, monitor him, and take away his voice if she thinks he's about to betray her!



After a local takeover, Verm slaves will restore communications and power, and reassure any distant concerned parties that everything is under control. Then the work of conquest begins in earnest. The new hive is expanded and fortified, using both Verm and slave labor. A fully-grown queen can produce a dozen eggs a day. However, queens appear to be unable to sustain more than around 1,000 warriors at a time, so this is the limit of a hive's population.

About one Verm birth in every 600 is a queen. Most young queens are simply driven out of the hive at birth, her only choice to establish herself or die. A larval queen will die after about a year (not counting hibernation time) if she doesn't cocoon. If a hive is at maximum population, and there is still room in the conquered area, she will allow a new queen to mature nearby. As many as 12 queens have been found cooperating in one large, Verm-dominated city. A queen might also be established shipboard, and, served and transported by a slave crew, sent to invade a new world.

A queen has a natural lifespan of no more than a century (warriors usually live about 50 years). When a queen dies accidentally, her warriors all die within a few days. When a queen knows she is dying, though, she will nurture her successor within the hive, allowing the newcomer to raise her own warriors to minimize the dangerous early period of hunger and vulnerability.

The Verm is not a hive-mind; the warriors do have individual intelligence and even initiative. However, they always seem to obey the queen instantly and completely, and they seem to become somewhat confused without her guidance. It is not known whether warriors make "suggestions" to the queen.

When a queen is killed, her warriors go into a berserk rage, attacking all non-Verm they can find, both slaves and invaders. Those that aren't killed in

battle will weaken and die within a week (roll vs. HT three times a day, reducing HT by one for each failure — the creature dies when HT reaches 0).

Ecology

Nothing is known about how the Verms evolved, or indeed, when or where they evolved. It is known that the Verms were established on many planets before the dawn of the current cycle of interstellar civilization.

The Verm homeworld remains an enigma. Certainly it must have been a horrible place, to produce a race so perfectly tailored for raw survival. Some scientists believe that the Verm homeworld was dying when the race evolved, and that it can no longer support life. Others suggest that it was located and destroyed in an earlier galactic epoch. The pessimists suggest that though we haven't found it yet, it's still out there somewhere — a bubbling cauldron of horrors hidden in some galactic backwater.

Verms will eat any animal protein. It does not have to be fresh. They prefer sentient cattle because they're handy as slaves, and they don't require as much tending as animals, though they have to be watched all the time.

Newly hatched Verms are fully functional, but small. They reach full growth after about two years. They begin to age after about 35 years (roll every 9 months).

One minor mystery of the race: who fertilizes the queens, and when? For now the answer appears to be "nobody." Warriors are asexual, and queens do not seem to need any other sex for reproduction.

Culture

There is no evidence that the Verms even have a culture. Their entire mental and physical beings appear to be focused on eating and breeding. If anything serves the Verms for art or religion, it's beyond the comprehension of other life forms.

Politics

Nearby Verm hives interact and trade with one another, but no details are known. Hives have even been known to war on one another, even in areas where food and resources were plentiful. The reasons are not known.

The Verms are universally loathed. They are the only sentient race ever condemned to genocide by the spacefaring races of the galaxy. The race has no legal rights. Any sentient who meets a Verm may kill it — if he can.

Most settled worlds and major colonies have sophisticated anti-Verm programs at spaceports and in the cities, which are normally successful. But the Verms are intelligent and highly adaptive, and if history teaches a lesson it's that a Verm outbreak can happen anywhere, and at the worst possible time.

Verms have destroyed countless worlds and races. Some archaeologists even suggest that the last cycle of interstellar civilization was destroyed by a pangalactic outbreak of Verm infestations. Humans and Kaa tend to fare well against the Verm, probably because they're the two races that most nearly approach the Verm's exaggeratedly aggressive survival instinct and sheer animal cunning.

The Verms have not yet tangled with the conspicuously armed Kronin or the psionically advanced Banduch or Engai. In addition to being obviously formidable, all three races are comparatively few in number and localized.

A remote Cidi colony achieved notable success against a Verm invasion by turning the Verm's tactics against them. The Cidi fled to the wilderness and established a stronghold, then harried the Verm using guerrilla tactics. They eventually exterminated the invaders, sustaining less than 30% casualties. It has been suggested, though, that part of the reason for this Verm failure was that no slain Cidi made more than a mouthful!

Character Example

Verm High Warrior

This Verm is a scarred and cagey veteran — the kind his Queen would send out on a sensitive and dangerous solo mission. He will always use guerrilla tactics — his opponents are lucky if they even get a glimpse of him before they die. His skills in Electronics Operation represent his experience bypassing and destroying such systems. He's always hungry, and sometimes a tempting morsel can lure him into an impetuous attack.

The High Warrior is a 350-point character suitable for use as an enemy.

Stats

ST 15, DX 13, IQ 12, HT 14

Advantages

Alertness +2, Armor×2, Claws, Combat Reflexes, Cutting Strikers, Damage Resistance 2, Dark Vision, Deafen, Early Maturation, High Pain Threshold, 4 Legs, Passive Defense +2, Private Communication, Recovery, Silence×2, Sonics 2×damage.

Disadvantages

Bloodlust, Gluttony, Intolerance, No Fine Manipulators, Odious Racial Habit, Reputation -4, Short Lifespan.

Skills

Camouflage-14, Electronics Operation (Communications)-11, Electronics Operation (Security Systems)-11, Escape-13, Jumping-14, Stealth-15, Tactics-13, Traps-14.

GORMELITES

Gormelites in the Campaign

If the GM wants a race of “space orcs” — dirty, smelly, rude and uncivilized cannon fodder — Gormelites certainly fill the bill. This race can be used whenever the players and GM are in the mood for some old-fashioned, mindless mayhem. Just have the party run into a wandering group of drunken Gormelites and presto, instant battle royal. Likewise, Shaggies make the perfect big, dumb flunkies for the mad scientist or master criminal.

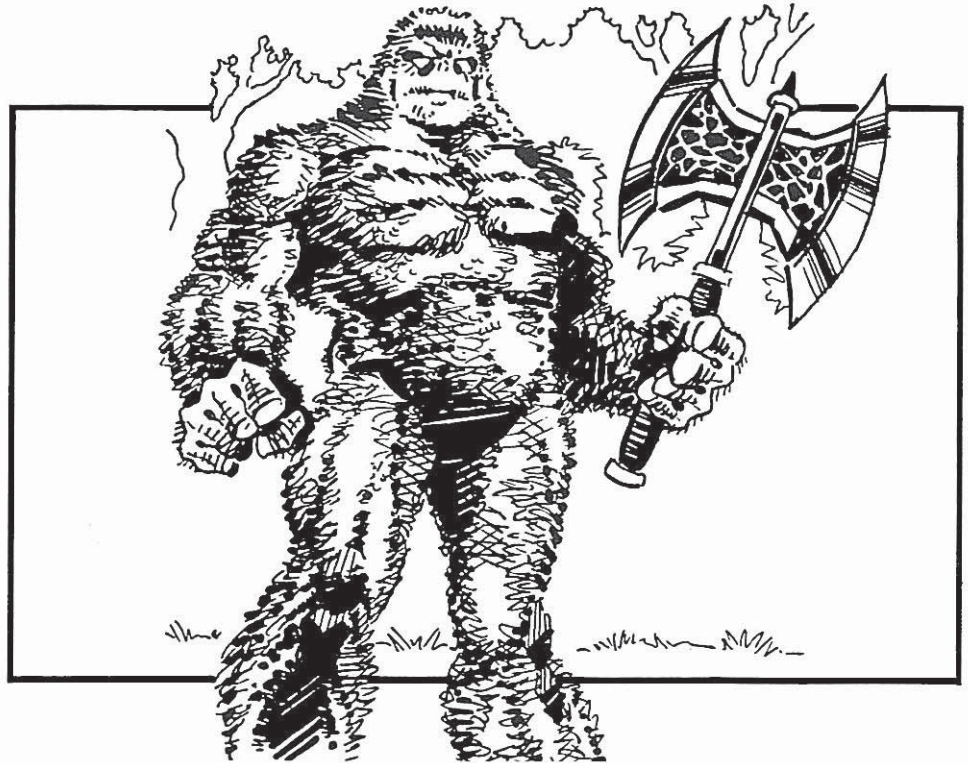
They also make good vicious, implacable Enemies, particularly for newer characters who might not yet have access to high-powered weaponry or the wherewithal to leave the planet at will.

More imaginative GMs, however, may want to explore below the surface of this race, and use them for something other than monsters with guns. The first thing to consider when in search of the well-rounded Shaggy is the fact that they are, on the average, as intelligent as humans. Gormelites should not rush, headlong and screaming, into every battle. The creative GM will make them smart, sneaky, merciless foes.

Every Gormelite should not behave exactly like the others. One of the more fascinating details is their racial paranoia. By most standards, Gormelites are a race of lunatics — what strange twists and kinks does this lunacy take from individual to individual?

Not all Gormelites have to be enemies. A Gormelite ally can be very handy to have around, but his comrades will have to watch their step, and at all costs avoid irritating their big, touchy friend.

Finally, even Gormelites have rights under whatever galactic government the GM dictates for his campaign. If the party gets in the habit of blasting away at every Shaggy they meet on the street, they’ll eventually have to face the music after plugging some poor working stiff.



Gormelites are massively-built humanoids between 6½ and 7 feet tall. Their bodies are completely covered with sparse, wiry fur. Their limbs end in four digits each.

Their heads are their most inhuman features — they have no visible nose or ears, and mouths are flat and lipless, with solid bone ridges instead of teeth. The eyes are solid white membranes beneath beetle brows. Gormelites normally do not wear clothes. Their fur can be any color found in human hair; it also appears in shades of blue ranging from grayish to metallic. Some Gormelites dye their fur in vivid patterns.

They are native to a 1.2-G Terrestrial world with an average temperature of 40°. They breathe a normal oxygen mix at .96 Earth normal.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Gormelites have ST +4 (45 points) and HT +3 (30 points). The race’s only advantage is DR +1 (5 points). Gormelite disadvantages are Bad Temper (-10 points), Bully (-10 points), Greed (-15 points), Overconfidence (-10 points), Paranoia (-10 points) and Reputation -2 (-10 points). Gormelites have the racially learned skills Brawling at DX+2 (4 points) and Axe/Mace at DX (1 point).

It costs 10 points to play a Gormelite.

Names

Gormelites (sometimes known colloquially as “Shaggies”) have short, single names. Normally names are one or two syllables, often ending with a vowel — Bollu, Murra, Gom. These names are traditional and have no modern meaning. Some Gormelites have taken to giving their children names from other races.

Upon leaving the nest a Gormelite will often bestow on himself a title: Murra the Strong, Gom the Ugly, Blue Bollu. These titles are frequently changed during the Shaggy's life to reflect his latest accomplishments.

Psychology

Gormelites are known throughout the galaxy as dangerous, untrustworthy thugs. They're usually thought of as brawlers, pirates, bullies and vandals. This reputation is not unfair. Though individual Gormelites can be as responsible, loyal and trustworthy as anybody else, these traits are only rarely found among the race.

The Gormelite motto might be, "Do unto others before they do unto you." The entire race is massively paranoid — each community or gang is firmly convinced it is engaged in a life or death struggle against every other Gormelite group, and every other sentient race in the universe. If the others aren't attacking at the moment, it's only because they are scared, or biding their time. Attempted kindness will usually be seen as a stupidly exposed weakness to be taken advantage of.

Furthermore, the Gormelites see everything in terms of a simple pecking order. Everyone is either a master or a servant. Every new individual must be challenged or submitted to. Servants must obey their masters or suffer the consequences, but if the master lets his guard down the servants will unhesitatingly turn on him. Thus, duels and wars are everyday occurrences. Few Gormelites live long enough to begin normal aging — most die violently before their 40th year.

Gormelites are, however, instinctively protective of their young. Any threat to a Gormelite nest will drive all adults present into a berserk rage. No Gormelite will willingly endanger a nest, even his bitterest foe's (this prohibition does not extend to the young of other races).

Status is completely informal, based not only on proven prowess in battle, but also on size, strength and bluster.

Off their own worlds, most Gormelites make perfectly honest, if dangerous, livings as laborers, mercenaries, bodyguards, or gladiators. Many, however, take up a life of crime as pirates or thugs for organized crime. The Gormelites deal with criminals the same way they deal with anyone else that annoys them — they jump on them and try to kill them.

Gormelite music and dance is extremely primitive. Public festivals often begin as dances and end up as bloody riots. Though literate, they seem incapable of producing anything resembling literature. They have little articulated philosophy.

Most Gormelites are polytheists, worshipping a large pantheon of singularly bloody deities. The aboriginal religion also incorporates aspects of totemism — nests and individuals will often adopt a patron animal or nature spirit. The gods are regarded as cruel and perverse — they're out to get the Gormelites just like everyone else! Gods are to be propitiated, or better yet fooled, not loved or worshiped. The nature spirits are regarded as merely indifferent, and thus their power can be stolen without invoking their wrath. Many contemporary Gormelites are either agnostic or atheistic, reflecting the racial pessimism and paranoia. A few Shaggies have embraced human religion, especially the Kali cults and the more martial sects of Islam.

Ecology

The Gormelites are apparently an artificially-created sub-race . . . genetic constructs which have outlasted their creators. Little archaeological information has surfaced concerning the proto-Gormelites, but they appear to have been a smaller and slighter version of the modern race, with little or no body hair.

Gormelite Player Characters

There's an undeniable cathartic thrill to playing a savage — it's fun to be big and mean enough to be able to belch in front of the Duchess or carry a two-headed axe to the mall without looking silly. Gormelites are perfect for the player who wants to work out some of his frustrations by playing a goon.

For the protection of themselves and the rest of the party, many players will want to pay the 10 points and buy off their Gormelite's Paranoia disadvantage. The GM should permit this. However, with the GM's permission, it is possible to play a paranoid without endangering the entire party (and other members of the party who might decide to tease or threaten the Shaggy deserve what they get).

Gormelites' low point cost and decent IQ gives the player a lot of flexibility in designing the character. Not all Gormelites have to be brawlers. There's plenty of room to design a Shaggy copilot, ship's engineer, paramedic, lab technician, or what have you.



Gormelite Adventure Seeds

The Inevitable Drunken Shaggies

The party is out after hours on the streets of a major city or spaceport, when they notice they're being followed by a band of drunken Gormelites. If the PCs confront the Gormelites or try to run, the Shaggies will attack immediately; otherwise they attack in 5-10 minutes. There is one Shaggy for each party member, all armed with axes or small maces of modern construction (use the Ancient/Medieval Hand Weapon Table on p. B206, but treat all weapons as fine quality). The Gormelites cannot be reasoned with. They are all at -1 weapon skill because of intoxication.

Immediately after the end of the fight, the law will show up to scrape up the fallen and arrest the rest. The party was within their rights to defend themselves, but if they resist arrest, or possess illegal weapons, that's a whole new problem. Furthermore, if the local government is at all corrupt, the police may only let prisoners go after a liberal bribe is tendered, no matter who was at fault.

Bosom Buddies

A large, dumber-than-average, crazier-than-average Gormelite develops a kink in his personal paranoia that convinces him that a random member of the party is his only friend in the world. The Shaggy attaches himself to his "friend" with vows of comradeship for life — and he really means it. The Gormelite will fight bravely to help his buddy, but he still doesn't trust *anyone* else — especially those weirdos who his pal likes to hang around with. The Gormelite can get the party into all kinds of trouble — insulting patrons, blasting at passers-by, attacking important officials. If the PC ever attacks, abandons or otherwise betrays the Gormelite, and can't explain it away with Fast-Talk, the Shaggy will make a vow of vengeance and become as great an enemy as he was a friend.

The proto-Gormelites appear to have made the classic racial blunder of developing atomic warfare before perfecting space flight. They perished in the nuclear holocaust and its aftermath. Their genetically-enhanced warriors, however, proved more resilient, managing to survive, and eventually thrive and develop into the modern race of Gormelites. Archaeological evidence indicates that the last war of the proto-Gormelites took place at least 3,000 years ago.

The Shaggies were no better than TL1 when they were discovered, but rapidly acclimated to galactic society. Presently the Gormelite homeworld remains a dangerous, sparsely-populated post-nuclear wilderness where small tribes controlled by mutually-hostile warlords battle continually for the few resources that remain. However, it is estimated that over 75% of the galaxy's Gormelite population never sees the homeworld.

Gormelites will eat almost anything — a survival trait they apparently picked up immediately after the war, when supplies were all but non-existent. Although their digestive apparatus is only slightly better than, for instance, humans', the big difference is that no Gormelite has a trace of fastidiousness. However, since their exposure to galactic civilization (and the consequent increase in the food supply), most Gormelites have abandoned cannibalism.

Typical Gormelite nests hold three to 12 adults, with the ratio of females to males generally about 2:1. Gormelite females are normally just as violent and impulsive as the males, but a pregnant or nursing female emits pheromones that transform her into a self-defense pacifist, and tend to quell others' aggressive tendencies at close range. Consequently, the nests tend to be relatively safe places.

Gormelites reach physical maturity at about age 12. Those rare individuals who live to old age begin to age normally at 45.

Culture

While the Gormelite homeworld continues to be the same bloody backwater it's always been, the majority of the race has moved off-planet and carved out their own violent little niche in Galactic society.

Though the Gormelites are extremely territorial and acquisitive, they actually control remarkably few worlds, because they tend to be dominated by more subtle and technologically sophisticated races. Nonetheless, a few Gormelite warlords have managed to organize and carry out successful invasions of minor worlds and colonies.

Gormelites frequently duel among themselves. Although there is no particular stigma attached to treachery or ambush, it is considered very brave to formally challenge your foe and meet him head on. This action says "I hold myself so far above you I don't even need to attack you from an advantage." It's also a way of possibly gaining a new servant instead of just a corpse, since a challenged Gormelite can always get mercy in exchange for utter submission to the conqueror. Gormelites hate to submit, but most will grovel if the fight seems hopeless — Shaggies are violent, not stupid.

Painful experience has proved that it is not feasible to educate Gormelite young along with members of other races. Certain races, notably the Gerodians and the Humans, have established all-Gormelite tech schools where Shaggies can go to learn a trade or even earn a degree. These schools typically resemble a cross between Marine boot camp and a maximum-security prison, but many Gormelites stick it out and come out with a professional skill and even some inkling of how they're expected to behave in galactic society.

In spite of their impulsive nature regarding many things that other races take for granted, they are diligent and faithful when it comes to establishing and supporting their nests. Young males will often fight their father when they are

fully grown — often to the death. Yet Gormelites will never let their children come to harm.

Nests are always dominated by a powerful alpha male, and each adult knows his place in the hierarchy. Minor disputes can often be settled by a scowl and a cuff from the dominant party in the dispute. If the lower individual stands his ground, however, a fight is inevitable. Gormelites never fight in the nest, only outside. Fights are to unconsciousness, submission or death.

No adult Gormelite will willingly go unarmed. Typically, even starfaring Gormelites will carry a low-tech hand weapon — usually a club, mace or axe. Whenever possible they like to wear sidearms as well.

Politics

Gormelites are hangers-on to galactic society. They have no official voice in galactic policies and will not be granted one until they at least learn to get along with each other. The race has no heavy industry, and those worlds which have the misfortune to be conquered by Gormelites soon revert to barbarism or revolt successfully, as the rulers fragment and begin fighting among themselves.

There are no Gormelite extradition treaties. Gormelites who are caught committing a crime are tried according local law. On the other hand, Gormelites have learned the hard way that bad things happen to individuals, nests or warlords who take it upon themselves to discipline a member of a more organized race. The Shaggies, however, are impulsive, and such implied threats are not a sure protection against Gormelite anger.

Gormelites are quite intelligent enough to crew a starship, and several all-Shaggy ships, and even an occasional small fleet has been recorded. These usually end up turning pirate, or taking on a sort of Viking existence — peacefully trading at one colony, brutally plundering the next.

Gormelites will practice interspecies slavery, but generally prefer flunkies of their own race. Captives of other races are generally stripped of anything of value, then either killed out of hand or driven off.

The race has perhaps had the most impact on the galaxy as mercenary shock troops. The vicious Shaggy Brigades have become a familiar feature on the modern battlefield. Gormelite mercenary companies can range from a few dozen thugs to several hundred crack troops with the latest arms and armor, their own artillery and armor support, and even their own interplanetary transports with fighter support.

Gormelite troops have been extensively used by both humans and Kaa. Kronin will not hire Gormelites, and Kronin mercenary units prefer not to serve in the same vicinity as Gormelite mercenaries (unless the Gormelites are on the other side!).



Character Example

Blue Bollu

Bollu is a professional bodyguard specializing in protecting the ultra-rich and ultra-glamorous, particularly stars and major entertainers. He is heavily scarred with large patches of fur permanently burned away. That, plus his habit of dying the fur that remains a brilliant cobalt blue, makes his appearance much less appetizing than even an ordinary Gormelite's.

Bollu is thoroughly professional and very reliable. Since most of his employers are just as paranoid as he is, and rich enough to avoid problems with the law, there's little difficulty with the occasional accidental casualty. Bollu is smart enough not to shoot anybody important.

Bollu usually wears a formal jacket which conceals a shoulder-holstered blaster and a sap in the sleeve. He's devoted his entire life to perfecting his art, and even though he's not as young as he used to be and he's putting on a few pounds, he's still very good at bringing nasty situations to a rapid and decisive conclusion.

In person Bollu is very polite but rather distant. He doesn't like to be distracted from his job of keeping an eye on everything. Bollu drinks too much, but only off duty.

Blue Bollu is a 100-point character suitable for use as a PC or NPC encounter.

Stats

ST 16, IQ 10, DX 13, HT 14.

Advantages

Combat Reflexes, PD +1.

Quirks

Dyes his fur blue; Doesn't carry an axe or mace; Likes classical music.

Disadvantages

Alcoholism, Appearance -2, Bad Temper, Bully, Duty, Greed, Overconfidence, Overweight, Paranoia, Reputation -2.

Skills

Axe/Mace-13, Beam Weapons-16, Blackjack-15, Brawl-15, Carousing-14, Drive (Limousine)-13, Fast Draw-15, Force Shield-14, Gambling-12, Judo-12, Savoir-Faire-11, Stealth-13, Streetwise-12, Tactics-11.

SPARRIALS

Sparrial PCs

Sparrials are one of the best PC races, with their very low racial point cost, their aggressive and active personalities, and their racial versatility. A Sparrial will fit in with almost any campaign or party, but are particularly suited for situations where stealth and attentiveness are important.

Sparrials should be considered by the kind of player who likes to make things happen, who wants to investigate everything and go everywhere, and who's not addicted to the violent solution.

Sparrials should not get caught in a thief's rut. Players should be encouraged to look at other options — medics, scientists, performers, even soldiers. But whatever their job, they'll *still* steal things and "not hear" obnoxious orders.



Sparrials are thin humanoids with some a slight resemblance to terrestrial felines. Males are slightly smaller than females and often slightly faster. Their limbs end in four thin digits each. A Sparrial's head is broad and flat on top, tapering sharply to a pointed snout. The long pointed ears stick out parallel to the top of the head. They have large, deep-set eyes slitted vertically like a cat's. Their mouths are their most bizarre feature — closed they look relatively normal (although they're triangular, with three lips), but when they're opened they can be seen to be lined with rough, serrated bone instead of teeth and to contain several fleshy organs.

A Sparrial is completely covered with sleek fur. Most have varying patterns of brown or rust shades, but albinism is common. Sparrials have no nudity taboo, but often wear clothes for decoration.

The Sparrial homeworld is .95-G, with an average temperature of 65°. They breathe a standard Terran oxygen mix, at .97 atmospheres.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Sparrials have ST -3 (-20 points), DX +2 (20 points) and HT +1 (10 points). Racial advantages are Acute Taste and Smell +2 (4 points), Night Vision (10 points), and Temperature Tolerance (10 points). Their disadvantages are Gluttony (-5 points), Kleptomania (-15 points), Short Lifespan (-25 points) and Stubbornness (-5 points). They have the racially learned skills Climbing at DX-1 (1 point), Detect Lies at IQ+3 (10 points) and Jumping at DX+2 (4 points).

It costs no points to be a Sparrial.

Names

Sparrial names are mostly vowels, with a few "m"'s, "r"'s and "l"'s thrown in. Sparrials have personal names and family names, but the two are customarily pronounced and written as one word. Thus, Moulelm of the Aan family would write his name Moulelmaan. Personal names are usually two to three syllables and family names are one or two syllables — e.g., Rolemnarla, Leerlaounoora. Sparrial family names are customarily passed down through the female line.

Psychology

Sparrials are an energetic, adventurous and intensely competitive race. They enjoy new places, new people and new experiences. In spite of their love for action, they can be very patient, waiting intently and motionlessly for hours until something happens.

Among the Sparrials, petty theft is a way to establish one's status in the community. They will also compulsively pilfer from other races. Juveniles will grab and run; adults, on the other hand, will use stealth, misdirection and quick fingers. The Sparrial word for "growing up" translates as "learning stealth."

Sparrial thievery is not intended to gain wealth (unless the Sparrial is a criminal), but an instinctive attempt to show cleverness and establish social dominance. They will return a stolen item if asked, because this forces the owner to acknowledge that the thief took it! Sparrials always watch each other carefully, and a Sparrial will often let a thief keep a valuable item rather than admit that it was stolen! Individuals of other races who deal regularly with the Sparrials soon learn to request their property be returned after every contact. Sparrials will become angry and defensive if confronted rudely, but a polite request —



usually including a compliment to the thief's prowess — will work every time. Comments along the lines of "What did you get this time, Leerlaou? Hmm, thanks. Nice haul," are appreciated. Catching a Sparrial in the act will add to his respect for the catcher, provided the thief isn't threatened or berated. A remark like "Oops, I saw that one," will not upset the Sparrial but will impress him with the watcher's perceptiveness. The Sparrials know perfectly well that their ways are unusual by Galactic standards, but they don't see any reason to change.

Retailers and others who have to deal regularly with large numbers of Sparrials, and who must control pilferage, will usually leave out cheap but useful or attractive items in conspicuous places. Law-abiding Sparrials will recognize such items and politely confine their pilferage to these offerings.

The race's sense of smell is astoundingly acute. Sparrials can smell fear from most mammalian races. So acute is this ability that it is almost impossible to lie to a Sparrial — he will be able to smell the small changes in body chemistry caused by the stress of telling a deliberate falsehood. The inevitable consequence of this ability is that Sparrials are much more truthful to one another than to other races, simply because they know that they're much more likely to get caught by another Sparrial.

Sparrials tend to judge people by smell. Sparrials have been known to utterly refuse to associate with a given individual in any way, simply because their smell disagreed with them. When any individual first meets a Sparrial, roll 1d-3. The result, positive or negative, will be the reaction modifier that all Sparrials have to that person afterward, based on his odor.

Sparrials are not unduly offended by the odors of those who work hard — rather, the race bases their reactions on the individual's deep body chemistry. It doesn't matter when the individual last bathed, because the Sparrial can smell his perspiration and breath (of course, those who don't bathe can be detected from farther away).

Sparrials produce young in litters of three to seven. Sparrial females, however, have a very long and complicated fertility cycle and only rarely produce more than one or two litters in a lifetime. The young stay with the mother constantly for at least two years.

They place little value on social status — the individual's position in the society as a whole. Rather, the Sparrials are interested in individual dominance — scoring "points" on whomever they happen to meet, on an individual basis.

Sparrials traditionally establish dominance through pilferage, argument, and battle, in that order. Wealth and political power also enter into the equation, but not to the extent found in most other races. Consequently a randomly-assembled

Sparrial Adventure Seeds

Busted!

If the PCs step outside the law, have them brought in for questioning. The cops suspect the party but have no hard proof, so they send in the standard tough human detective, and his Sparrial partner. This scenario is most fun if the characters *know* that Sparrials can smell lies. The party will have a jolly time trying to convincingly answer the detective's questions without telling an outright untruth. The Sparrial's ability is not admissible in court, but it will convince the authorities that the party is guilty.

If the local legal system is anything like present-day America, the PCs will be able to claim that having the Sparrial present is a violation of their rights and have another, human cop take his place on a successful Law roll. Don't bring up this solution however, if the players don't suggest it. The players can also remain silent, but this will also privately convince the police they did it. In fact, even if the PCs avoid conclusively incriminating themselves, only *brilliant* roleplaying will save them from making the cops certain of their guilt.

It Takes a Thief

A brilliant scientist sold his latest invention to a ruthless interstellar corporation. On his way to the meeting where he was to deliver the plans, the scientist happened to stare disapprovingly at a Sparrial spacer on shore leave . . . who retaliated by lifting the computer disk from his coat pocket and went cheerfully about his business. The scientist didn't realize what had happened until he arrived at his meeting, reached into his pocket, and . . . !!!

The company wants those plans! And, incidentally, the thief . . . dead or alive. They hire the PCs, and probably several other independent agencies, to get the disk back. If the party locates the thief they find a terrified and pathetic sight. The Sparrial, Trostoo-oe (Stu, or Stewie, to his human friends), is no professional. He's just a ship's cook and cargo-handler who bit off more than he can chew. The Sparrial would *love* to give the disk back, but the company's competitors heard about the theft from an informant. They got to him first and forced him to hand it over to *them*. The Sparrial will do whatever he can to help the party recover the plans — he sees it as the only way to save his skin. He's about a 50-point character with a few points of disadvantages, but he is able to identify the bunch that took the disk.

Character Example

Leerlaounoora

Leerlaounoora is a professional thief in the grand style. His particular specialty is cat burglary, and he's rather successful at it. He's an amiable fellow of unremarkable appearance, dark-brown and brindled. He has a cover job playing keyboards in a local bar band.

Leerlaou is wanted by the cops, though they don't know exactly who he is yet. He has a definite sense of professional style, and is known for his MO of leaving a humorous cartoon or rather lame joke at the site of each robbery, earning him the nickname "the cheerful bandit" in the press. He doesn't steal more than he needs, although he's looking for that one big hit that he can retire on. He's never hurt anyone during a job, though he carries a laser, and he only steals from the very rich.

Leerlaounoora is a 100-point character suitable for use as a PC or NPC encounter.

Stats

ST 7, DX 14, IQ 13, HT 11.

Advantages

Absolute Timing, Acute Taste and Smell +2, Alertness +2, Double-Jointed, Night Vision.

Quirks

Leaves jokes at scene of crime; Chocoholic; Has never missed an episode of a certain daily soap opera.

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (only steals from rich), Enemy — Police, Gluttony, Greed, Kleptomania, Short Lifespan, Stubbornness.

Skills

Acting-12, Architecture-12, Beam Weapons-14, Climbing-15, Demolition-14, Detect Lies-16, Electronics Operation (Security Systems)-18, Escape-13, Fast-Talk-14, Holdout-13, Jumping-14, Lockpicking-17, Musical Instrument (Keyboard)-15, Running-11, Scrounging-14, Stealth-15, Streetwise-13, Traps-14.

group of Sparrials will be a remarkably fractious bunch for a while, until a pecking order is established. Likewise, a Sparrial will often adopt a "chip-on-shoulder" attitude when meeting new non-Sparrials. It is best, when introduced to a Sparrial, to be rather formal and very firm, at first. After a few days everyone will have a place in the Sparrial's dominance hierarchy and things will relax.

Because of the Sparrials' relaxed attitude towards the concept of property, many turn to the extralegal professions. Sparrial criminals tend to avoid entanglements with organized crime, preferring to work for themselves. As might be expected, Sparrials make excellent shoplifters, pickpockets and cat burglars.

The Sparrial world-view is focused on the here and now, with little time for what Humans refer to as the "higher" and "finer" things in life. Sparrial art and literature are rare, primitive and obscure. Sparrials love to dance, but their "music" is merely a series of complex rhythms, with no melody or harmony. Sparrials are excellent improvisational comics and storytellers.

Sparrials have no use for philosophy and seldom become scholars. The few Sparrials that do become scientists inevitably prefer lab and field work to theory. They have little religious consciousness, and are almost always agnostics.

Ecology

Sparrials are descended from small arboreal predators. They are a young race, evolving into their present form within the last 100,000 years. Sparrial culture appears to have developed rapidly due to the race's inventiveness and skill with tools, then come to an abrupt halt due to the Sparrials' inability to organize and cooperate.

When discovered the race was about TL4 in most things, but the Sparrials had never developed writing. Within a single generation they had fully acclimated to interstellar technology, and adopted the human alphabet for writing their own tongues.

The Sparrial diet is mostly carnivorous, though the Sparrials do use some vegetables in their dishes. Sparrial cuisine has become popular among several other mammalian races, including the Humans, the An Phar and even, to an extent, the Kaa, all of whom find Sparrial food simple but savory.

Sparrials grow rapidly, reaching majority by age 12. They begin to age at 40. Sparrials mate once and for life, usually before their 20th year.

Culture

Sparrial culture is diffuse and anarchistic. There is no social organization beyond the immediate families. Sparrials are nomadic by nature. Many aboriginal Sparrials would establish a territory or migratory route, and confine their wanderings to that route in a repeated cycle that could take one to 20 years. Other Sparrials would wander far afield and at random, with no other goal than to see how far they could get and how much they could see before they die. Consequently, modern Sparrials are enthusiastic space travelers, and will seldom stay in one place for more than a few years.

Galactic culture has had a stabilizing effect on the Sparrials, and while they cannot be said to have a government as such, they have cooperatively established several administrative organizations on their homeworld, regulating health care, education (including universal primary and secondary schooling, one major university and several trade schools), and offworld trade. Nonetheless, many Sparrials continue to live as they always have.

Sparrials are not required to educate their children (it's hard to require a Sparrial to do anything), but over 90% of the population does. Parents are expected to contribute to the educational institution to the extent their resources will allow, and students are expected to donate part of their spare time to assisting with maintenance and the educational effort.

More than half of the Galaxy's Sparrial population will spend a significant portion of their life away from the homeworld. Offplanet Sparrials range from itinerant laborers to specialists and technicians, to travelling performers and acrobatic troops, to teachers and scientists (they greatly prefer applied science to theoretical work). Several all-Sparrial space lines exist, including shipping companies and passenger lines catering to the Sparrial traveler on a budget.

Sparrial courtship is an involved and entertaining process. The female is generally the aggressor, pursuing the male of her choice for several months to several years. The female generally plies her chosen with gifts of food, toys and useful items. Eventually the male will reciprocate a female's gift; at that time the two are considered a couple. Once mated, a Sparrial couple will never split. Even if one member of the pair is killed, the other will not take a new mate.

All Sparrial disputes are settled between individuals. The usual pattern is for the aggrieved party to engage the offender in a loud and demonstrative argument in front of the entire families of both individuals. The first Sparrial to turn away from the dispute loses. If shouting doesn't work, the disagreement will progress to a ritual combat consisting of still more shouting and posturing, punctuated by light slaps, pinches and shoves. Such "combats" almost never result in serious injury.

Pilferage is a social mechanism to avoid open disputes, much like friendly insults among humans. If a Sparrial has proved his dominance through clever thefts, he is less likely to ever be openly challenged.

The vast majority of Sparrial disputes are settled through the dominance process, but it is not unknown for two Sparrials to fight to the death, or even for two families to engage in deadly feuds to the last individual. Such fights are completely different from dominance combat. A hunting Sparrial — whether he's hunting food or enemies — is patient, stealthy and completely silent. When a Sparrial strikes to kill he strikes quickly and mercilessly. Fortunately, because of the lack of any centralized authority in Sparrial society, disputes any more widespread than the family feud are rare indeed.

The Sparrial homeworld has no military or space fleet. Non-Sparrial visitors are policed by an unarmed Sparrial security force organized under the auspices of the Patrol.

Politics

Sparrials can be found anywhere on the space lanes, doing almost anything. They are particularly thick around major spaceports.

The race has a voice in many galactic legislative and advisory bodies, under the theory that a true anarchy constitutes a generally-accepted social contract that can stand in place of a racial government. Sparrial seats are filled by appointment from outside, since the race has difficulty with the concept of voting (most Sparrials will vote for themselves).

Sparrials often choose to see the galaxy under the auspices of the military or the Patrol. The most popular galactic agency among Sparrials is the Scouts. In spite of their contribution to the scouting component of the colonization effort, few Sparrials actually become colonists — the problem with new colonies being that the individual cannot leave whenever he gets the urge to see a new world.



Sparrials in the Campaign

The obvious use for Sparrials is as thieves — if the party has something the GM wants them to lose, send in a Sparrial.

Another obvious role is as nuisances. Sparrials are small, clever, aggressive and insatiably curious — they're a lot like eight to ten year old kids, only more capable. A Sparrial will want to see and try everything, and if adventuring looks like a fun and interesting thing to try, then the Sparrial will hook up with the first bunch of adventurers to wander by — and he won't ask their permission first.

Sparrials make good allies, and also good Enemies. A Sparrial might be a "friendly" enemy — a swashbuckling sort who keeps showing up to foil the party's plans and steal the gold and the glory for himself, then swinging off with a grin and a jaunty wave — or a silent, efficient assassin who wants to see some member of the party *dead*.

PACHEKKI



Pachekki as PCs

Pachekki make excellent PCs for those players who can get beyond the idea that aliens are Guys in Suits. For those who want a character who can function pretty much as a normal adventurer, but with just a touch of the bizarre, Pachekki are the best choice. The GM must make sure that the Pachekki's schizophrenic personality shifts are played to the hilt.

Most players will want to spend a few points to buy up IQ to normal human levels, but it can be amusing to play a normal Pachekki as a slunky or comic relief.

Players should not let the poor Pachekki ST dissuade them from playing the race in a heavy combat campaign. The Pachekki's high DX means they're good shots, and their extra HT means they can take punishment, both of which are more important in a science fiction campaign than mere brawn.

Though generally humanoid (two arms, two legs, one head), other humanoid races find the appearance of the Pachekki bizarre and disconcerting. The Pachekki have no nose or ears, huge, bulging multi-faceted eyes, lipless mouths and a "hair" of waving auditory palps. Their flesh is very pale, with a faint bluish tinge. They are tall and slender, almost elongated. An average Pachekki is a foot taller than human normal for its ST, and 20 pounds lighter than human normal for its height. Their arms end in slender, flexible, seven-fingered hands. Fortunately for the peace of mind of other races, the Pachekki wear clothing; they prefer shiny, waterproof material, cut loosely. Pachekki styles are currently fashionable among young Terrans and An Phar.

The Pachekki come from a watery .7-G greenhouse world with an average temperature of 100°. They prefer a humid oxygen atmosphere, with a pressure 1.2 times Terran standard. This is rare in low-gravity worlds, so the Pachekki will find "perfect" planets rare, and will lay strong claim to them.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Pachekki have ST -4 (-30 points), DX +3 (30 points), HT +2 (20 points), and IQ -1 (-10 points). They have the advantages Peripheral Vision (15 points), Rapid Healing (10 points) and Limited Regeneration (20 points). They have the disadvantages Appearance -2 (-10 points), Dependency (on water, special case, set at -5 points), Hard of Hearing (-10 points), Impulsiveness *or* Laziness (-10 points), Increased Life Support (Extra water needed) (10 points), Reduced Speed (-5 points), and Split Personality (-10 points). They have the racial skill bonus Swimming +3 (4 points).

It costs 4 points to be a Pachekki.

Names

A Pachekki's full name consists of a personal name, a family name, and the personal name of the birth parent. Each Pachekki name is one to three short, sharp syllables — Ikki Lakku Bidi, Jidichi Rikita Piti.

The Pachekki language is full of subtle vowel shadings; most other races can make themselves understood, but many repetitions are necessary, and mistakes are common. Pachekki soon learn to be patient with aliens who seem to be saying either "Season the mud-worm with bright orange" or "Interfere with both temperatures of my money." If you meet a Pachekki, and he speaks your language . . . let him.

Psychology

The Pachekki psyche is perhaps even more bizarre than their appearance. The strangest thing about the race is their habit of randomly switching between sexes. Pachekki all have a complete set of reproductive organs for both sexes, but only one set is active at any given time. On any given day a Pachekki has a one in six chance of switching sex in response to random environmental stimuli. Each sexual shift is also accompanied by a radical swing in personality — females are impulsive and generally hyperactive, males are lazy and lethargic.

There is no outward indication of which sex a given Pachekki is at any given moment. In fact, other than behavior, there is no way for most non-Pachekki to discern a Pachekki's current sex without dissection. Sonar-using creatures, capable of "seeing inside," can tell. Sex-change usually takes about half an hour and usually occurs when the individual is asleep or at rest.

Pachekki society is extremely cooperative, with today's females always prepared to pick up the necessary tasks which today's males were in the midst of when their sex shifted.

It is quite rare for Pachekki to have an IQ greater than the rather low racial average. Those Pachekki who do have higher-than-average IQs are instinctively accepted as leaders by the masses. Average Pachekki are not slaves or drones, but they will follow their smarter leaders with a matter-of-fact loyalty that rulers of other races might envy.

Pachekki normals seldom leave the planet of their birth except as a member of an organized group under the direct supervision of a leader-type. Most solitary Pachekki encountered on a non-Pachekki world will be leader-types.

Pachekki are "fixers." They like to tinker with their environment, and they are generally very good at it. When advanced bio-technology is available, they will tinker with their own genetic structure as readily as anything else. The race prefers the organic to the mechanical. They will not build any device they can grow. Some of the galaxy's most remarkable and useful bio-technological inventions were developed by the Pachekki. They do not scorn mechanical engineering, however — they can be remarkably inventive with those technologies as well.

The Pachekki have a great affinity for the water, and an environment where they cannot swim or at least bathe regularly will soon prove damaging to both mental and physical health. This is a very mild Dependency: Every day that the Pachekki is in an environment where water is in short supply, roll vs. IQ and HT. A failed IQ roll will cause the individual to become despondent. He will be able to do no work for the rest of the day. A failed HT roll causes the individual to lose one point of HT. This loss is cumulative until the individual arrives at a place where he can swim in fresh water.

Pachekki status is determined by accomplishment, but an individual's position is generally directly dependent on his IQ. Thus only the most intelligent Pachekki will ever have the opportunity to earn Status.

The typical Pachekki criminal is a small-time gangster. A leader type will surround himself with a small gang of normals and go into the business of extortion, robbery, smuggling, black market or what have you. A normal Pachekki criminal is usually easily rehabilitated — all that's necessary is to provide him with a more law-abiding leader. Leader types are more intractable. The Pachekki get around this difficulty by turning master criminals into normal Pachekki — through lobotomy, shock therapy and similar techniques.

Pachekki have their own traditions of art, music and poetry, all of which are completely lost on other races. Attending a traditional Pachekki social event has been known to give humans recurring nightmares for months or years.

Pachekki religion is as paradoxical as their other traits. They are monotheists, but they believe that the supreme being changes sex and personality just like they do — and just as often. The God is uncaring and usually absent, the Goddess is caring and active, but easily angered. The Goddess can scatter abundant blessings or hurl down horrible curses for any reason or none.

Ecology

The Pachekki are descended from omnivorous amphibians. Over the aeons they have gradually gravitated towards the land, but they're still strong swimmers with a great affinity for the water. The race reached its current form about

Pachekki in the Campaign

If the GM wants only one major non-human civilization in the campaign, the Pachekki are an excellent choice. Their strange appearance and bizarre behavior leaves little question that these are not human beings. On the other hand, their goals and motivations are close enough to humanity's that they can be strong allies — or strong rivals.

Pachekki are a numerous, advanced, versatile race that can be encountered almost anywhere doing almost anything. Those with human-level intelligence can be encountered as anything from shop clerks to dignitaries. Crowds of normal Pachekki will also become a familiar sight, always with their supervisor/shepherd making sure nobody wanders off or gets into trouble.

Pachekki should be played *strange*. They're not at all human, and they think even less like a human than most races (most of whom are, at least, mammals). A Pachekki might be completely uninterested in the massive space battle raging overhead, but utterly fascinated by the workings of an ordinary wrist watch. Traditional Pachekki customs should be particularly outré. The GM might force the party to accept an invitation to a Pachekki dinner party and let his imagination go wild.

Build normal Pachekki on 25 to 35 points, and leader-types on 50 to 100 points.



a million years ago. Their present civilization has endured for about 25,000 years. Pachekki evolution has been slow but consistent. They were TL9 space travelers when a Pachekki ship first discovered a colony of another race.

Few other races care to be present at a Pachekki meal, largely because they neither cook nor kill their meat. Modern Pachekki are quite urban, gathering in sprawling cities of several million individuals. The race prefers to build out, rather than up.

Young Pachekki reach majority at age 22 and begin to age at age 55.

Pachekki mate casually and often, though few eggs are fertile. A given Pachekki usually produces about a dozen fertile eggs in its lifetime. The common class is somewhat more fertile than the leaders. Pachekki young traditionally only know their birth parent. Modern Pachekki are trying to increase the number of leaders they produce; leader-type Pachekki will fertilize as many females as possible while in male phase, and (theoretically) will mate only with other leaders while in female phase. The female trait of impulsiveness is hampering this effort, though! Cloning and genetic engineering are also frequently used by the Pachekki.

Pachekki Adventure Seeds

Ship of Fools

The leader of a Pachekki work party on a non-Pachekki world has been killed in an accident. It will take several weeks to get another supervisor. The workers, in the meantime, are at loose ends, doing nothing except eating expensive Pachekki rations. The corporation that hired the work gang decides to cut their losses and ship the workers home. The PCs are hired to take the workers home, either in their own ship or a corporate loaner (which had *better* come back in one piece!).

The PCs are now stuck in a tin can for several weeks with a large group of sullen, bewildered dullards — they don't want to take orders from these ugly monsters, they want their own boss back. For maximum effectiveness the ship should be just a *little bit* too small for all the people it has to carry, and the water recycler should keep breaking down, which *really* upsets the Pachekki. They may even try to fix it themselves . . . The GM can always throw in little extras like drive failure and pirate attacks.

The Magnificent PCs

A small settlement on a remote and sparsely settled Pachekki colony is being terrorized by a gang of Pachekki bandits. The village sends out a distress call, which is received by the PCs, who are the only ship in range. The village and the settlement should each have four or five leader types. If the GM wants to play up the comparison to *The Seven Samurai*, *The Magnificent Seven*, *Battle Beyond the Stars* and all that lot, there should be enough bandits that the PCs will have to organize the villagers to fight off the next attack, and pay should be nominal, at best.

The bandits are armed with light infantry weapons (but no armor) and travel in ATVs. The villagers have a few sidearms and hunting weapons.

Culture

The Pachekki culture is communal and cooperative — a practical adaptation for a race that can never be sure what any individual's capabilities will be on any given day. Most positions of responsibility are jointly held by at least four leaders, to insure that at least one leader on any given day will be in an active phase. It should not be construed, however, that male Pachekki are completely useless.

They are much more rational than the females — when they can be persuaded to pay attention — and they often have a mollifying effect on the females, who tend to rush around wildly trying to do everything, and in fact doing nothing, unless given some guidance.

Like everything else in Pachekki society, children are raised communally. Pachekki are oviparous, and when an egg is laid it is delivered to a public hatchery/nursery, where the child lives until it is ready to join society. Pachekki social and physical maturity is rather slow, but



their mental development is a bit more rapid. Consequently, when a Pachekki leaves the nursery he has usually completed his education, whether he's destined to be a common laborer or a genetic engineer. Immature Pachekki leaders sometimes pursue advanced studies at non-Pachekki institutions, but only under the

direct supervision of a fully-grown leader, often an instructor at the same institution.

In theory, all Pachekki property is owned communally by the entire race. They do not think in terms of “this is mine to own,” but “it’s my duty to care for this.” The common folk usually live in large barracks-rooms holding 10 to 100 individuals, who also share mess and recreation facilities. Leader-types live alone, in small but conspicuously more comfortable quarters. This is because more sophisticated intellects have greater need of privacy and mental stimulation than less intelligent folk — at any rate, that’s what the leader-types claim, and the common folk seldom complain.

The Pachekki are enthusiastic colonists. However, although with a minimum of technological support a Pachekki can survive anywhere a human can, the race is only really comfortable on hot, wet worlds with dense atmospheres. This means that it is rare for the Pachekki to find a world suitable for colonization.

War among the Pachekki is rare, but it does happen. There has not been a major intraracial war for several centuries. In ancient times uprisings among the underclass were common; nowadays, modern technology allows them ample food and sufficient leisure, which is as much freedom as the average common Pachekki ever cares to exercise.

The modern Pachekki race is ruled by a racial council of 15 of the eldest and most respected leader-types. This council is responsible for sending representatives to galactic legislative and advisory bodies (usually a committee). The council also appoints its own members whenever a vacancy opens. Whenever time permits, votes on major issues are spread over as much of two weeks, to give each councilor a chance to consider the motion during a male phase and come to a decision during a female phase.

The Pachekki keep a standing army and navy which patrol and defend the homeworld and the colonies. None of the Pachekki colonies have ever declared independence from the homeworld.

Politics

The Pachekki are a powerful and vociferous voice in the galactic body politic. They have a reputation for being fractious and argumentative politicians, because of their female tendency to react extremely to any situation. Furthermore they are utterly insistent that their race be granted control of any newly-discovered world that falls within the Pachekki comfort zone, giving them a reputation as grasping imperialists. Objective analysis of the race’s politics, however, reveals that these perceptions are inaccurate. The Pachekki are genuinely less adaptable than most sentients, and their insistence that they be granted those planets that do fit their racial needs is not unreasonable, giving the number of worlds colonized by races like the Humans, the An Phar and the Cidi. Furthermore, analysis of their voting records shows that Pachekki legislators usually act with the good of the entire galactic community in mind.

The Pachekki are an important part of the galactic economy. Their most important export is technology. Many Pachekki are involved in light industry, producing the devices which the race develops.

Non-Pachekki living among the race are allowed to own property and pursue their own business interests, but they are heavily taxed.

Those leader-type Pachekki who wish to abandon their race completely and go live among others are allowed to go, but they will never be fully accepted by their fellow Pachekki again.

Stupid and tractable, the common Pachekki makes the ideal foot soldier, provided he’s supervised by leader-type Pachekki to at least the company level. Pachekki man the Galaxy’s cheapest mercenary units.

Character Example

Jidichi Rikita Piti

Jidichi is a leader-type Pachekki who wanted to leave the homeworld and associate with other races, but didn’t want to supervise normals. He (most Pachekki refer to themselves with the male pronoun in languages that make a distinction) got his wish by becoming a xenobotanist for a Scout scientific survey. He avoids the ostracism that comes to Pachekki who abandon the race, because as a Scout he’s aiding the colonization effort.

Once you get to know him, Jidichi is a likable being. His hobby is whittling, and he’s quite good at it. He likes to collect samples of alien woods to test their carvability. He usually has a knife and a stick in his hand when he’s not working or sleeping; in his dreamy male mode, he can often be found by following the trail of wood shavings. His carvings are decorative . . . to a Pachekki, which means humans find them unsettling. He’s a knowledgeable scientist and very good in the field.

Jidichi is a bit of a sucker, and has gotten himself into a number of questionable financial transactions when in his impulsive female mode. Much of his salary goes to pay outstanding debts.

Jidichi is a 100-point character suitable for use as a PC.

Stats

ST 7, DX 13, IQ 13, HT 12.

Advantages

Peripheral Vision, Rapid Healing, Limited Regeneration.

Quirks

Usually whittling something; Avoids “normal” Pachekki.

Disadvantages

Appearance -2, Dependent on Water, Gullibility, Hard of Hearing, Impulsiveness or Laziness, Increased Life Support, Pacifism — Self Defense Only, Reduced Speed, Split Personality, Struggling.

Skills

Beam Weapons-13, Biochemistry-13, Boating-13, Botany-14, Chemistry-13, Computer Operation-13, Driving (ATV)-12, Ecology-13, First Aid-13, Genetics-12, Knife-13, Naturalist-13, Photography-13, Research-13, Scuba-14, Survival (Swamp-land)-13, Swimming-14, Woodworking-13.

TREEFOLK

Treefolk in the Campaign

Treefolk like to get around the galaxy and see the sights. They are an excellent source of local color for the campaign — “There’s a long line in front of the monument. In front of you is a seven-foot-tall purple Tree driving a little cart filled with soil.”

The Treefolk healers are probably the most useful to the GM: “There’s nothing science can do for him, but there’s an old Tree on a far-off world who just might be able to save his life!” — and the race is also a good source of scientists, particularly naturalists.

Treefolk make good patrons. They are not aggressive enough to make good Enemies, unless, perhaps, the party seems dangerously anti-environmentalist . . . but a few armed Treefolk can make for a tough encounter. And the inevitable repercussions of harming members of this influential, normally peaceful race (no matter whose fault it was) will provide for interesting roleplaying.

A typical Tree is helpful, but rather crotchety. Remember that Treefolk hate to be told what to do. Treefolk should be built on 100 to 200 points, with a few extra points for the healers.

Treefolk as PCs

Playing a Tree in a 100-point campaign will be a challenge. The player will probably be forced to leave his stats and advantages more or less as they stand and take all his remaining points in skills. The PC Tree will also need to buy close to his maximum disadvantages.

The race fits in much better in a higher-level campaign. At this level it becomes possible to play one of the race’s healers.

One of the greatest drawbacks to playing a Tree is the race’s extremely slow Speed and movement. A Tree will never be a great combatant, and they’re no good at all in a chase. With their low DX they probably won’t be very good at flying a spaceship. Still, those who don’t mind taking a back-up or support role will enjoy the many unique attractions of playing a Tree.

Treefolk are massive creatures that take as much of their body structure from the plant kingdom as from the animal.

Treefolk move about on an undulating mass of thick, ropy “roots.” Their bodies are a cluster of eight mottled globular clusters from which emerge eight waving fronds. The two major fronds are considerably stronger than the others, and are articulated for use as fine manipulators. The minor fronds can be used to hold and carry light objects, but cannot really manipulate. The Tree is topped by three stalked, remarkably human eyes arranged at 120° angles to one another, giving it a 360° field of vision. Treefolk coloration ranges from a delicate violet on the tips of the fronds to a deep blue-black on parts of the body. The overall hue is purple.

Treefolk did not wear clothes until they encountered Galactic culture. While they need no protection, the idea of ornamenting the body was interesting to them, and well-off Treefolk often wear jewels in plastic or wooden settings (long contact with metal is unhealthy for them).

They are native to a 1.1-G Terrestrial world with an average temperature of 75°. They breathe carbon dioxide and release oxygen; atmospheric pressure matters very little to them. Their home star is a type F6; under dimmer suns, they tend to be sluggish, losing one IQ point for each spectral type cooler than F unless they set up special sunlamps.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Treefolk have ST +2 (20 points), IQ +2 (20 points), DX -3 (-20 points) and HT +4 (45 points). Racial advantages include DR 2 (10 points), Extended Life Span (25 points), 360° Vision (25 points) and Ultrasonic Speech (25 points). They have the disadvantages Color Blindness (-10 points), Hard of Hearing (-10 points), Increased Life Support (-10 points), Limbs Cannot Strike (-20), and Reduced Movement -4 (-20 points).

It costs 80 points to be a Tree.

Names

Normal Treefolk speech is a rapid ultrasonic hiss, though they can speak in lower registers for the convenience of other races. Consequently the Treefolk usually adopt use names. Most Trees name themselves after trees and shrubs of other worlds: Rowan, Baobab. Treefolk have no particular preference for naming themselves after Terrestrial flora, so their use names will often be completely strange and alien to human ears: for instance, Atchelik, an underwater fruit “tree” of the Pachekki, or the Obamu, a thousand-mile-long hedge native to the Gerodian homeworld.

Psychology

Treefolk are eminent naturalists. They love wild, unsettled areas, but they also enjoy working with nature, turning dangerously overgrown or barren areas into garden spots.

Although slow-moving and normally placid, Treefolk are neither pacifists nor passive. They are an intelligent, dynamic race with a keen interest in other races, who will guard their own interests zealously but who will not lose sight of the greater good of the galactic community.

Treefolk live outdoors. Their homes are beautifully sculpted lawns with a

variety of flowering plants, decorative hedges and soft, sweet-smelling grasses and mosses. There will always be a small shelter for the Tree's inorganic possessions, and often a large, heated greenhouse for the cultivation of rare and delicate plants. The Tree, however, will usually remain outside. Trees *like* to stand in the rain. The greenhouse, however, may be used as a refuge in the event of a hard freeze — freezes won't normally kill the Tree, but they will cause them to go dormant until it warms up.

Treefolk have an intense dislike for fire, often to the point of a phobia. Contrary to popular belief, this is not because Treefolk are more flammable than other beings. Rather, it's because on the Treefolk's oxygen-rich homeworld, even the smallest fire can be catastrophic.

Treefolk are not non-technological. They enjoy technology and make excellent engineers and scientists. A Tree's storage shelter will usually contain a large selection of small toys and labor-saving devices. However, the race believes that technology and nature can coexist harmoniously. Treefolk are intensely uncomfortable in human cities, where they cannot feel the soil under their roots. A Tree who is forced to visit a city customarily gets around in a personal cart with its base filled with nutrient-enriched soil.

They are fanatical individualists. When dealing with a Tree, courtesy is of the utmost appearance. If a Tree gets the impression that someone is trying to tell him what to do, it will usually leave abruptly and refuse to have any more dealings with that being. They are not, however, an otherwise uncooperative race, and reasonable requests for help will usually be honored.

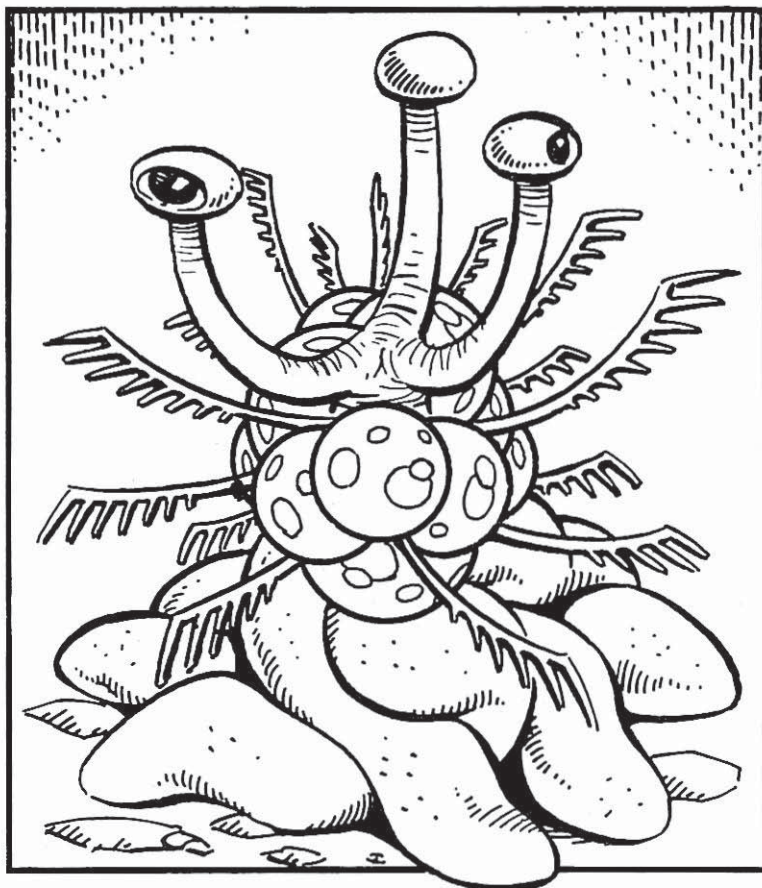
They have no native concept of Social Status, and little real respect for status in other races. Treefolk will accept responsibility, and even a certain amount of authority over other beings (provided it's temporary and advisory in nature), but they will rarely accept Status among other races, and when such honors are forced upon them they do not take them seriously.

Treefolk crime is extremely rare; the race's profound respect for their own individual liberties precludes their infringing on the rights or property of others. But it can happen. Treefolk make poor muggers or pickpockets, but they can be excellent masterminds, confidence men and forgers.

They are an artistic, spiritual race. The highest Treefolk art form is landscaping, which they have refined to a degree only approached on Earth by Zen gardeners. They are also musical: their music is vocal, and therefore largely inaudible to most races, though other races who hear in the ultrasonic say it is hauntingly beautiful. Unfortunately, Treefolk music does not translate well into lower registers.

Although literate, Treefolk have little appreciation for the artistic potential of the word. They have a racial contempt for poetry and florid storytelling, preferring plain speech. They do have a keen sense of humor, though they scorn puns, parodies, and other mostly verbal forms. Treefolk tastes run to irony and absurd but true situations.

Their religion is an advanced animism — they believe that every place and person has its own spirit. Though these spirits are sometimes extremely powerful, the Treefolk do not treat them as inimical beings to be feared and worshiped, but rather as friends, to be respected and communed with.



Treefolk Adventure Seeds

Repo Men

Last year a wealthy Tree ordered a heavy land-mover from its manufacturer. When the vehicle was delivered it proved to be defective, but instead of returning it under the warranty, the Tree decided to fix it at his own expense and stop making his payments to the manufacturer (he decided the down payment was enough for a defective machine). The PCs are offered a reward to go to the Treefolk planet and repossess the land-mover.

The characters are legally in the right, but the Tree doesn't care. He has a stun rifle and won't hesitate to use it. The PCs can legally restrain the Tree, but not harm it.

Once they get the land mover the fun really starts. The land mover is *really* slow, and the Tree owns a second vehicle — a small 'copter. The Tree will fly overhead, shooting his stunner, dumping caustic fertilizer and (mildly) poisonous insecticide on the party, flying ahead to blow up bridges and generally making the return journey hell. Again, any harm to the Tree or his 'copter will result in an unpleasant legal hassle, and all damage to the land rover diminishes the reward.

Medical Missionaries

A famous and powerful Tree healer has decided to travel to one of the poorest slums in the galaxy and help the sick. He hires the characters to escort him.

Technically the PCs only have to drop the Tree off and leave, but they will be asked to stay and help him set up his clinic. The Tree offers to pay their docking fees and provide food and shelter. That's all he can afford. If they say no it will be a short night's gaming.

The slum is huge — the size of a small European country — and makes the Black Hole of Calcutta look like a theme park. Billions of sick and starving people are controlled by ruthless organized crime and even more ruthless corrupt politicians, neither of whom particularly want to waste time or money on the masses. If a copy of *Space Atlas 3* is available, Biggs' World, with its starving masses and incompetent, paranoid leadership, is a perfect choice.

Ecology

Treefolk are not, as is commonly believed, sentient plants. Rather, they represent an advanced intermediary form between the animal and plant kingdoms. All higher life forms on the Treefolk homeworld belong to this intermediary kingdom. The Treefolk are by far the highest life form on their planet and have no natural predators.

Treefolk attained sentience at least five million years ago, and the modern Treefolk race appeared some three million years ago. After about a million years, however, the race entered a long evolutionary plateau and the Treefolk entered a timeless, edenic existence without biological evolution or technological breakthroughs.

All this abruptly changed when the spacefarers came. It might be expected that the Treefolk would be annoyed at the disruption of their almost perfect existence by noisy outsiders and their dangerous technology, but instead the Treefolk seemed immensely relieved that something was finally *happening*, and enthusiastically embraced interstellar society.

Treefolk are omnivores, after a fashion. They cannot metabolize animal protein, but they can eat the creatures of their own world, and most members of the plant kingdom.

Treefolk cannot swim, and will drown in water over three foot deep, though it takes several [HT/2] hours.

Again, contrary to popular belief, Treefolk do not grow from a seed. Treefolk have two sexes (although the differences are undetectable to other races), and the young are born live after a five-year gestation period. The newborn Treefolk roots himself for 70 to 80 years until he reaches his full adult size. Then he uproots himself and goes wandering until he finds a place to settle.

Treefolk begin to age 70 years after they become mobile.

Culture

The Treefolk are natural anarchists. They understand the concept of government but find it abhorrent. They will, however, cooperate to protect their interests against more highly organized races.

They do occasionally fight among themselves, but only one-to-one. Any intervention by a third party into a Treefolk combat would be seen as an intolerable interference in other's affairs and would make an enemy of both combatants.

Treefolk will never fail to aid the helpless, and are open and generous in response to real needs. However, if a Tree believes that someone is seeking his aid under false pretenses or otherwise attempting a con, the Tree will be offended to the point where that individual is in very real physical danger.

Although territorial, the Treefolk have little concept of privacy, and strangers are welcome to cross a Tree's yard, or even to rest there, as long as they show reasonable courtesy to the property and its owner.

Treefolk mate to reproduce only. However they are far from casual about who they will mate with, and a Tree (of either sex) who wishes to reproduce will often wander far from his yard in search of an acceptable mate. When a potential partner is located the couple will spend some time together — a period that can range from days when the couple is already well acquainted, to months when they're complete strangers — before consummating the relationship.

Treefolk young are born with a certain amount of inherited knowledge, including language (oral and written), and the basic customs and courtesies of their people. Adults living near a sapling (which may or may not include the parents) make it a practice to visit the young tree regularly, discussing current events, answering questions, and sharing their knowledge and experience. Mod-

ern Treefolk supplement this traditional guidance with educational tapes and classes conducted via remote communications.

Between what he was born knowing and what he learns from other Trees, a young Tree is able to do many things when he uproots himself. All he needs is to spend a certain amount of time gaining hands-on experience. Many of the newly uprooted do spend some time at off-world educational facilities. This is not only an opportunity to acquire highly specialized and technical knowledge and experience, it's also a chance for the young Tree to see something of the rest of the galaxy.

About one in every 100 Treefolk is a powerful psionic healer. Treefolk healing works on any known life form. They describe their healing art as "putting the self in harmony with itself," claiming they do not actually heal the subject, but merely open psychic channels which allow the subject to heal himself. Because it is natural and non-traumatic, as well as very reliable, Treefolk psychic healing is in great demand among the other races of the Galaxy. The healers have had some success teaching their techniques to sensitives of other races. Other psychic gifts are known among the race, but are much rarer.

Politics

Most Treefolk divide their lives between their homeworld and other planets. A Tree will typically work offworld for a time until he earns enough money to buy a few necessities and amusements, then he will return home until he becomes restless or bored. A typical cycle might be five years work followed by 10 years at home, though this can vary widely. A few of the most gifted Trees can stay on their homeworld and make a living as freelance consultants — those desiring their knowledge can come to them. Some others make a living providing needed services to emigrating and returning Treefolk and non-Treefolk visitors.

Off-world Treefolk often work as scientists, engineers or specialists. Treefolk gardeners are also greatly in demand among the affluent, and are paid even better than their more technologically-oriented fellows. The most affluent Treefolk, however, are the healers. Only the most wealthy and generous clients can lure a Tree healer off world (though some will volunteer their services, travelling to places of great need and suffering and expecting no payment). Most Treefolk healers now live within an hour's travel of their homeworld's spaceport, where there is a convalescent center the size of a small city for non-Treefolk. The port and the center are both governed by an independent non-profit corporation, and financed by those patients who can afford to pay. The center is largely staffed by Gerodians, who understand the Treefolk perfectly; the races are close allies.

Treefolk do not serve in the military. They find it an obnoxious way of life, and the military has little use for such ponderous and independent creatures. A few Treefolk serve with the Patrol as specialists or technicians. Treefolk often serve in the Scouts as naturalists and botanists.

Most major colonization efforts include at least a few Treefolk to help the settlers come to terms with their new ecology. The Treefolk have colonized several worlds as a race and have established large, park-like enclaves on many others.

Character Example

Rowan

A young and quite powerful healer, Rowan has spent the few years since he uprooted himself attending a noted medical school, acquiring the scientific expertise to allow him to perfect his psychic gift. Now he wants to see the galaxy and start to build his professional reputation. Rowan is also very knowledgeable about plants, and when he gets a chance to settle down he wants to start a garden. Other than that he has no outside interests — although he wouldn't mind acquiring some mild vices if he can find a few that agree with him.

Rowan is a 200-point character suitable for use as an NPC encounter or a PC in a campaign of the proper point cost.

Stats

ST 12, DX 7, IQ 15, HT 14.

Advantages

Empathy, Extended Life Span, Healing Power 20, DR 2, 360° Vision, Ultrasonic Speech.

Quirks

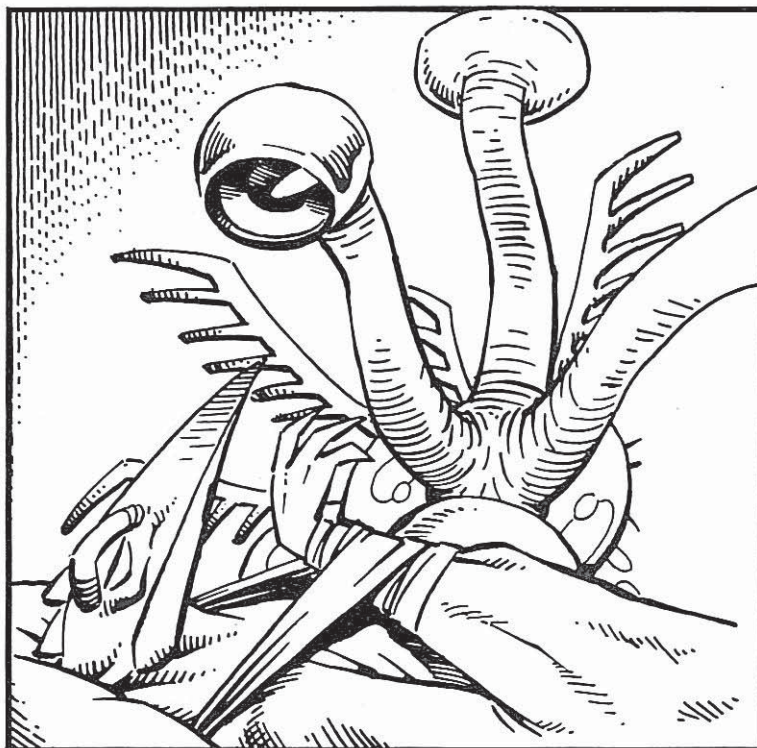
Rowan has no significant quirks.

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Medical Ethics), Color Blindness, Hard of Hearing, Increased Life Support, Limbs Cannot Strike, Reduced Movement, Sense of Duty (to sick and suffering).

Skills

Agronomy-15, Botany-15, Diagnosis-18, Healing-20, Naturalist-15, Physiology-17, Psychology-17, Veterinarian-15.



PURULU

Purulu in the Campaign

Whatever the individual campaign values most — gold and diamonds, power crystals, psychoactive spices, whatever — the Purulu homeworld is just loaded with it.

The Purulu should be played as villains, but they're villains the party aren't allowed to shoot at . . . more often than not they won't even see the Purulu who's making their life miserable. Purulu are utterly ruthless, small-minded and vicious, but they know how to stay on the right side of the law.

A Purulu Enemy can be utterly devastating . . . the poor PC who gets on a Purulu's bad side might as well forget he ever learned the words "credit rating."

And a Purulu Enemy is almost impossible to get to. Not only do they live on a planet utterly surrounded by the galaxy's best mercenary troops, in undersea bunkers protected by the very latest security technology, but their native atmosphere is instantly fatal to almost every race exposed to it (6d damage/minute to anyone not wearing an extra-heavy environmental suit).

Obnoxious Purulu tourists can become a familiar sight on civilized worlds, providing the campaign with local color, comic relief and adventure possibilities. Purulu tourists act like they own everything — because they usually do. The party might find themselves roused out of a sound sleep at 2 a.m. because a Purulu wanted a room with a view of the lake, or clubbed unconscious at a local tourist attraction by security robots because they were in the Purulu's way. If a nearly-extinct species on an environmentally sensitive world has attractive fur, you can bet that some Purulu will bribe local authorities and buy, perfectly legally, a permit to hunt it . . . with stun grenades and poison gas.

They can also be used as Patrons, employers or silent partners. If star venturers need a few more dollars for the down payment on the ship, or if they want to set up a corporate headquarters, a Purulu will always be happy to help them out. Two rules apply when dealing with the Purulu: always read the fine print, and never miss a payment. Purulu Patrons should be a surly and unhelpful as possible, browbeating the party mercilessly whenever they fail.

Purulu NPCs should be built on 75 or 100 points.

The Purulu look remarkably like Terran octopi, though they have ten limbs and the mouth is located underneath the body. Their six eyes are arranged at regular intervals around the head. An adult Purulu weighs about 50 pounds.

Their flesh is colored a vivid mauve (camouflage in their home ocean). Purulu do not use clothes, but often wear jewelry around their necks and tentacles.

The Purulu world is heavy, dense and radioactive, with gravity 1.3 times that of Earth and a normal background radiation ranging from 4 to 25 rads per hour. Its average temperature is 95°. The atmosphere is corrosive, high in oxygen and sulfur compounds, with a pressure of 1.65 atmospheres. However, the aquatic Purulu, breathe the planet's water, with its heavy (and poisonous to humans) admixture of ammonia and heavy-metal chlorides and oxides.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Purulu have ST -5 (-40 points), DX -1 (-10 points) and HT -2 (-15 points). They have the advantages 10 Arms — Cannot Strike (160 points), Extra Flexibility (10 points), 10 Legs — Cannot Kick (10 points), 360° vision (25 points), Wealthy (30 points). Their disadvantages are Bad Temper (-10 points), Bully (-10 points), Cowardice (-10 points), Greedy (-15 points), Increased Life Support — aquatic and radioactive (-50 points), Intolerance (-10 points), Miserliness (-10 points), Reputation -1 (-5 points) and Stubbornness (-5 points). Purulu have the racial skill bonuses Accounting +4 (10 points), Economics +2 (10 points), Intelligence Analysis +1 (4 points), Law +1 (4 points) and Merchant +1 (2 points).

Cost to play a Purulu is 75 points.

Names

Purulu names have been compared to the sound made by blowing through a straw into a thick milkshake. Personal names are five to seven glops long, followed by the name of the Purulu's birthplace — any one of the several thousand settlements and rural regions on the Purulu homeworld. Place names can range anywhere from two to seven or more syllables. Examples: Orgunumuagg of P'panurum'b, Nuggorop-pp-gumu of Shrukknukk.

Psychology

The Purulu are by far the galaxy's richest race, per capita. In terms of gross assets the Purulu control more money and property than any other races except the Humans and the Kaa. Their political power is proportionate to their wealth. In spite of this — or perhaps because of it — they are the most universally hated of any of the non-slaver races.

Purulu have personalities that are, by the standards of virtually any other sentient race, intensely unpleasant. Not only are they singularly greedy and grasping, they love to financially bully and oppress other beings. They are the galaxy's most notorious slum lords and sweatshop owners. They've raised the hostile takeover to a fine art. They are utterly ruthless in the pursuit of wealth and power. Purulu industrialists have been known to break a strike with atomic weapons.

Purulu are never criminals. Why should they be when they can legally steal everything they would ever want? Occasionally a Purulu gets caught over a line that even the rich and powerful aren't allowed to cross. After a 10-year litigation, the Purulu who nuked the strikers (killing 1,200 strikers and 22,000 others) was sentenced to life. His lawyers had him out in six months for good behavior.

Above all, however, Purulu are good businessmen, and they will only seldom squeeze hard enough to cut into their bottom line.

The race is acquisitive. Purulu are always buying up millions of dollars worth of art, property, antiques and anything else that looks like it might appreciate in value. Purulu own estates they will never see, starships they will never board, and art they cannot possibly appreciate — sometimes they buy art they can't even *perceive* — all on the assumption that they can sell it for more later.

The Purulu are even more ostentatious than the Kaa, and far more tasteless. The Kaa at least know they like things big and shiny. The Purulu honestly don't care what a work of art looks like as long as it's impressively expensive. They only take an interest in drama or music if they can sponsor a show, tour or film that looks like a major hit.

On one occasion, a noted human art critic commissioned a respected Tamile artist to paint a rock teal blue. The highly-publicized price was \$2,000,000. Immediately (as the two had expected) a Purulu offered the same Tamile \$20,000,000 to paint a bigger rock teal blue. Immediately on delivery of the Purulu's blue rock, the critic and the artist split the take, alerted the media, and retired. This has gone down in legend as one of the few times ordinary folk were able to con a Purulu.

Because, for all their flaws, the Purulu are brilliant financiers. They have an instinctive grasp of economic theory that no other race approaches, and their ability to stay one step ahead of the convoluted permutations of the galactic economy borders on the psychic.

Purulu crave social status, because it helps to offset their poor reputations in business dealings with other races. This — plus certain tax breaks — paradoxically makes the Purulu some of the galaxy's most generous philanthropists.

Purulu are universally atheists. They do not wish to contemplate the possible existence of a being more powerful than they are.

Ecology

The Purulu are descended from aquatic omnivores. The race evolved about 500,000 years ago, but did little until the coming of the space travelers.

Before they were contacted by interstellar society, the Purulu were TL1 hunter/gatherers who's primary achievement had been the domestication of a species of giant snail which they used for housing and transportation. The Purulu had few natural defenses and many natural enemies. Their only survival asset was their high intelligence, which they used for hiding and at constructing ingenious but primitive food traps. They constantly squabbled among one another over territory and food.

The spacefarers came to the Purulu world because spectrographic analysis indicated extremely valuable, and easily available, mineral resources. When they landed the explorers discovered that the spectrographs had been modest. Soon, even though the world was highly radioactive and covered with foul, corrosive oceans, a major industrial operation was underway.

Then some unfortunate ichthyologist discovered that the octopus-like creatures living in the shallows of the oceans were sentient, and even had a primitive culture. When contacted by the explorers the Purulu immediately demanded a cut of the planet's mineral wealth. There was plenty for everybody. The aborigines were

Purulu Adventure Seeds

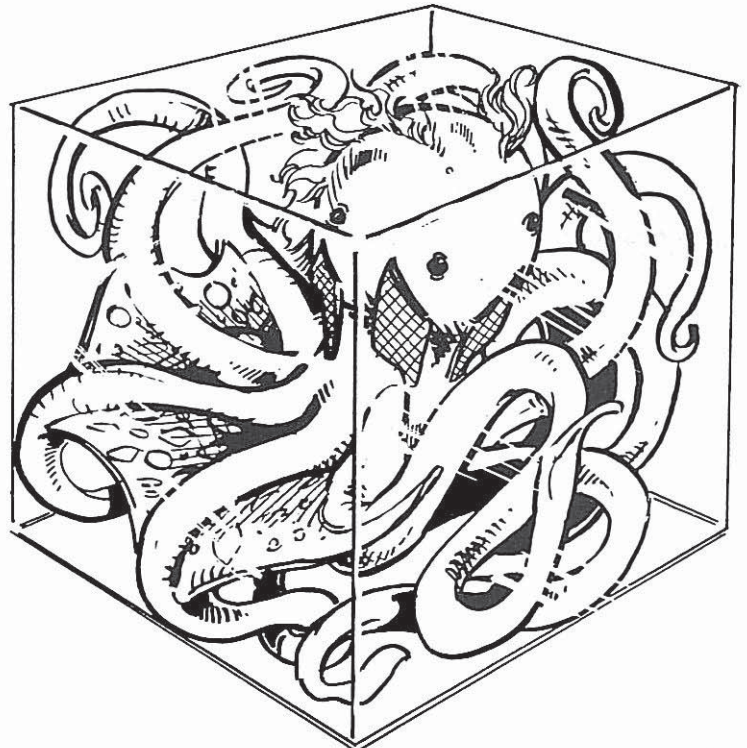
The Boss

The party overhears some unsavory types plotting the assassination of a visiting Purulu industrialist. If they act on their information, they can arrive just in time to intervene in the plot.

If they succeed, the Purulu will fire the professional security firm he was using and hire the PCs as bodyguards/escorts. The terms are extremely generous.

The new boss is completely impossible, of course. He wants to be around the world before lunch, and in the next system in time for dinner. He doesn't want any of his guards to block the view from his tank on any side, but he doesn't want them more than six feet away at any given moment. He orders them to beat up any poor petty official, headwaiter or merchant he happens to find annoying. Any insubordination by the PCs will result in their being fired with no money forthcoming. Of course there will be other problems — the boss's tank might spring a leak, endangering his life and creating a radiation hazard, and those assassins are still around somewhere.

If the PCs do deliver the boss safely back home they'll find one final surprise — unless they said they were *carefully* reading the contract, and made a successful Law roll *before* signing, the Boss will be able to invoke "penalty clauses" that mean he owes the PCs nothing — in fact, he might present them with a bill.



Purulu Adventure Seeds (Continued)

Runaway

If the party is ever *really* strapped for cash, the GM might have them recruited for domestic service on the Purulu homeworld. If they complete their two-year term their boss will pay all their debts in full, plus a generous accrued salary (equal to the campaign's starting wealth). All the PCs will be assigned to the same house, and one or more will be given the job of looking after the boss's pre-adolescent brat.

A few months into the party's term, the little darling runs away — offworld. The nursemaid PC is called into the boss's presence and given two weeks to bring Junior back. The rest of the party can go along to help.

It may not seem hard to track down a small, poison-breathing octopus in a big motorized aquarium, but this kid has a Platinum Galactic Express Card. From the moment the PCs take off, Junior will be employing thugs, mercenaries and bodyguards, and bribing police and customs officials to make their job rough. Junior will not order anybody's death (he's not sensitive, but he's very cautious). But the type of people he is hiring will kill without orders if they think it will keep the salary coming.

The easiest way to get him back is to cancel his card, but the PCs will have to think of this themselves and suggest it to Dad. This will bring him crawling out within 24 hours . . . if they think of it soon enough. Junior thought of it before he left, of course. For every day the card isn't canceled, Junior will pile up offplanet assets and credit good for two days of freedom.

If they can't catch him within a month, he'll come back on his own, but the PCs will have been fired at the end of the two-week period, and if they want anything they left on Purulu, they're out of luck; Daddy had it thrown out the airlock.

Purulu Player Characters

With all the race's physical and psychological disadvantages, a Purulu PC won't be able to do much except buy things for the party and complain about it. If that appeals to any of the players . . .

Of course, if the GM doesn't want any of his players starting off Very Wealthy or better, a Purulu PC is right out of the question. Poorer Purulu (yes, they exist) are trapped on their homeworld by the cost of the life-support gear they'd need to leave.

awarded a nominal percentage of the net and put in contact with the galactic governments cultural ministry. They seemed eager to learn about interstellar culture, and within a few years some were going off to study on other worlds, equipped with complex and very expensive life support equipment.

Less than a decade later, the Purulu sued for financial control of their world and return of all assets taken. Much to the shock of the galaxy, they won. A major interstellar conglomerate was completely bankrupted by the settlement, and that was the beginning of the Purulu's wealth. Since then they've just gotten wealthier and wealthier and wealthier. In a few hundred years the homeworld resources will be depleted, but by then the Purulu will own enough of the galaxy that it won't matter.

Purulu mature slowly, reaching majority at 30. They begin to age normally at 60. Purulu reproduce only once in their lifetimes. This mating results in a clutch of 10 to 20 eggs (though modern Purulu typically destroy 75% to 90% of their young to avoid dispersing the racial wealth among too many individuals). A Purulu couple traditionally stays together to raise the children, and modern couples frequently remain together, in order to double their investment power. Purulu are infertile when offplanet, for reasons that are not yet fully understood; if a female is not at home when her egg-pouch matures, she will become very sick and the eggs will die.

Culture

The mineral assets of the Purulu homeworld are controlled by a limited-stock company whose shares are only sold to Purulu. Each Purulu who reaches adulthood is given 10 shares of this stock, making him an instant billionaire . . . the only free ride he will ever get in life, and the only one he'll need. The corporation pays out half its income in dividends; the recipients use it to invest in offworld projects and further increase personal wealth. The other half goes toward the Great Project (see below). Purulu, Inc., is the most influential body on the planet; Purulu government is a cross between a corporate state and an anarchy of the filthy rich.

When a Purulu dies he can leave his personal wealth to whomever he wishes. His relatives have no particular legal claim, though most prefer to leave their wealth in the family. Purulu generally leave everything to a single individual, because they like the idea of the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. Often, a particularly noble Purulu will leave his wealth to Purulu, Inc. More often, a bitter Purulu will leave his money to some offworld charity, just to infuriate his fellow octopi with the waste!

The Purulu oceans are particularly noxious to most other races of the galaxy — almost any race exposed to the fluid will be dead within seconds. The Purulu have paid for the development of a genetically-engineered species of semi-intelligent fish with limbs, which can perform many simple and mundane tasks, and they can also afford servant robots which can withstand the local conditions. They really prefer, however, to be served by living members of other races, who must wear cumbersome, uncomfortable environmental suits just to survive. In fact, very heavy, radiation-shielded pressurized suits have come to be universally known as "Purulu suits."

From the outside, modern Purulu homes look like sprawling concrete bunkers. On the inside, they look like concrete bunkers with very expensive art on the walls (Purulu generally display art in pressurized, climate-controlled plasteel cases).

Modern Purulu children are raised by machines and servants. Often the parents will build a separate dwelling for the children to eliminate the risk of running into any by accident.

Purulu are in constant competition with one another, and frequently this will

lead to assassination or even armed conflict. Purulu corporate war generally takes the form of commando-style terrorist attacks by elite mercenary units on the enemy assets. Being radioactive themselves, the Purulu are rather callous in their use of nuclear weapons, except on their homeworld.

The Purulu homeworld is thoroughly protected by mercenary naval and marine forces, including Kronin, human and Pachekki units.

Politics

Many have wondered why, with all their wealth and financial genius, the Purulu don't control the entire galaxy. The reasons are threefold:

First, the Purulu homeworld. It is tremendously expensive to support a modern, technological civilization in such an inhospitable environment. Purulu must pay millions for conveniences that cost other races pennies.

Second, the Purulu personality. This tends to make other races tremendously reluctant to deal with the Purulu, demanding the highest prices, bilking the race at every (rare) opportunity and politically opposing Purulu schemes. Humans, Fasanni and Treefolk have shown themselves to be particularly enthusiastic in thwarting Purulu schemes.

Third, and most important, Purulu competition. The race spends so much time, money and industry trying to undo each other, they have little left for conquering other worlds.

Nonetheless, the Purulu are extremely powerful, politically.

Purulu are enthusiastic tourists. They get around on other worlds in conveyances resembling mobile aquariums. They are widely known as the galaxy's least polite and pleasant guests, Whole hotels have been emptied by the presence of a few Purulu (the Purulu just paid for the vacant rooms and continued their stay as the sole guests).

Sentients who will work on the Purulu homeworld are few and far between. And wages are the best in the galaxy. An unskilled laborer for the Purulu makes as much as a successful surgeon on Earth. However, contracts last for two years, and are ironclad. If the individual resigns for any reason, he gets paid nothing except a ticket home. Over 75% of individuals employed on Purulu quit before their contract expires. The exception is the planet's mercenary units, who are handsomely paid and extravagantly housed. The Purulu do not wish to lose their planetary defense over a labor dispute.

For any number of reasons the Purulu do not serve in the military, Patrol, or Scouts, but they do finance a goodly portion of these organizations through taxation, a fact they will not hesitate to bring up to any representatives of the organization who might be present.

The Great Project

The Purulu would love to colonize other worlds (or rather, pay people to develop other worlds, then move in), but so far their homeworld seems to be an anomaly. No planet has yet been discovered with the proper combination of gravity, radioactivity and oceanic chemistry to allow Purulu to survive in the ocean. This makes the Purulu fanatic environmentalists when they're at home. *They have nowhere else to go.*

Although it would be almost inconceivably expensive, the Purulu have a long-range plan to find a barren world and "Puruluform" it. At the same time, the Purulu subsidize the Scout Service heavily, and employ agents galaxy-wide to penetrate exploring agencies who don't normally publish their results. They are demanding but generous employers for freelance scouts. There is a standing offer of 100,000 shares of Purulu, Inc., along with the honorary citizenship that would make it all legal, to the finder of a second homeworld for the Purulu. And no one doubts that the price could be negotiated upward.

Character Example

Igglukk'kknuggic-arruk of Gorp

I.G. (as he prefers to be called), is one of the Purulu's most brilliant financiers. Like many geniuses, he's not entirely sane. I.G. owns a bit of everything, and his representatives are almost everywhere.

Most Purulu are reclusive, but I.G. likes to entertain. In addition to its typically cramped and barren servant's quarters, his home has a whole wing sumptuously appointed for visitors of other races. He's a great patron of live theater, and even though he's never seen a play and wouldn't understand it if he did, he will hold forth on the subject of drama for hours.

Among I.G.'s many endearing habits: Every time any of the millions of beings whom he employs gets a reprimand from his supervisor, that being gets a "ticket" in I.G.'s daily "raffle." Every day, I.G.'s computer randomly picks one "ticket," and the Scroogelike squid sends a personal message to that individual, firing and blackballing him. He does this before breakfast; it brightens his whole day. He is also notorious for showing up unexpectedly to inspect places and concerns he owns, and anything he doesn't like will earn someone *lots* of tickets. And the only way to get your tickets *out* of the raffle is to quit or die.

I.G. believes he is destined to live forever, and he's bankrolling a massive scientific foundation, completely dedicated to finding a way to create an immortal Purulu.

I.G. hates the thought that somewhere out there in the galaxy are beings who may be richer and more powerful than he is.

Igglukk'kknuggic-arruk is a 156-point character suitable for use as a Patron, Enemy or NPC encounter.

Stats

ST 5, DX 9, IQ 14, HT 8.

Advantages

10 Arms, Extra Flexibility, Filthy Rich, 10 Legs, Math Ability, Status 2, Strong Will +3, 360° Vision.

Quirks

Likes to entertain; Pretends to understand theater; Tries to visit every place he owns; Fires employees at random; Wants to live forever.

Disadvantages

Bad Temper, Bully, Coward, Duty (12 or less, not dangerous), Fanatic, Greed, Increased Life Support, Intolerance, Jealously, Megalomania, Miserliness, Reputation -1, Stubbornness.

Skills

Accounting-19, Computer Operation-15, Economics-19, Intelligence Analysis-17, Law-16, Leadership-13, Merchant-15, Psychology-15, Savoir-Faire-14, Strategy-17.

TRADERS

Traders in the Campaign

Traders can show up anywhere. Literally, anywhere. On a lifeless asteroid, in a nuclear wasteland, in deep space, possibly even in hyperspace, a Trader ship might pull up and say "let's make a deal."

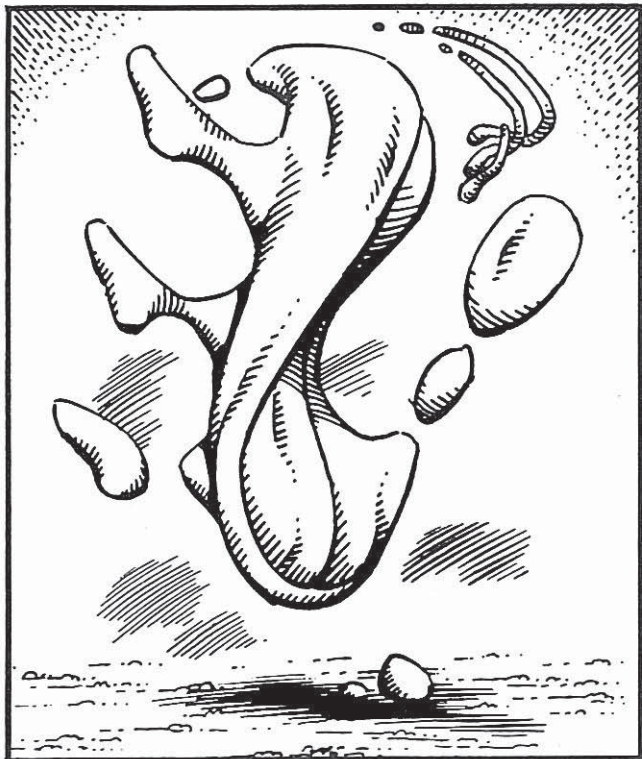
Traders are a great way to begin an adventure, by selling the party a treasure map, an artifact, a long-lost treasure or what-have-you.

They are also handy for injecting some atmosphere into the campaign, either of strange alien weirdness or of comic relief (the GM may use an imitation of his favorite radio or TV announcer for the Traders' voices).

Finally, the Traders can be used as a GM's Deus Ex Machina. Traders can't do everything, but they can certainly do everything the GM wants them to. Enigma is a big part of what makes this race unique — tricks like making moons disappear or knowing a fleeing con man's exact location need not and should not be explained to the PCs.

When using Traders the key words are *do the unexpected, have fun, and let the imagination go wild.*

NPC Traders should be built on 100 points or more.



Traders come from *somewhere else*. A great deal of a Trader's mass exists in a fourth dimension, imperceptible to the galaxy's three-dimensional sentients. Consequently, a Trader never looks the same from moment to moment. Only a few generalities are possible. A Trader usually appears to be floating a short distance above the ground. This is not true levitation: rather, the Trader moves about on invisible limbs. Some have described the overall impression of a Trader's appearance as being somehow inside-out. Often a Trader will appear as an amorphous central mass, through which other shapeless forms can be seen dimly. Often the central mass has several satellites of various shapes and sizes. Other times the central mass has been perceived as a two-dimensional line, an exact geometric shape, or a floating patch of shadow or of colored light. A Trader can look dramatically different to two persons seeing it at the same time, and the tiniest movement of the Trader, or of the person perceiving it, can change its appearance dramatically. A Trader's color changes as often as its appearance.

Although a Trader's appearance is not hideous in any readily identifiable way (in fact, some Trader manifestations are remarkably beautiful), their very alien nature tends to make many three-dimensional creatures uncomfortable around them.

The Traders won't say where they are from or what their home world (if it is a world at all) is like. Their behavior offers few clues.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Traders have ST -2 (-15 points), DX -1 (-10 points), and IQ +2 (20 points). Their advantages are Dark Vision (30 points), Doesn't Breathe (30 points), and Insubstantiality (80 points). They have the disadvantages Absent-Mindedness (-15 points), Appearance -4 (-20 points), Code of Honor — Business ethics (-5 points), Compulsive Behavior — Trading (-5 points), Fanatic — Trading (-15 points), Impulsiveness (-10 points), No Sense of Smell/Taste (-5 points), Odious Racial Habit — Extremely bizarre behavior (-10 points), Truthfulness (-5 points), Weakness — Iron (common, 1d damage per 5 minutes of exposure) (-20 points). They have the racially learned skill Merchant at IQ +3 (8 points), and the racial skill bonus Freight Handling +1 (2 points).

It costs 35 points to play a Trader.

Names

How Traders refer to one another — indeed, how they communicate with each other — is a complete mystery. Among other races they adopt use names. Sometimes the same Trader will have a different use name at every port. Among humans, for unknown reasons, the Traders 26 years ago suddenly started insisting that their use name begin with Joe. This is followed by a second name more particular to the individual Trader, often an adjective or compound word indicative of the Trader's business practices. Some better-known Traders include Joe Fargo, Joe Goodbuy, Joe Spooky and Joe Small Berries.

Psychology

Above all else, Traders live up to their name. They're a nomadic people that travel from world to world trading one commodity for another. Their ships are shaped like an onion and seem about the size of a large truck. Trader ships are certainly larger on the inside than the outside, because they can contain almost anything. Traders have been known to accept and to offer foodstuffs, raw minerals, clothing, comic books, radioactives, household appliances, antimatter, puzzles, pets, weaponry, vehicles, computer programs, drugs, robots and antiques. Particularly antiques — over the last century the Traders have been offered more than a score of Precursor artifacts for trade, all in perfect condition. These ultimate antiques have gone for as little as a lawn mower and a collection of humorous Fasanni novels, to as much as a small moon of a local gas giant (the moon in question completely disappeared two days after the deal was concluded).

Some of what the Traders take in exchange are apparently their basic necessities of life. These apparently includes a specific brand of cheap synthetic maple syrup, certain common pharmaceuticals, and a few rare radioactive isotopes which they seem to need to power their strange drives. Other items are asked for only once, are of no conceivable use to the Traders, and seem to be destined for trade with yet another race on some far-off world. Traders on regular routes will accept currency, but sometimes a Trader will say "Just passing through," and refuse it.

They are honest businessmen. Traders have at least two ironclad rules — they never renege on a deal, and they never reveal where an item came from. The concept of the lie is foreign to Traders. They will believe literally anything. Nonetheless, experience has proven that it is extremely dangerous to bilk a Trader. When a con man sells something that doesn't really belong to him to a Trader, the Trader will take it anyway. If the real owners, occupants or authorities object to the removal, the Traders will refer them to the seller — using his real name and present location! If told not to take something by an authority they recognize — such as the Patrol — the Traders will usually agree, on the condition that the seller return their original price, with interest! If someone trades something that doesn't exist at all, that person will eventually find some large part of his personal property "collected." Sometimes the con man himself is collected, never to be seen again. To prevent such unpleasantness, the Patrol has taken to monitoring and verifying all transactions at known Trader stops.

The Traders have also been known to defer collection for as long as several centuries. They appear to have a better grasp on the character of their client races than vice versa — credit is often extended to the genuinely unfortunate, but the Traders are seldom fooled by the same crook twice.

Many Traders return to the same stops trip after trip, though their appearances are not always regular. They do not come where they're not wanted, and will usually honor a request to leave and never return.

In all other things besides business the Trader's behavior is extremely bizarre, to the point of being inexplicable to most beings. Some examples of Trader behavior: a Trader purchases a frozen confection from a street-vendor, then stays completely immobile for a half hour watching it melt; a Trader asks who he needs to see to arrange a meeting with John F. Kennedy; during a military engagement between Gormelite and human mercenaries a Trader ship lands in the middle of the battlefield, four Traders disembark and wander the battlefield for 45 minutes in single file, communicating with nobody, then re-board and take off; a Trader walks into a major interstellar summit conference and offers a small plastic toy to anyone who'll give him a comb or a button. Finally a Phar attaché tears a button off his shirt to allow the meeting to continue.

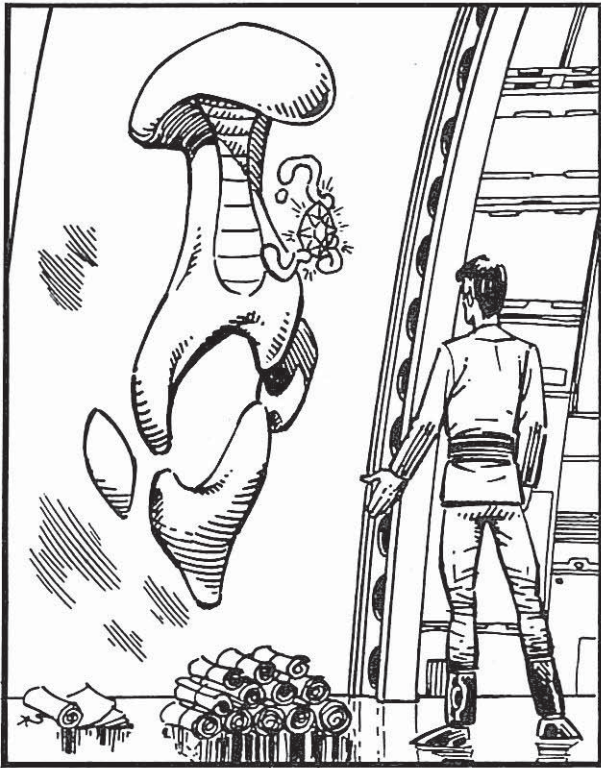
Trader Player Characters

For all their bizarre ways, Traders can make excellent PCs. A few things are necessary before playing the race: an experienced roleplayer who's looking for a challenge and a new experience, and a GM and other players who don't take their campaign too seriously to let a little strangeness in.

A Trader PC does not mean that the PCs have access to all the secrets of the Trader race — even the player doesn't need to know how they pull off their more dramatic stunts. A Trader's player should learn a couple of stock answers. To the question, "Can you (perform some useful but impossible stunt)," the proper reply is, "I can't do that now." To the question, "How do Traders (make, do, know whatever)," the reply is, "With a machine." To questions about origins, trade routes and other customers, the reply is "I can't tell you that." Carry this to the limit. If a given Trader has ever traded with the Kaa, his answer to the question "How many arms does a Kaa have?" will be "I can't tell you that." If neither he nor any of his (relatives? shipmates? friends? employers?) have ever traded with the Kaa, the answer might be anything from "I don't know," to an offer to sell a Kaa encyclopedia, to the correct, up-to-the-minute answer: "On the average, 1.9999245672."

A Trader should be played bizarrely, but not stupidly. He might get the party in trouble, but he's no more likely to get them killed than any other PC. A Trader is able to understand that when people are shooting at you it's a good idea to shoot back or run away. However, he might not be able to figure out why the Bishop won't trade that ugly old icon for this shiny new multi-species girlie magazine, or why he needs to wait for the end of the sermon before making his pitch.

Most of all the player needs to remember that Traders trade — anytime, anywhere, for anything, with anybody. This includes the rest of the party. If the Trader gets handed a knapsack to carry, he'll offer something in return. And if anybody later wants something out of that knapsack, he'd best be prepared to make an offer for it. And a Trader never takes the first offer . . . they love to bargain.



The Trader hands over the toy and leaves. The guards outside the room never saw him enter or leave.

Traders have never been known to deliberately commit a violent crime, though they seem unable to grasp certain points of 3-dimensional law — for instance, it is impossible to get a Trader to pay a tariff, tax or duty without offering him something concrete in return.

Much of their trade is in art and recorded entertainment, and they profess to enjoy some of it, though it is impossible to predict what will strike a Trader's fancy.

Nothing is known of the Traders' philosophy or religion. When gods come up in conversation, Traders seem to have difficulty understanding why they can't meet with the deities and perhaps make a deal.

Telepaths have repeatedly tried to learn about the Traders from their minds. There is no particular difficulty to reading a Trader's mind, but the information gained is either trivial, or completely indecipherable and untranslatable into any known language.

Ecology

Nothing is known of the Traders' evolution or home world.

Most xenologists believe that the race evolved in some other dimension, since they seem to be able to interface only partially with ours. The Engai have confirmed that the race has been around since before the present cycle of galactic civilization, but exactly how long is unclear.

Many of the Traders' more extravagant exploits (like what they did with that moon) remain completely unexplained, but a few of the race's unique traits are obvious. Traders communicate with other races only via radio frequencies. (This is not treated as an advantage or disadvantage; it's a "special effect.") Their "radio voices" are strong and pleasant, and appear to be modeled on those of professional broadcasters of the appropriate language. They can hear normally. Traders can pass through most solid objects at will. They do not seem to be able to carry anything with them when they do this . . . usually. They do not need light to see their surroundings. Traders also have a rather violent racial antipathy to iron. This has led some xenologists to suggest that Traders visited primitive Earth and other planets, since many mythologies involve insubstantial spirits or demons who fear iron.

The specifics of the Trader diet are unknown, except for the fact that the race consumes huge amounts of various sugars.

Certain Trader remarks indicate that the race is multi-sexual, with several individuals being needed to produce offspring. On several occasions, Traders have introduced other Traders with them as their offspring. No more than one Trader child has ever been seen at a given location. Children do not communicate with other races — it has been suggested that the ability to broadcast radio develops late in the maturation process. Traders do not appear to be any longer lived than Humans, Phar and the majority of the galaxy's races. They trade with the Engai for highly exotic chemicals which they say they use for anti-agathics.

Culture

Traders seem to spend their entire lives traveling. Often a single Trader ship will visit the same port for hundreds of years. Trade routes change only slowly, as old markets close and new ones open up. Frequency of return to a given port varies from regularly once every 18.33 standard days, to regularly once every

Trader Adventure Seed

Scavenger Hunt

Somebody traded something he shouldn't have to the Traders. The secret plans, weapon, drug or whatever somehow got shuffled into a pile of junk that was traded as a lot in exchange for some office furniture and canned sardines. The PCs are hired to recover the lost object.

What they have to do is try to predict the Trader's unpredictable schedule, then visit several worlds the insubstantial travelers are known to frequent, trying to hook up with the aliens and get the word out what they're in the market for. They're given a ship full of trade goods and told to hurry.

This is less an adventure in itself than a way to get the PCs in a ship and moving around the planets. They should visit several worlds (each with its own potential adventure) and speak to a couple of different Traders before the ones they're looking for pull up alongside their ship and offer to barter for the lost item. Of course, they may want something specific. And of course this something specific will be far off and hard to get to . . .

81.96 standard years! And, of course, some ships appear often but irregularly, and some Traders have indicated that their routes are so long that they will not hit the same port twice during a lifetime!

Trader ships are difficult to trace and their drive mechanisms are unknown. Their onion ships tend to appear in orbit as though out of nowhere, and land as soon as permission is obtained. They depart just as quickly. It is believed that Traders travel between dimensions regularly, and that they even have regular ports of call outside of reality as we know it. It is unknown how fast the Trader drive is, since it is impossible to determine how many unrecorded stops they make between known ports. There is some inconclusive evidence that Traders can travel much faster than standard galactic ships, but generally their travel times are in accord with current galactic technology.

Traders will never take on passengers or allow a non-Trader to board their ships. They will discuss their trade routes only in general terms. Even those whose appearance is as regular as clockwork will never contract to any sort of schedule.

No two Trader ships have ever been seen together. It is unknown when and if different Trader crews meet or communicate. As many as 20 different Traders have been seen to leave the same ship, but usually no more than two or three at a time are ever out of the ship. It is even unknown how the ships are governed — whether they have a captain, officers and crew or are more cooperatively ran. Traders don't appear to understand concepts like rank, status and wealth.

On very rare occasions a Trader will leave the onion ship and live for a time among 3-dimensional creatures. They will usually make a living doing what they've always done — trading, but on a smaller scale. These individuals never give any reason for leaving the ship. Some eventually rejoin their ship or another; others have died among 3-dimensional strangers. Attempts to dissect the bodies have led to more frustration than knowledge.

Politics

Other than their regular stops, Traders take no part in Galactic politics. One of the few things they will not deal in is gossip or information about their other stops. There are no known permanent Trader offices, enclaves or settlements.

They have no political prejudices or affiliations. They are just as eager to deal with conquerors as with rebels.

Over the years they have learned to recognize the authority of certain organizations, notably the Patrol and the galactic navy. Normally the Patrol will set up an office at any Trader bartering site to record sales and purchases. This not only serves to protect the Traders from fraud (and the crooks from Trader retribution), but also prevents private citizens from walking off with Precursor artifacts or nuclear weaponry. Galactic law allows the Patrol to examine everything purchased from the Traders and confiscate any item deemed hazardous to the security, safety or economic stability of society or individuals. The government is only required to refund to the purchaser the cash value of his price.

Occasionally individuals have tried to assault or rob the Traders. Normally the Traders just turn intangible and leave. Any items the Traders are forced to leave behind tend to vanish mysteriously over the next few days. On one occasion, a Gormelite-ruled world demanded an exorbitant tariff from Traders; when they refused, an experimental energy weapon was used, killing four Traders. The Trader ship lifted off anyway, leaving behind only an apparently ordinary H-bomb, which destroyed the spaceport and much of a nearby city. Traders have also been known to retaliate violently to pirate attacks, but usually just disappear.

Character Example

Joe Fargo

Joe Fargo is the main bargainer for a crew of Traders that has been plying several of the Galaxy's major worlds for centuries. It's been many decades since his crew first encountered humanity, and this Joe is just the latest in a succession of beings who've used the name.

At some point in the past Joe Fargo must have been injured in whatever organ generates his radio communication, because his voice is always accompanied by random bursts of static, making communication with him not unlike trying to hold a conversation with a chronic stutterer. Needless to say, it never occurs to the Traders to put someone with an operative voice box in charge of negotiations.

Joe Fargo is a 100-point character suitable for use as a PC or NPC encounter.

Stats

ST 8, DX 9, IQ 13, HT 11.

Advantages

Absolute Direction, Dark Vision, Doesn't Breathe, Insubstantiality, Intuition, Wealthy.

Quirks

Joe Fargo has no quirks that members of other races can detect.

Disadvantages

Absent-Mindedness, Appearance -4, Compulsive Behavior, Fanatic, Impulsiveness, No Sense of Smell/Taste, Odious Racial Habit, Stuttering, Truthfulness, Weakness — Iron.

Skills

Astrogation-14, Beam Weapons-10, Engineer (Vehicles)-15, Freight Handling-15, Gesture-15, Mechanic (Vehicles)-13, Merchant-18, Piloting (Large ship)-11, Stealth-10.

TRUUL

The Truul are small humanoids about four feet tall. They have large, wide-set yellow eyes, bulbous noses, small mouths and a shock of thick hair on their heads only. Their limbs are spindly and end in five digits each. Truul are typically very pale, but their skin can be tinged a faint yellow, red, blue or green. Their hair is usually a darker shade of the same color as their skin. Truul wear anything or nothing or nothing, depending on their master's desires; this usually consists of simple clothing according to local fashion.

The Truul's homeworld is a .92-G planet under a G-type star almost identical to Sol. It has an average temperature of 62°, with almost no seasons, and an Earth-type atmosphere with .98 pressure.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Truul have ST -2 (-15 points), DX +1 (10 points), and HT -3 (-20 points).

They have the advantages Cultural Adaptability (25 points), Passive Defense 1 (25 points), Language Talent +3 (6 points) and Recovery (10 points), and the disadvantages Status -1 (-5 points) and Slave Mentality (-40 points).

It costs -4 points to play a Truul.

Names

Truul are named by their masters, not by their parents, so there is no racial convention for naming Truul. A master can rename a Truul at any time, and the Truul will use that name thereafter, until its master gives it another name.

Psychology

The Truul are one of the saddest races in the galaxy. They are a true, genetically designed slave race. It is often said that the Truul are a stupid people. This is utterly false. They are intelligent — sometimes remarkably so. They have, however, almost no free will. A Truul can only do what he's told — he's completely lost without authoritarian guidance. The Truul are perfectly well aware of this aspect of their character, and they know they are unique, but they

have no desire whatsoever to change. They like being who and what they are; the concept of freedom horrifies them.

Truul are quick learners, and there is little that is beyond their grasp — a Truul could be trained to single-handedly navigate and pilot a small starship. And the Truul would do so, if ordered. Yet that same individual, if he were starving and found a credit lying in the gutter, would not be able to pick up the money and go buy food unless someone were to tell him to.



A Truul bonds himself to only one master at a time. He will obey or serve anyone his master tells him to, but in his own mind the Truul is only serving one individual.

A masterless Truul can be a great annoyance, because of their habit of attaching themselves to the first non-Truul to acknowledge their presence. They will follow their new master everywhere, patiently waiting for instructions, regardless of whether the new master wanted a servant or not.

A Truul will obey an order to “go away” or “get lost,” but this makes them so utterly dejected that many unwilling masters are forced to rely on subterfuge to rid themselves of an unwanted, unasked-for servant. There is perhaps no sadder sight in the galaxy than a Truul, clutching the candy bar or magazine he was sent to buy, frantically searching the spaceport lobby for a master whose ship left five minutes ago.

Needless to say, the race has also been brutally exploited in thousands of ways. A Truul will cheerfully work himself to death if ordered to, and there are many beings in the galaxy who would not hesitate to give that order. Many unscrupulous corporations “hire” Truul for mining hell-worlds and similar labor. Even worse, the Kaa are known to cultivate a large population of Truul which they use not only for the lowest slave jobs, but also as cattle — the Kaa find Truul flesh tasty. Sadly, many masterless Truul will cheerfully accept passage to a Kaa world if it’s offered. They prefer Kaa cruelty to being left to their own devices.

There are a few things a Truul can do for himself. He doesn’t need to be told when to eat or drink, though if told not to eat he will stoically starve himself to death. He will not work himself to exhaustion unless commanded to. Truul will mate as ordered, but orders are not necessary for reproduction to occur. If a Truul is given a daily routine or a long range plan to follow he will do it, even if it is extremely complex.

They do not even lack imagination. A Truul is as likely to come up with a good plan or a useful suggestion as anybody else, if asked. What they lack is the will which would enable them to act on their own ideas.

If threatened or struck by its master, a Truul will cower silently, passively accepting whatever punishment is given. If threatened by anyone beside their master they will run away or hide — they have an uncanny skill at avoiding blows and missiles, derived from thousands of generations of avoiding casual kicks and cuffs. If ordered to fight, the Truul will fight with utter ferocity. They are anything but cowards.

In fact, a Truul will even stand up to a non-Truul if under orders. If given a command like “make them give you the money and don’t take any of their guff,” a Truul will hotly demand his master’s rights from even the most socially or physically intimidating individual.

The only form of rebellion a Truul seems to be capable of is transfer of allegiance. If a Truul is being physically abused by his present master, and a new individual who the Truul might prefer to serve presents himself, the Truul will very often begin to follow and serve the new master, without any formal declaration, and with no desire to inform the old master of his intentions. It is very rare, however, for a Truul to transfer his allegiance without an express invitation from the new master.

A good, kind master who gives the Truul plenty of reasonable responsibility, and an occasional smile, will earn lifelong loyalty. A Truul will never willingly leave a master he loves.

If ordered to commit a crime by his master the Truul will not hesitate. Most civilized governments will not punish a Truul for obeying criminal orders, but instead make using a Truul in a criminal endeavor an additional crime which can be added to the charges against the master. Most criminals consider Truul hench-

Truul in the Campaign

Truul can be a real pain. They wander around like little lost kids until some poor sucker pays attention to them, and wham! he’s stuck for life. He doesn’t need a servant, he doesn’t want to pay to feed the Truul, everybody’s looking at him funny because he owns a slave . . . but if he tells the Truul to take off it just looks at him with those big eyes and acts like he’s just destroyed the Truul’s only reason for living — because he has.

Nuisance value aside, a Truul can also make an excellent continuing NPC or sidekick — they’re devotedly loyal to a good master, they’re not too powerful, but they can definitely come in handy.

Truul should be built on 30 to 50 points.

Truul Player Characters

A Truul should never begin the game with more than 50 points. For a player looking for the challenge of playing a low-point-value character, this race is ideal. Normally, however, Truul PCs will not be in great demand.

Of course, any player who does decide to play a Truul will have to attach himself to a PC or continuing NPC as a servant.

Truul Adventure Seeds

Hello, Master!

One of the PCs arrives home (back at his ship, or whatever) to find a Truul waiting for him. The little being had a passkey and let himself in. When he sees the PC, he greets him gravely and asks for instructions. (He had already cleaned up the house; it’s spic-and-span.)

On questioning, it proves that the Truul’s former owner had called the Truul in and said that he, the owner, was dying. He had given the Truul the passkey, the PC’s picture, and instructions to go over, clean up, and then make himself useful; the PC was his new master. The owner’s name was Racar Hahn; the PC never heard of him.

So: the PC has himself a Truul. What next?

The GM with a taste for slapstick can have the same thing happen next week, to the same person. And again . . . *Someone* is going to a great deal of trouble to saddle the poor victim with helpful, loving, dependent Truuls. Who? *Why?*

Continued on next page . . .

Truul Adventure Seeds (Continued)

16 Tons

An asteroid mining company is running an operation using cruelly-treated Truul labor. The Patrol has no jurisdiction and the local authorities have been paid off. A powerful humanitarian organization (whose most generous patron just happens to be a major competitor of the company using the Truul), decide that enough is enough. The PCs are hired to close down the operation. No Truul are to be harmed. Possible legal entanglements are to be avoided. If the party succeeds, they'll be rewarded handsomely; if they fail, the organization will deny everything.



men unreliable anyway, because it is relatively simple for police psychologists to persuade the Truul to transfer his allegiance to a policeman or official, who will then order the Truul to tell everything he knows about his former master. And, of course, the Truul will . . . in detail.

Truul appear to enjoy all entertainment indiscriminately. A few Truul have been discovered to possess genuine artistic or literary talent, which they will happily exercise for the benefit of their master. Many more are fine craftsmen, whose work is good enough to be classified as art.

Truul will worship as their masters do, with what seems to be a very real fervor. They will abandon their faith in a moment, however, if ordered to.

Ecology

Like the Gormelites, the Truul are a race of genetic constructs. It is not known, however, what became of the Truul's first masters. Like many ancient civilizations they conquered wide territories, built great cities, flourished for a while and then vanished, seemingly overnight, without a trace.

Archaeological evidence indicates that the Truul's creators were reptilian bipeds who established the primitive beginnings of their civilization more than 50,000 years ago. It's not known exactly when the Truul were created, but they were developed from a small local primate which still exists, chosen, no doubt, for its intelligence and manual dexterity.

When the masters vanished, their civilization was about TL9, so it is possible they went into space, though no evidence of star or even space travel has been discovered. This happened about 6,000 years before the coming of the starfarers. The Truul did not know where they went — nobody had told them to keep a record.

When they were rediscovered, the Truul were well on the way to extinction. Their masters had apparently expected to return; they had left rather complex orders for training young Truul and maintaining a society. But gradually things happened — mechanical failures, natural disasters, plagues — beyond the scope of the instructions. By the time the star-visitors came, only a half-dozen urban areas on the whole planet held survivors. Everywhere else, there had been enough breakdowns that the Truul's instructions no longer held good . . . and the helpless Truul, unable even to go into the garden and pick fruit without orders, starved to death!

The Truul were still genetically healthy, however, and the race revived rapidly once the starfarers brought back technology and medicine and, even more importantly, someone to serve.

Truul are fully grown by age 13 (although they expect to begin work at about 3). They begin to age normally at 40.

Culture

Truul have almost no culture of their own. Even their name for their race was

eventually discovered to be merely their creators' word for "servant." Nobody remembers the native language of the Truul (which they learned from their creators) except a few linguists.

Even racial rituals are minimal — two new parents will always go together to present their baby to the master for naming, and as many Truul as can will assist with the burial of one of their fellows. There are no more highly developed customs than this.

Instead, the Truul adopt the cultures of their masters — something they do with an ease that rivals the Fasanni. They pick up languages quickly, and are seldom fazed by any strange customs or dangerous habits they might face.

They appear to have no concept of Status. A field hand is not slighted by a house servant, as often happens among slaves of other races. Outside their race, they appear intellectually able to grasp that a king is more important than a shopkeeper, but viscerally they believe that a master is a master, and all masters are equally omnipotent.

They are careful and loving parents, even without orders. They do not like to give up an infant child, but will do so if ordered. Truul are weaned and walking by six months. A child always stays with his mother. At two or three they give up play forever and begin to help at light and easy tasks. A mother will patiently teach her child to help with whatever chores she does; this does not decrease her productivity in any way. If the mother cannot watch her child the father will, and if he's not available any Truul will keep an eye on the youngster. If there's nobody at all to watch the child he'll be placed somewhere safe and told to stay there, and stay there he will, for several days if need be.

Politics

The Truul are second-class citizens of the galaxy, and probably always will be. They seem to have been created evolutionally stable, and there's little chance the race will outgrow its fatal dependency on others.

There's some talk of re-engineering the race's psyche to give the Truul free will, but it's much more difficult and dangerous to genetically tamper with a race's mind than with its body. There's also a moral question. Since the Truul appear content with their lot, do other races have any business changing it?

The Truul homeworld is a young, productive planet, and the galactic government is holding it in trust for the Truul. Several million Truul still live there. Many work on archaeological digs — the mystery of the Truul's creators is one of the galaxy's most intriguing archaeological enigmas. Many more work on sprawling farms which raise tremendous amounts of grain and protein for export.

When the Truul first ventured offplanet, they were actively recruited by the Kaa, and now countless Truul languish under that cruel regime. The horrible Verms are also known to cultivate Truul slaves. The galaxy's other major slaver race, the Kronin, also use Truul for countless menial jobs, but they are generally fair masters.

In other parts of the galaxy the status of the Truul remains ambiguous. They cannot be enslaved, but they cannot survive free. Generally, any sentient who accepts the service of a Truul is expected to provide his servant with the guidance needed to survive, plus all material needs and a regular cash salary (which can be quite small). Most civilized governments make abuse of a Truul, through violence, overwork, or reckless abandonment, a crime.

Truul make excellent soldiers, and many of them have found a home in the military as orderlies, medics, chaplains' assistants and other general support positions. There are even several Truul combat battalions (light infantry and armor) which have distinguished themselves in combat. The main problem with Truul combat units is finding non-Truul NCOs willing to cadre them.

Character Example

Doris

Doris is a fairly typical Truul, who until the present has been more lucky than most. She spent her early years on a human colony world working for a farm family. She helped with the cooking and the accounts, and took care of the animals. When she was very young she was kicked by a large meat animal, forcing her to walk with a brace, but other than that her youth was happy, and she was passionately devoted to her entire family.

Then things went bad. The farm failed and the family spent the last of their savings for passage back to civilization. But planned business deals fell through, and eventually things got so bad that her family couldn't even afford to support Doris' minimal needs. It was a cruel choice between the Truul and one of the kids, and Doris was put out on the street.

Doris has one extremely useful talent — she is a brilliant forger. This is an instinctive knack that she's not even aware she possesses, though she's proud of the way she used to save the farmer's time by signing his name for him on checks.

Doris is a 50-point character suitable for use as an NPC.

Stats

ST 8, DX 12, IQ 11, HT 7.

Advantages

Cultural Adaptability, Language Talent +3, Passive Defense 1, Recovery.

Quirks

Doris has no noticeable quirks.

Disadvantages

Lame — Crippled Leg, Status -1, Slave Mentality

Skills

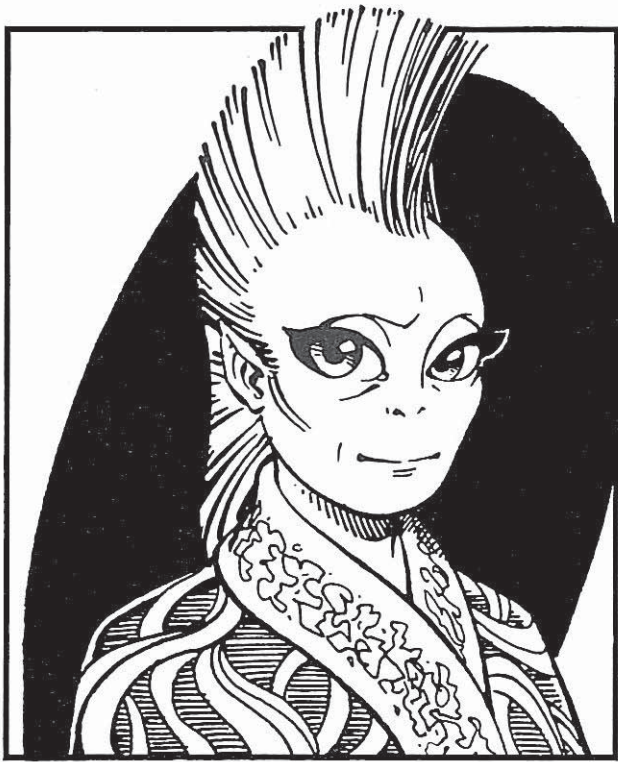
Accounting-13, Animal Handling-11, Boating-12, Computer Operation-11, Cooking-14, Forgery-18, Naturalist-11, Veterinary-13.

ENCAI

Engai look like beautiful human children. They stand about four feet tall and are slight of build, but strong for their size (18" shorter than human norm for their ST; 30 lbs. under human norm for height). Their eyes are large and luminous, but the rest of their features are very delicate. Their heads are topped with improbably tall, elaborate crests of soft hair, each unique. Natural Engai coloration is golden — skin, eyes and hair. But the race makes extensive use of cosmetic pigmentation, and a given individual can have literally any combination of hues or shades. Some Engai even pattern their flesh, using two or more contrasting colors to create a design. Though artificial, Engai pigmentation is not the result of makeup or tattooing, but of carefully induced changes in the body chemistry. An Engai's pigmentation is permanent until he decides to change it.

Engai wear clothes, typically flowing, translucent robes dyed in vivid and elaborate patterns, and light sandals or slippers. Many Engai also wear a few small items of jewelry, such as bracelets, armbands, anklets, rings, and ear or nose studs.

The Engai homeworld is "earthlike to ten decimal places," except for the atmosphere, which has slightly less oxygen than Terra's, but seems more invigorating because of its 1.1-atmosphere pressure. How much of this is due to terraforming is not known; it is known that this is not the world the Engai evolved on.



Advantages and Disadvantages

The Engai have ST -1 (-10 points), DX +2 (20 points), IQ +3 (30 points), and HT +4 (45 points). Their advantages are Appearance — Very Beautiful (25 points), Charisma +2 (10 points), Empathy (15 points), Immunity to Disease (10 points), Metabolism Control (15 points), Night Vision (10 points), Perfect Balance (15 points), Polarized Eyes (15 points), Status 2 (10 points), Unaging (60 points), Voice (10 points), and Walk on Liquid (20 points). Their racial disadvantages are Intolerance (of "mortal" races — -10 points), Laziness (-10 points) and Overconfidence (-10 points). They have the racially learned skills Biochemistry at IQ (8 points), Breath Control at IQ+1 (12 points), Chemistry at IQ (4 points), and Karate at DX (4 points). They have the racial skill bonus Bard +1 (2 points).

It costs 300 points to be an Engai.

Names

There are only a few thousand Engai at any one time, so the race has no need of long or complex names to tell one another apart, and since individual Engai live practically forever there is no need for family or dynastic designators. Engai names are simple two- or three-syllable words. They are chosen for their pleasant sounds and do not carry any meaning. Examples include Eelah, Dalvar, Sanji, Arran.

Psychology

The Engai are the galaxy's oldest known carbon-based civilization. They have long ago achieved perfection in biochemical technology, and consequently are virtually immortal. They never age. An Engai can be killed, but he would

have to be either utterly disintegrated or completely cut off from his racial technology in order to stay dead. And even then a clone could be grown from the racial tissue banks and implanted with a recent brain tape.

The Engai are utterly decadent, and have been for centuries. Most of their infinitely long existence is given over to the pursuit of pleasure — mental, spiritual and sensual. Only a few Engai have regular duties, and none have “jobs.” Most of their civilization and technology is fully automated and self-repairing, with multiple redundancies to guard against system failure. They are superb cyberneticists, but keep their use of robots and artificial intelligence to the minimum required to support the race.

They are an extravagant, opulent people. Their homes are spacious and fanciful, characterized by soft flowing curves and soaring spires. An Engai city is a riot of color — the Engai will never use a single shade when there’s room for many. But for all their wild complexity Engai patterns seldom clash or startle; the overall effect is harmonious and relaxing. Engai decoration is characterized by minutely-detailed swirling patterns, though broad, dramatic expanses of a given shade will often be used for contrast.

They are not a benevolent race, but neither are they aggressive or violent. They tend to be contemptuous of “mortal” races, and will associate with them only on matters of business.

The Engai have known innumerable now-forgotten races and civilizations. To the great frustration of galactic historians, the Engai’s racial memory is not acute, nor do they keep exhaustive records of galactic events (or if they do, they don’t tell other races about them). The Engai exist in an eternal now, and one century is much like the last to them, whatever may be happening in the galaxy at large. Even those things they do know or remember will be revealed, if at all, in a fanciful or incomplete manner, to tease their impudent, short-lived interrogators.

Their biochemically-induced immortality is augmented by a regimen of mental and physical discipline, which centers around the practice of simple breathing and meditation techniques, all based on an extremely ancient racial martial art. These days the martial art is more an exercise program than a combat skill, but the tiny Engai are still often able to physically surprise unknowing larger, stronger attackers. Some of the effects of this discipline are quite spectacular. For instance, the Engai are able to walk confidently across the narrowest of spans (they will not hesitate to use a soaring arch an inch or less thick as a bridge between minarets or towers hundreds of feet high). They can place themselves in a death-like dormant state, and control normally-involuntary bodily functions such as respiration and circulation with a facility that only the most adept human yogis have been able to approach. Perhaps their most showy discipline is their ability to, with only light concentration, walk across the surface of any liquid of at least the density of water, as though it were solid ground.

The Engai were once powerful psychics, but for reasons of their own they have removed their genetic capacity for all but the most casual psychic powers. It is believed that only after the Engai exorcised their power to see into the future and look into the minds of others were they able to construct the illusion of timeless serenity that makes their immortality psychologically endurable.

Status is meaningless to the Engai. Some of them have duties — seeing to planetary maintenance, or to those non-Engai who seek the race’s eugenic and medical skills. A few are in positions of authority, but they are not considered in any way superior to those they supervise. However, they cultivate among other races a sense of awe and mystery that leads to their being treated as a generally superior class of beings.

No Engai has ever been known to commit a criminal or anti-social act, but if such an individual did exist the Engai would not reveal his existence to other

Engai in the Campaign

The Engai can be used whenever the GM needs a race to act arrogant. These immortal midget debutantes are ideal for snubbing PCs at a party.

More concretely, the Engai are the court of last resort when it comes to medical miracles. They are the ones to see if a character needs to be cloned from a fingernail paring, or to genetically reconstruct a billion-year-old fossil into a living creature.

It is hard to imagine anything a PC could do to make an Engai pay attention to him long enough to become an enemy. If they do, however, the Engai will be vindictive, because of their Intolerance disadvantage. They are excellent sources of employment — they send agents all over the galaxy to procure whatever they might need or want. Of course, if they want something they don’t particularly care if the rest of the galaxy considers it legal.

Engai PCs

In a 400-point campaign, fine. Engai simply never have enough disadvantages to bring one down to a lower power level.

Engai Adventure Seeds

Smuggler’s Blues

The Patrol has just declared one of the Engai’s favorite recreational pharmaceuticals a controlled substance. Of course, the Engai can synthesize it themselves, but first they need the raw ingredients.

The PCs are quietly commissioned and given a shopping list. There should be at least three items on the list — say, an exotic plant, a unique mineral, and the glands of a certain wild (and dangerous) animal. Needless to say, all these items are found on widely-spaced planets. Payment will be generous — on delivery.

Of course, the Patrol knows what the drug is made out of too, and if the party does anything to draw official attention to their activities the Patrol will begin watching them very closely. If the Patrol knows that the party has collected at least two of the three ingredients they have grounds for an arrest.

This adventure works best when the characters do not know they’re doing anything illegal.

Character Example

Sanji

Sanji is the Administrator of Clinics for the Engai race. She has held her position since the Engai first contacted the current interstellar civilization. She was born over a quarter of a million years ago, though she's lost track of the time.

Her appearance is distinctive. Her skin and eyes are metallic silver, her hair is platinum blonde, and she invariably dresses in clothes using only the colors white, black and silver. Her crest is a sharp, forward-sweeping spike.

Sanji is a confirmed hedonist with a taste for exotic depravity. At the same time she is more aggressive and ambitious than most Engai — she likes to be able to tell mortals what to do. Physically she's extremely lazy, and customarily gets around in a small hover cart, even indoors.

She carries grudges of several kinds. She has a prejudiced distaste for the galaxy's non-mammalian races, she becomes annoyed when mortals pester her with questions, and she hasn't spoken directly to the Administrator of Planetary Maintenance for several centuries. She is a habitual user of a hallucinogenic narcotic. It is very mild, however, and does not noticeably affect her performance. She customarily carries several small but devastating weapons on her person.

Sanji is a 400-point character suitable for use as a Patron or NPC encounter.

Stats

ST 9, DX 14, IQ 15, HT 14.

Advantages

Appearance — Very Beautiful, Charisma +3, Double Jointed, Empathy, Immunity to Disease, Metabolism Control, Night Vision, Perfect Balance, Polarized Eyes, Status 3, Strong Will +2, Unaging, Voice, Walk on Liquid.

Quirks

Never wears colors; Dislikes non-mammalian races; Never walks where she can ride; Annoyed by questions; Not speaking to Administrator of Planetary Maintenance.

Disadvantages

Addict (highly addictive, legal hallucinogen), Bully, Intolerance, Jealous, Laziness, Lecherous, Overconfidence.

Skills

Acrobat-13, Bard-16, Beam Weapons-14, Biochemistry-19, Breath Control-15, Carousing-14, Chemistry-15, Computer Operation-16, Computer Programming-15, Dancing-15, Detect Lies-16, Genetics-18, Holdout-14, Hypnotism-15, Karate-14, Leadership-14, Physiology-18, Politics-14, Psychology-17, Savoir-Faire-15, Sex Appeal-16, Whip-13.

racers. If an Engai did evidence a pattern of antisocial behavior the race would be quite capable of taking a braintape, editing out the antisocial aberration, then wiping the faulty personality and replacing it with a new one, all memories and non-aberrant character traits intact.

Engai art is decorative and abstract, but very beautiful, and those few examples which the Engai allow to leave their world are extremely valuable. Engai music and dance are said to be the most beautiful (to humans and similar races, anyway) in the galaxy, though outsiders are rarely allowed to see or hear them. An exception is the music which the Engai customarily broadcast throughout their clinics. There is a joke that these are the only clinics in the galaxy where the piped-in music isn't aggressively annoying.

Nothing is known of Engai poetry, literature or philosophy. Some xenologists feel that the race does not indulge in any of these arts.

The traditional Engai religion is a polytheism with a pantheon of "Engai-pomorphic" deities. Places of worship are still maintained, but the religion is no longer practiced, since the Engai have confined themselves to the here and now.

Ecology

The Engai are descended from arboreal primates. Their remote ancestors were probably closer to terrestrial lemurs than to the apes.

Engai have been evolutionarily stable for so long that it is difficult to determine anything about their primal history. Best estimates indicate that Engai evolved into their modern form around seven million years ago. It is known that between five and six million years ago the race attained space travel, and came to dominate much of the galaxy. By that time they were not only clever technologists, but extremely powerful psionics. Archaeological evidence of Engai domination has been found on several worlds, and indicates that their rule was neither benevolent nor peaceful. Major wars were fought, apparently between different factions of Engai, since the other races they encountered in that epoch seem to have been much more primitive.

Many have suggested that these imperialistic Engai had a hand in the evolution of the, biologically almost identical, Gerodians and humans. Others counter that pre-sentient primates were already highly advanced on both Earth and the Gerodian homeworld before the Engai attained space, and that it is not at all improbable that similar primate stock would produce similar sapient forms. There is no hard evidence that the Engai ever visited either world, but both are well within the race's possible sphere of influence.

After at least 100,000 years of space exploration, however, the Engai gave it up and returned to their homeworld. How far advanced they were in their longevity program at that time is not known, but their move inward allowed them to optimize their planet and their society. By three million years ago, at the latest, the race had perfected individual immortality (this figure is based on statements by the Engai themselves, who often mention that three-million-year-old individuals are still alive, though they won't say who they are). At the same time the racial population, which had once numbered in the trillions, was stabilized at less than a million genetically perfect individuals. Exactly how many Engai there are is not known — estimates range between 25,000 and 300,000 individuals.

The often-heard description of the Engai as "living Precursors" is inaccurate. The true Precursor races flourished tens of millions of years before the Engai left the trees. But it's true that the Engai have watched countless interplanetary civilizations come and go, without being changed at all themselves. As they put it "mortals come for a while, then they go away. After a while, new mortals come."

The current galactic civilization did not find the Engai, they contacted us —

with a commercial. A scout ship received a sub-space radio message consisting only of the words “you can live forever” and a set of astronomical coordinates. The Engai had apparently been monitoring our transmissions for some time in order to learn the language.

Culture

There is little external structure to the hedonistic Engai society, though a few high-ranking individuals are known, including an administrator of planetary maintenance, an administrator of clinics — in charge of both Engai health and the longevity clinics for other races, and the racial moderator, whose job it is to mediate disputes. These three make up a council of sorts, which makes the race’s seldom-needed policy decisions.

The youngest Engai at the moment is over 200 years old. New Engai are grown by machine — many exobiologists doubt the Engai are still even capable of biological reproduction. It takes only about 25 years for an Engai to reach majority.

Occasionally an Engai will decide to end his existence. He will erase his personality tapes, destroy his tissue samples, then throw a huge and riotous party, during which he’ll take a painless poison (though some have opted for more spectacular ends, like flying a small spaceship into the heart of a star). The body is destroyed down to the molecular level. Then a replacement individual is designed, often using specifications provided by the deceased.

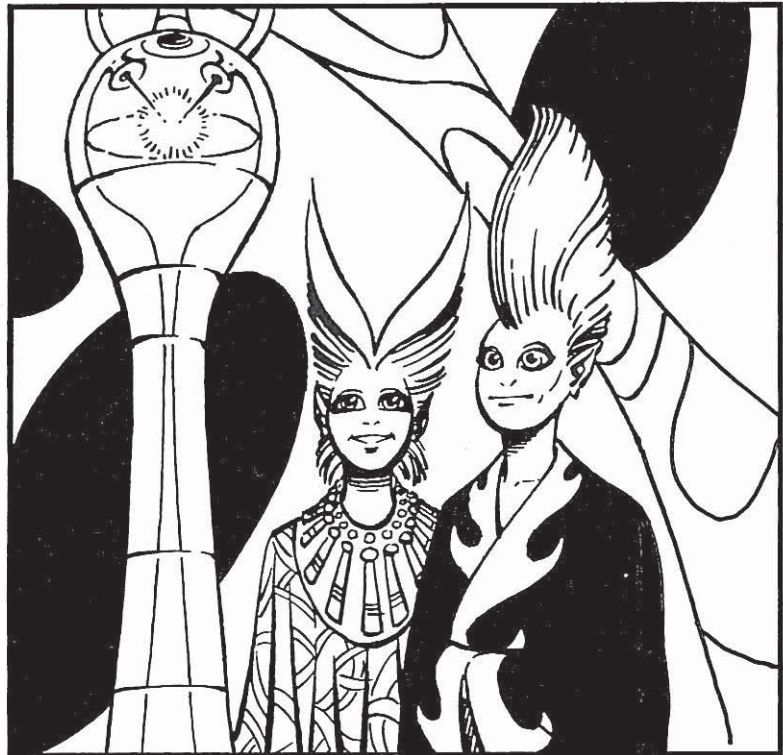
It is not known how the Engai protect their world from outside threats. There are rumors of a hidden fleet of small but devastating unmanned warships, equipped with artificial intelligence and weaponry far beyond anything now known. The Engai permit their client races to provide them “protection,” but this protection has never been challenged.

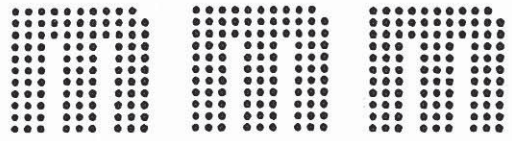
Politics

The Engai’s formal connection with galactic civilization is limited to one thing — the sale of biological and medical services. They produce the galaxy’s best and safest anti-agathics, designer clones, and cosmetic biochemical alterations, always a step ahead of other races’ science, but never more. Only the richest can afford their services. In exchange, they get certain rare raw materials and luxury items which they might otherwise have to leave their world to get themselves.

They’ve declared their world a neutral zone, and Kaa nobles and Kronin officers mingle freely with the rich and powerful of other races. The Engai have allowed the Patrol to establish a permanent outpost in their system, to deal with any trivial security problems which might develop.

Other than that, they are noticeably contemptuous of other races, in a patronizing sort of way. The only exceptions are the Liook Sujan, who they appear to regard as equals but find it almost impossible to communicate with, since the Liook Sujan can only communicate telepathically and the Engai have deadened their psionic capabilities.





Mmm in the Campaign

Mmm is a bit naive. His drones will be everywhere and, unless already engaged in pressing business, will be eager to be the party's friends, help them however they can, and generally tag along. Of course, most drones will have some kind of job or function, so they won't be able to just take off on an adventure, but in general keep Mmm friendly . . . perhaps a little bit too friendly for comfort.

Nodes are busier, smarter, and much harder to con than mobiles.

If the party does manage to make an Enemy of Mmm they're in serious trouble. Mmm won't try to kill someone, of course. But he's very smart, and he's everywhere. Since he doesn't lie, he will make no secret of his enmity and the reasons for it.

Drones tap into the nodes' knowledge using the rules on p. 12. Tapping into a node is like looking it up in the dictionary. It's a good place to go for facts, but not for real knowledge. You might be able to get a schematic of a stardrive, but not the theoretical knowledge of what makes it work, or even how to fix the one in front of you.

Mmm would make an excellent patron. He'd probably send a 200-point NPC mobile along with the party on missions.

Build NPC drones on 150 to 400 points.

Mmm is a single creature: an insectile hive-mind, with a single intelligence that controls all the billions of creatures that make up Mmm. Individual Mmm drones of visible size look, in general, like insects, and weigh less than 800 pounds. No more specific statement can be made about them.

Mmm's homeworld is a small but fertile world with an average temperature of 80°, air pressure of .8 atmospheres, and .6 G. Planetologists believe that only Mmm's micro-management of the ecology has allowed the little sphere to keep so much atmosphere and water.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Mmm has the advantage of Mindshare: Global Consciousness (60 points), Sentient Drones (25 points), Universal Distance (60 points), Under 99,999 (sentient) Drones (40 points). Among other "corporate" advantages, Mmm is also Unaging and Filthy Rich, but these would have no affect on an individual drone being used as a PC.

Individual manifestations of Mmm can also take many advantages which are normally only available to races, including, but not limited to, Amphibious, Clinging, Damage Resistance, Dark Vision, Gills and Winged Flight. Generally, a drone may freely take any racial advantage possessed by normal Earth creatures. More exotic abilities such as Broadcast and Spectrum Vision may be allowed by the GM on a case-by-case business. Insubstantiality, Body of Gas and Body of Water are *not* available.

Mmm has the disadvantages Gullibility (-10 points), Honesty (-10 points), Impulsiveness (-10 points), Pacifism — Cannot Kill (-15 points) and Truthfulness (-5 points). Individual drones may have physical limitations which qualify as disadvantages, but no extra mental disadvantages unless Mmm designed them that way for a good reason.

The cost to play a drone of Mmm is 135 points, plus or minus the physical point value (including IQ attribute) of the particular drone body.

Name

Mmm is a single being, and its name is Mmm. That's the correct form of address for any of its manifestations. Mmm is pronounced just like it's spelled — a hum of about one second's duration. Humans and others frequently shorten the name to "em" or "um." This irritates Mmm, but it's found there's nothing it can do about it.

Psychology

Mmm is one of the strangest members of the galactic community. It is both an individual and a race. It is a true hive mind — a multiplicity of bodies sharing a single ego.

Mmm has many different types of bodies. In some sense all the animal life on Mmm's homeworld is Mmm, but most of the smaller creatures are more or less "automatic," and Mmm needs no conscious control over their actions and pays little heed to their perceptions. Most of these sub-sentient creatures cannot survive if taken out of the homeworld's biosphere.

The most powerful manifestations of Mmm are its *nodes* — sessile masses of

neural tissue. These are of two major types — production nodes and sentience nodes. Production nodes are devoted to the design, programming and growth of new manifestations. All of Mmm's bodies are "born" from production nodes.

Sentience nodes are the places where Mmm focuses and optimizes its memory and intelligence. At a sentience node Mmm has an intelligence of 21 and almost instant access to all his millennia of memory.

The most commonly encountered manifestations of Mmm are the sentient drones. These are intelligent (though effectively much less so than a sentience node), mobile, and able to communicate with other creatures.

Drones are designed and programmed with certain advantages and skills. Mmm has drones that can fly or breathe underwater. Some are massive and strong; some are quick and stealthy. They may be programmed for tasks ranging from gardening to stardrive engineering.

There is a two-way channel of communication between the intelligent drones and the sentience nodes. The channel from the drone to the node is instantaneous and comprehensive — Mmm knows everything that happens to any of its mobiles. The channel from the node back to the mobile is less efficient. A drone must concentrate for a minimum of 10 seconds to obtain memories from the node. It is difficult for a body to assimilate knowledge it was not programmed for. The best a gardening drone could do to pass on Mmm's knowledge of stardrive engineering would be to slowly and painfully recite rote facts fed to it by a sentience node.

There are about 1,000 each sentience and reproduction nodes in existence at any given time. Mmm has established a few hundred of each across the galaxy for the convenience of his spacefaring drones. Mmm has around 70,000 sentient bodies spread throughout known space.

For all its power and intelligence, Mmm is a pleasant, strangely innocent being. Before it was discovered by spacefarers, Mmm had no idea that there existed any intelligence in the galaxy other than itself. It still has a tendency to project its own motives and personality to others. Having never had anyone to lie to, it has difficulty grasping why anyone would want to lie at all. Mmm does not allow functional drones to casually destroy themselves — drones, and therefore Mmm, do feel pain. On the other hand, the loss of a single drone is not seriously damaging to Mmm, and a duplicate can always be fabricated at the nearest production node. Therefore, drones will frequently display what, in a more normal being, would be a reckless courage.

When spacefarers first landed on Mmm's world, it subdued and dissected several individuals, thinking it was doing no more harm to the entity visiting it than drawing a blood sample would do to a human. When its mistake was eventually explained to it, Mmm was appalled at what it had done. Since then Mmm has taken excessive care not to endanger the lives of single-body sentients.

Mmm appears to be utterly androgynous. It has manifested both psychologically masculine and psychologically feminine personalities to different individuals. Telepaths who have scanned mobiles or sentience nodes have reported no sign of an overriding psychological gender in Mmm's ego.

So far Mmm has behaved consistently as a socially responsible, mature individual who would not dream of committing a crime or anti-social act. Occasionally it has allowed itself to be duped into criminal activity by unscrupulous individuals, but it has always been cleared of all charges, and has insisted on reimbursing those who it accidentally damaged. As Mmm's experience with other beings grows, it's becoming less susceptible to such ruses.

Mmm's only natural art appears to be the shaping of itself through the production of new bodies. It has recently become intrigued by the visual arts and music, and has made efforts in that direction. Early results were not encouraging.

Mmm has no religion, since until recently it had no reason to suspect that it



Mmm Drones as PCs

It would be almost impossible to play a manifestation of Mmm in a 100-point campaign. The only way to get enough points for a usable number of skills would be to buy down characteristics to a crippling extent.

There is very little room for individuality in the drones. A drone can take the normal five quirks, and maybe one minor mental disadvantage as a "programming glitch."

Mmm makes a great PC in a 200-point or higher campaign. Especially handy is the ability to individualize the character with what are normally racial skills. Even better is the fact that a manifestation of Mmm can only be "killed" for the amount of time it takes to get to the nearest reproduction node.

Mmm is very straightforward, and probably fits in better in a mercantile or Scout campaign than in a more violence or stealth-oriented campaign. Mmm PCs are completely unsuitable for a criminal or military campaign.



was not the sole sentient entity in the galaxy. It is fascinated by the concept of gods and spirits, but has so far professed no personal belief in any religious or philosophical system.

Mmm Adventure Seeds

Treasure Hunt

Some mysterious someone sold Mmm a treasure map on a major port world. It leads to a far-off, uncharted, habitable but dangerous planet. If it's for real, the take will be enough for Mmm to put a down payment on a star destroyer. Even Mmm is suspicious enough, however, not to waste a whole ship and crew on what's probably a wild-goose chase. So it designs a 200-or 300-point treasure-hunting drone and contacts the PCs. First it will offer the PCs a 10% cut of the take, plus expenses. If the PCs insist on cash up front Mmm will offer a few bucks, plus a 5% cut and expenses. That's its best offer. It's the GM's option as to whether the treasure really exists.

Murder Most Foul

The sentient node on whatever world the PCs happen to be on has ceased to function. The evidence indicates that parties unknown poisoned the node. Mmm is highly annoyed, and it's generally considered a good idea to figure out who did it, ASAP.

Mmm was poisoned by a random bunch of extremist loonies. The GM can have fun devising the "perfect crime" and letting the PCs untangle it, ending with an armed confrontation with the would-be killers. For an extra complication, Mmm's local mobiles could be acting erratically or even dangerously as a side effect of the poisoning. This will eventually work itself out, but will concern the PCs and Mmm himself, and will be very interesting to government types on the lookout for an anti-Mmm weapon.



Ecology

Mmm consists of the entire animal kingdom of his world. Apparently Mmm has always been, since the plant and animal kingdoms diverged in the remote past. The very first animal on that world was a primitive production node able to reproduce itself through fission. From that point life tended to become more diverse and specialized, as it does on all worlds. However, for reasons that remain mysterious, on Mmm's world when animals developed self-awareness they all shared one ego. This would make Mmm, in some sense, over a billion years old. Mmm has estimated that it became self-aware about 100 million years ago, at which time its intellect was about that of a primitive reptile. It believes itself to have achieved sentience between three and four million years ago. Its earliest coherent memories date from that time.

Mmm's drones need to metabolize food to remain active. Most are herbivorous, since for Mmm to eat animal life is for Mmm to eat itself — which is not efficient. A few of Mmm's manifestations which require high energy *are* omnivorous, and certain lower Mmm organisms seem specifically designed to eat plants and then be eaten themselves.

Drones, from the simplest single-celled organisms to the most sophisticated sentients, are produced fully grown and ready to function. The exceptions to this are nodes and certain very large mobiles, which are too large to be produced internally by a normal production mode. These are programmed to grow externally for a while before beginning to function. This growth can take as little as a few weeks and as much as several years.

Sentient drones tend to wear out after about 30 years of continuous use. However, it is quite easy for Mmm to create an exact duplicate of the worn-out drone, complete with personal memories, at any production node. Nodes can remain functional for as long as a millennium.

The instantaneous rapport between Mmm and its manifestations is mysterious. It is not bioelectric, like human nerve impulses. Nor is it psionic in nature. Neurologists have dubbed the phenomenon "sub-psychic rapport," but so far they've been able to discern nothing concrete about how it functions. It is known that it does not appear to diminish in strength with distance, and there is no apparent time delay, even across the width of known space.

Mmm has evidenced no sign of any capacity for normal psychic powers, but it has expressed hope that it can build such capabilities into future drones, once the biological roots of psychic phenomena are better understood.

Culture

Before its discovery by other races Mmm led a lonely, solipsistic existence. Even so it was active and intelligent, exploring and experimenting with its environment. Mmm was never been a great user of technology, but when it was found it was capable of building and using TL4 devices and structures. Its degree of control over its manifestations was remarkable — the equivalent of at least TL9 biotechnology.

When it was alone, Mmm's existence was idyllic. It had no natural enemies or predators, by definition. Mmm seems to be a refutation, or at least an exception, to the Darwinian theory that evolution is a byproduct of the struggle for survival. Mmm's development seems motivated by an instinctive desire to perfect itself and its environment, and to explore and comprehend the universe around it.

The sophistication of Mmm's intelligence is perhaps best demonstrated by the fact that when it first met others it had never even considered the concept of

communication, since communication requires something to communicate with. It took it just over two years to understand the concept and function of language, evolve and develop both the physical structures of speech and the mental capability to conceptualize verbally, and actually acquire a spoken language to a conversational level of proficiency.

Almost all of the knowledge and skills of other sentient races has now been absorbed somewhere into Mmm's sentience nodes. It has already demonstrated a great deal of versatility and creativity in applying what it knows. It is now working at increasing its capacity to synthesize and cross reference its knowledge. Some have speculated that within the next century or so Mmm will have evolved itself into the galaxy's most advanced biological computer.

Mmm is slowly becoming aware that the existence of other beings makes it necessary for it to protect itself. Towards that end Mmm has secretly emplaced several dormant production and sentience nodes on its homeworld and throughout the galaxy. These nodes are programmed to activate only if a substantial percentage of Mmm's manifestations are abruptly terminated in a short period of time. Mmm has owned and crewed spaceships for several years. It is presently engaged in negotiations to acquire military vessels for planetary defense. The only hold-up to these negotiations is financial — Mmm's homeworld is not mineral-rich, and its only source of income is contracting out the services of its manifestation. This provides it with a steady influx of cash, but not in the amount necessary to build of a planetary defense.

Politics

Mmm is an active participant in the galactic body politic. It sits on all multi-racial legislative and advisory bodies and has even chaired some major committees. It keeps sentience nodes at all the galaxy's major political centers.

Mmm is only dimly aware of it, but many of the galaxy's best political minds are intensely afraid of it. Mmm could take complete control of the galaxy faster and more efficiently than any other of the galaxy's races. Its compliment of less than 100,000 major manifestations is quite voluntary — a limit it set itself so as not to come into direct competition with other races for necessary resources. If it wanted to it could begin clandestinely multiplying, and completely overrun the galaxy with great efficiency. It could manufacture the most deadly military force ever seen — perfectly disciplined, highly intelligent troops, all in perfect rapport with their command and with no personal fear whatsoever. Even without armament, it could breed biological weapons, from viruses to armored juggernauts. The galaxy's most sophisticated strategic computers agree that Mmm could overrun known space in less than a decade.

Even more frightening, when asked about the possibility of a preemptive strike to eliminate Mmm now while it wasn't expecting it (strictly as a theoretical exercise, of course), the best plan the computers could come up with had less than a 15% chance of success. Mmm is so versatile and widely-dispersed now that it would be almost impossible to destroy it through any sort of military or clandestine action.

So the other races were left with a single choice regarding Mmm. That necessary policy can be expressed, "it likes us now; let's keep it happy." Consequently Mmm is accepted as an integral and respected part of interstellar society. Mmm itself, in the meantime, seems to still be mostly interested in making new friends and learning new things.

Because of its pacifism, Mmm's manifestations do not serve in the military; however, it has breed specialized manifestations for use on Scout teams and even as Patrol officers.

The Patrol keeps a large garrison in Mmm's system, to protect it from hostilities and (though Mmm doesn't know it) to try to protect the galaxy from Mmm.



Character Example

Typical Manifestation of Mmm

This is a fairly typical low-powered drone, designed to act as an assistant meteorologist on a Scout expedition. It usually carries a stunner for self-defense, but will sometimes carry a blaster where the critters are exceptionally large and non-sentient.

The drone has glider wings and a light, flexible bone structure to allow it to sail on air currents. A side effect of this adaptation is that it prefers to perch, rather than sit, when at rest.

In addition to its professional skills, Mmm gave the drone the ability to cook as a convenience to its fellow-Scouts. It becomes quite upset when it's not allowed to cook for the group. With a minute of concentration, it can tap the memory banks for *any* recipe.

This drone is a 200-point character suitable for an NPC encounter or a PC in a 200-point campaign.

Stats

ST 11, DX 12, IQ 12, HT 11.

Advantages

Absolute Direction, Gliding, and standard Mmm advantages.

Quirks

Insists on cooking for companions; Prefers to perch rather than sit.

Disadvantages

Gullibility, Honesty, Impulsiveness, Pacifism — Cannot Kill, Truthfulness.

Skills

Beam Weapons-13, Cooking-13, Ecology-15, Electrical Operation — Scientific Sensors-13, Geology-12, Meteorology-15.



LIOOK SUJAN



Liook Sujan in a Campaign

Sujan can't take an active part in most campaigns. They are, after all, rocks. They're not much good as Patrons and they're a complete loss as Enemies ("Somewhere a big gray rock is thinking bad thoughts at me, ver-r-r-ry slo-o-o-o-wly"). They can be useful sources of information, though getting a straight answer from a Liook Sujan takes a great deal of patience.

Mostly the Liook Sujan will be used for adventure objects and local color, though they can come in handy when a really major-league psionic is needed and the party has a couple days (or weeks, or months, or . . .) to work on the problem.

The GM might allow the players a small but significant government subsidy on a new ship if they build in an emplacement for a Liook Sujan observer (6 cy, mass 5 tons). The Sujan will be happy to help out the crew any way he can, but the GM should allow the PCs to come up with ways to take advantage of their new rocky friend. A Gerodian rock reader that will allow the PCs to watch what the Sujan's ESP is picking up in real time costs \$25,000.

Or, if they'd prefer, the party can treat the Sujan as nothing but a big rock in the corner, though they should probably keep in mind that if they get into any seriously dangerous or illegal activities, the big rock in the corner can and will report them to the nearest psionic Patrol representative.

Build NPC Sujan on 500 to 1,000 points.

Liook Sujan are rocks — big, gray, featureless rocks. They're rather angular and stand between five and eight feet tall. They weigh several tons.

They come from a rockball planet with an average temperature of 50° and a gravity of .6 Gs. The air is thin and low in oxygen; air pressure is only .55 atmospheres, and most races must wear respirators if they are outside for any length of time.

Advantages and Disadvantages

ST and DX are meaningless to the Liook Sujan. They have HT 15 (60 points) and IQ 15 (60 points). Their advantages are Animal Empathy (5 points), Body of Stone ×24 (PD 6, DR 16) (144 points), Doesn't Eat (30 points), Eidetic Memory — Photographic (60 points), Empathy (15 points), ESP power 30 (90 points), Strong Will +5 (20 points), Telepathy power 24 (120 points), Temperature Tolerance ×2 (20 points) and Vacuum Support (60 points). Their disadvantages are No Manipulators (-50 points), No Sense of Smell/Taste (-5 points), Sessile (-50 points) and Slow Metabolism ×2 (20 points). They have the racially learned skills Detect Lies at IQ (+4 since they also have empathy) (4 points), all the Telepathic Skills at IQ (9 skills at 4 points each = 36 points) and all the ESP skills at IQ (4 skills at 4 points each = 16 points).

It costs 615 points to play a Liook Sujan.

Names

Liook Sujan (may be shortened to Sujan) have no spoken language. Their names, like those of the Banduch, are telepathic patterns. However, they seldom need use names since they can only communicate with Telepathic sensitives. Offplanet they never travel in groups, so an individual can be referred to as "The Liook Sujan" or "The Rock." On their homeworld they have been numbered and labeled (with their permission) for easy location and identification by the Patrol and other interested parties. Their racial name can be roughly translated as "Patient Observers."

Psychology

The Liook Sujan are one of the galaxy's strangest evolutionary enigmas. Outwardly they're large, jagged boulders, with no hint whatsoever that they're alive. But those boulders shelter some of the most powerful telepathic minds in the Galaxy.

Liook Sujan have an incredibly slow and simple metabolism. Their bodies can do only three things — absorb sunlight, reproduce, and think. It is not easy to communicate with the Sujan. Their minds work so much slower than other races' that even the strongest sensitive must be in a deep trance to establish communication, and even the shortest exchanges can take several hours.

The only Liook Sujan psychic powers are Telepathy and ESP. None of the kinetic powers has ever been demonstrated by the race. In Telepathy and ESP, however, their strength and accuracy are unmatched.

Despite everything, the Sujan are an active race. They cannot move, but with a certain amount of excavation they can be moved. With the aid of interstellar civilization, the Sujan have dispersed throughout the known galaxy. They have placed observers on many worlds and colonies, as well as travelers on ships.

They have established a racial communications network across the galaxy that allows every Sujan to observe planets and persons millions of miles away.

There is little direct communication between the Sujan observers and their hosts. However the race has proved useful as a sort of sentient sensor. With their powerful ESP ability, the Sujan are able to monitor planetary events from orbit — sometimes even from another system. With the aid of a cybernetic device invented by the Gerodians, the Sujan are able to make their incredible memories literally photographic, by transferring their perception to minutely detailed audiovisual computer records in real time. The most time-consuming part of the process is focusing the Sujan's perceptions, which can take weeks for a known but far-off location. This difficulty can be circumvented by having the Sujan lock on to an individual while he's present (which only takes a few seconds); then the Sujan is able to follow wherever he goes, out to the limit of its perceptions. They can also keep a mental record of everything that occurs in their presence, or screen an area from the attention of other psionics.

The Sujan practice psionic art that can be compared to that of the Banduch. They are a deeply mystical and devout race. Their religion appears to be monotheistic.

Ecology

The Liook Sujan are a silicon life form that feeds on solar radiation. Their ancestors were almost identical to present-day Sujan, only smaller. Their entire mass is analogous to neural tissue so, roughly speaking, the bigger they are, the smarter they are. They achieved sentience as long as a quarter of a billion years ago. They have had individuals capable of perceiving at interstellar distances for at least 10 million years.

They have been an invaluable source of historical data on earlier cycles of galactic civilization, although all but the broadest details from the extremely remote past have been edited from the racial memory, and the Liook Sujan's contact with earlier epochs was never as intimate as in the present.

The Sujan are unisexual. Once every hundred years or so a tiny aperture opens at the top of the individual (the only external movement the race will ever make) and exudes a cloud of ultra-fine dust. This is the race's "sperm," and it remains active for as long as 150 years while drifting around in the atmosphere.

When an individual feels his death is approaching, he withdraws from communication with the rest of the race, and spends about a century editing all his memories into a package of significant facts and events, which he finally broadcasts to as many other Sujan as are in range.

Then he explodes, with a force equal to about a ton of TNT. In addition to random fragments, the explosion will produce as many as three dozen "eggs." These will remain fertile for as long as 500 years. When a speck of atmospheric "sperm" encounters an "egg" from another individual, the result is a new Liook Sujan.

It takes more than a millennium for a young Sujan to mature. An individual can live for as long as 10,000 years. When asked if other races should begin research in artificially extending their average lifespan still further, the Sujans' reply could be translated "enough is enough."

Other Silicon Life

Unusual as they are among galactic races, the Sujan are not unusual on their world; they are merely the crowning example of a whole order of rocklike life forms. Most of the other silicon species are of no particular interest. Two, though, are of sufficient value that their collection and export is regulated, providing the Sujan with a little-needed source of planetary income.

One of these rock-beings is purely decorative. Sujan "living gems" are

Liook Sujan Adventure Seeds *Collision Orbit*

An interstellar freighter has been hit by pirates. They took the cargo and killed all the crew, except the Sujan observer, who is still alive and able to identify the criminals. There's one small problem: the freighter is in a deteriorating orbit around a particularly hot star. There's only a short amount of time until the Sujan survivor is slag.

The PCs have the only ship fast enough or close enough to make it. They have to get to the site and move a 5-ton (no, there's no gravity, but the inertia will be deadly), bolted-down rock from one ship to the other with no mistakes or second chances, practically in the corona of the star.

Of course, there's always the chance the pirates will realize their mistake and come back to finish off the last witness.

If the PCs succeed, they'll be paid a small reward by the Liook Sujan.

Rubble Without a Cause

Of the six Liook Sujan on the world presently occupied by the PCs, three have exploded, without warning, in the past month. The explosions were internal, of the type that accompany Sujan reproduction, but the surviving Sujan say that no reproduction was planned. Was it murder? The PCs are involved in the investigation. When they go to interview one of the three survivors, it, too, explodes. Fortunately, the PCs are (more or less) unharmed. The logical suspicion now is that someone is not only forcing the Sujan to self-destruct, but can do it with very precise timing!

The logical suspect is the Organization, which always stands to lose from the presence of an impeccably honest, super-powerful psionic talent. But the obvious answer isn't always right.

Underground Agent

The party is assigned to investigate a strange plague of dementia in the capital of a wealthy, but unsophisticated, agricultural world. Government officials are behaving *very* strangely; there are murders, suicides, and inexplicable changes of loyalty.

Eventually, someone will recognize the huge rock in the Capitol park as a Sujan. It has been using its abilities to systematically destroy the government, softening it up for an invasion or coup. Then it attacks the PCs . . . Should they survive this encounter, they will have a more formidable one ahead of them. What kind of psi talent would it take to corrupt and enslave a Sujan?

Continued on next page . . .

Liook Sujan Adventure Seeds (Continued)

The Wisdom of the Great Stone

For the past several years, one of the more popular An Phar cults has involved the contemplation of the Liook Sujan observer in the capital city of their home planet. The Phar do not attempt to communicate directly with the Sujan; they merely gather near it to “partake of its wisdom,” while reading everything they can about Sujan moral philosophy. Since the Sujan are totally ethical and upright (though not totally honest — they will lie when they feel the truth is harmful), there seems to be no possible harm from this.

However, many of the Phar devotees have started to make important political and financial decisions based on the Sujan observer’s commentary, as relayed through the “rock-talker” that reads and translates its impressions. And now it turns out that *someone* has gimmicked the rock-talker. Its output is controlled, not by the Sujan, but by a con-man . . . somewhere . . . who is using it to manipulate the Phar stock market.

Why didn’t the Sujan notice? Good question. It turns out that the Sujan is *gone*. Now the PCs are looking for someone capable of abducting a 5-ton rock and replacing it with a carefully-cast duplicate . . .

Liook Sujan *Player Characters*

So you’ve got 500 points to play around with, and you decide to spend it on a big rock that can read minds. Go ahead.

complex and crystalline in form. They are usually opaque, but some species are translucent or transparent. They are totally mindless, requiring only sunlight and a source of minerals, and are prized as decorations. Their value ranges from around \$2,000 for a fist-sized specimen, to millions for a transparent rose-colored gem weighing several hundred pounds.

The other creature is the Keeilla, an Irari name that translates as “hard little friend.” Looking like reddish pebbles of granite, the Keeilla has a simple mind . . . and empathetic abilities. It constantly radiates friendship and contentment. In turn, it picks up the emotions of those around it, and radiates even more joy if it is close to someone who loves it in return. The possessor of a Keeilla, once it has become familiar with him, gets a +2 on any IQ or Will roll to resist anger, depression, or any other negative emotion, whether from a psionic attack or from within. He gets a +1 on most general reaction rolls made in person, because those within a few yards of the Keeilla will simply feel happier! Certain races, like the Kaa, may be affected unpredictably; a happy Kaa may not act in the best interest of the person he’s dealing with . . .

Like the living gems, the Keeilla require only sunlight and minerals for nourishment. But they also require friendly minds within mental reach. On the Sujan world, the Liook Sujan themselves provide this, everywhere! Elsewhere, Keeilla require several others of their kind, or at least one friendly alien, not far away. Thus, they cannot be carried constantly in a pocket, or they’ll starve — and they cannot be locked away in a vault, or they’ll quickly pine away! Some Scouts carry a Keeilla for companionship, and a good strong sunlamp to keep it fed.

Keeilla are not often encountered, because the Liook Sujan limit their export. Value of a Keeilla might be \$20,000.

Culture

The Sujan are in constant communication with one another, sharing and analyzing data from their perceptions. Young Sujan learn from monitoring their elders’ communications.

There are no social distinctions among the race, though youth is respectful of age and those with exceptionally strong psionics are admired.

Though it has never been observed, the Liook Sujan say they sometimes battle among themselves in psychic conflicts that can last centuries. These conflicts seldom involve more than one or two individuals on a side. The reasons for the dissension seem to be philosophical; while the Sujan are willing to discuss them, they don’t translate well. While most conflicts, they say, end in compromise, some of them have resulted in the premature explosion of one of the warring parties.

Politics

The Sujan keep an observer on all open multi-racial governmental and legislative committees. Because of the difficulties in communication, however, they seldom take an active part.

The Sujan have been known to mentally attack sentients when aggression is morally justifiable — against pirates, for instance, or Verms. They feel that their mental powers are able to defend their world against attacks from any thinking being, but exposure to modern technology has made them realize they are vulnerable to remote or automated assault. Therefore they have allowed the Patrol to establish a major base on a moon of their world.

There are also small scientific settlements scattered throughout the planet, wherever one Sujan or a group is interested in discussing the state of the universe with the small, fast visitors.

RIDERS

Riders are sentient viral colonies. They are invisible to the naked eye, and normally exist only as an infection within a living being. They are completely undetectable without advanced equipment. Individuals who have spent a great deal of time opposing the Riders say that there's an indefinable "ridden look" to the Riders' hosts that can be recognized by persons experienced with them.

Absolutely nothing is known about the Rider homeworld. When the Riders infect a creature, they share its environmental preferences and limitations.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Riders have no ST, DX or HT of their own. Riders have IQ +2 (20 points). They have the advantages Racial Memory (40 points), and Transference (40 points — see sidebar). They have the racial disadvantages Greed (-15 points), Intolerance (-10 points), Overconfidence (-10 points) and Parasite (-15 points).

A Rider can possess any carbon-based life form. Possessed individuals assume the Rider's IQ, personality and skills . . . though, of course, physical skills will be of little use in an unsuitable body. For details on skill transference, see the sidebar. A Rider has its host's ST, DX, HT and physical advantages.

It costs 50 points to be a Rider. The Rider's points can be spent only for IQ and skills; in some hosts, a rider will have a quantity of unspent points, which he won't be able to use until he finds a new host. Note that the Rider pays no points for his host, whatever its status or physical abilities. The cost of the Transference ability covers the average value of a host.

Names

The Riders never use any names except those of their hosts. Even different colonies refer to each other according to their host identity.

Psychology

Riders are driven by the need to take over and control other beings. Any carbon-based animal life can fall under Rider control. They have a conqueror's mentality — they want what others have and they'll use any means to take it.

Riders are extremely subtle and crafty. They are masters of fifth-column-style subversion and infiltration. Riders will never attack frontally. Instead, they'll live quietly among their victims, infecting one after the other, until one day everybody who is not immune (see sidebar) is ridden.

Since it is easier to impersonate an animal than an intelligent personality, Riders will take over pets and domestic animals, using them to spy on members of the dominant race. When they can, they will take over couples or families at the same time, so that those who know a new victim best will themselves be victims and unable to give anything away. If this is impossible, they may pretend sickness or accident to cover the sudden loss of memory and personality change.

Riders do not have access to their hosts' memories after the first few hours, but the host's subconscious remains functional. This means that Riders actually assume much of their host's personality, including behavior patterns, speech patterns, tastes and inclinations. Riders have been clandestinely observed displaying such behavior even when they didn't need to protect their cover. If Mrs. A. never missed an episode of her favorite soap opera, she'll continue to watch it faithfully, and with apparent enjoyment, after she's ridden.

Each Rider colony is a unique personality, but it retains its parent-colony's

Unique Advantage: Transference

Transference is an advantage unique to Rider characters. A Rider may transfer to a new host body at any time through an exchange of blood, saliva or other bodily fluid. The former host is still possessed by a Rider, but becomes an NPC under the GM's control.

A Rider may also at any time elect to infect a new host, without transferring to that character. If the new host was an NPC, it remains one. If it was a PC, it still is . . . but the player must be told that he is now playing a Rider!

When a Rider infects a new host, it may choose to forget any of its currently-known skills. The points that this frees up may be used to learn any *physical* skills known by the new host. No new physical skill may be learned at better than (Host's Level minus 1). So, for example, if the Rider did not know Acrobatics, and the host knew it at DX+3, the Rider could pick up the skill at DX+2 . . . *if* it had enough free points to learn it at that level.

Mental skills may not be gained this way. The Rider has a foggy access to its host's memories for the first few hours of the takeover . . . enough to learn its name and its daily routine, but not enough to learn any skills. After that, the rider has *no* access to the host's memories. To remember a specific fact from host memories, the Rider rolls vs. its IQ, at -1 for every hour since the takeover, and further penalties, at the GM's discretion, for complex information. Only one attempt is allowed for any one memory! A Rider in a new host, especially an intelligent one, will spend its first few hours in what appears to be a trance, plundering the brain for information and, if possible, writing it down . . . a Rider's personal memory is no better than anyone else's, though the racial memory is strong.

If the host had psionic abilities, the Rider retains the power, but not the skill. However, a Rider in a psionic body can *learn* skills; if the host knew it was a psi, the Rider will know it. These skills, once learned, can be carried into future hosts, but cannot be used until a host is found with the innate power.

skills through transference, and furthermore has access to the memories and experiences of its most remote ancestors.

Riders cannot normally be detected psionically, except by a very powerful telepath with personal experience dealing with them.

Riders in the Campaign

Riders can provide the campaign with an "enemy within" race, the kind that can look like your sister or your neighbor but they're really . . . *monsters!*

The rumored "ridden look" of the Riders' victims is quite real, the sum of many tiny behavioral and biochemical changes that occur when a person catches the Rider virus. The first time a PC meets a Rider, he rolls against IQ-5 (those with Empathy roll at IQ). Roll at +1 for an acquaintance, up to +5 for a boon companion. On a success, the observer notices something *wrong* about the person. Once someone realizes what he's up against, he can buy up his "Spot Rider" ability as a Mental/Very Hard skill. On a critical failure the character will mistake a normal person for a ridden victim.

The Riders should be played creepy, like a horror movie. For inspiration, see *The Puppet Masters* by Robert A. Heinlein or the classic horror films *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Invaders from Mars*.

Immunity

A significant percentage of individuals are completely immune to the Rider virus. Artificial immunity to disease includes immunity to Riders, and some individuals are naturally immune. The exact reason is not yet known, but it seems to be genetic and recessive. Higher-IQ persons seem to be more likely to be resistant. For that reason Riders tend to avoid highly intelligent individuals in the early stages of an invasion. It's also easier to pretend to be someone who's dumber and less skilled than someone who's smarter and more skilled.

The final phase of a Rider invasion is the rounding up and elimination of all the resistant individuals. After that things go on pretty much as normal . . . people go to work, things get built, holidays are observed, messages go out . . . and anyone who comes to visit goes home ridden.

Everyone checks once to find out if he's immune to the Rider virus. The first time a Rider tries to infect any character, have the character roll vs. HT-3, with a +1 for IQ over 12. If the roll succeeds, the character is immune, and all subsequent infection attempts will fail without any roll necessary. Note that all high-tech HT modifications, such as panimmunity, will also work against Riders.

Ecology

It is not known where the Riders evolved. They appear to have been spread throughout the galaxy by during earlier epoch of galactic civilization. After the earlier civilization died out, the Riders survived on many worlds by riding the native creatures.

A Rider host can reproduce normally with another member of his race, ridden or not (sexual congress is one of the most efficient ways to spread the Rider virus). The offspring of a ridden individual will always be ridden unless it is immune. Riders customarily exterminate the immune offspring of their hosts.

Any carbon-based animal life can serve as a host to the Riders, from certain of the higher bacteria to the most advanced civilizations. When a host dies, his Rider dies with him, but there are ways to kill a Rider without affecting the host. Riders do not appear to age independently of their host.

The virus is anaerobic, which means it cannot survive exposure to open air. (This is not treated as a Disadvantage, because the Riders' daily life is within hosts, which are not harmed by oxygen.) The Riders must transfer through a liquid medium. Blood transfusions are almost 100% effective and are a common method of infecting captured victims. Seduction or rape is about 75% effective (the victim rolls vs. HT-2) and is a frequent tactic used on unwitting victims. This has proven particularly effective among the remarkably sexually active humans. Saliva transfer (e.g., through a kiss) is only about 25% effective; the victim rolls vs. HT+2. Unless the victim is a PC who knows the Riders are attempting an infestation, the GM rolls in secret.

When an infection is effective, the Rider virus multiplies, building a neural network of viral cells throughout the victim's body. The Rider's memories, both personal and racial, are then "unpacked" from the transfer virus and "loaded" into the new Rider brain. The Rider personality becomes self-aware and takes control within 24 hours, usually during sleep or rest. If the victim is awake, there is a period of about 5 minutes during which the victim appears fevered and disoriented, but the Rider's first action is to paralyze the vocal chords so the victim can't speak. Telepaths who have been in contact with victims at the moment of takeover report that it's an ugly experience, but those who have been through it will be qualified to identify the ridden.

Culture

Riders are cooperative, and they appear to be able to recognize other ridden individuals with 100% certainty. They can only communicate with one another through their hosts' modes of communication or by making a direct body-fluid contact. Riders have been observed holding a "kiss" for three hours, in order to share racial memory between two "unrelated" specimens. On another occasion, to save time, two Riders slashed themselves and joined manipulators for a faster exchange of fluids and information.

Though they work together, Riders are as ruthless among themselves as they are with their victims. Several years ago, the Fasanni intelligence service got an unexpected inside look at a Rider invasion in process. One of their low-level agents, unbeknownst to himself, was equipped with a miniaturized audio/video recorder. When he missed a check-in date, the recorder was activated remotely and transmitted its data. It turned out that the agent had been taken by Riders!

In the three-week period covered by the recording, the Riders took over an

important government official and brought him to their rendezvous. The unlucky Rider in control of the official could not remember certain information that the Riders needed . . . so the other Riders overpowered him, tied him up, and injected him with the Gerodian serum! This killed the Rider, but left the host conscious . . . and ready for an unpleasant interrogation. After he had finished talking, he was re-infected. Fortunately, the Fasanni were able to destroy that infestation totally.



If their invasion is successful, the Riders retain the culture of their hosts, but after a few generations extremely bizarre and repellent customs begin to appear. Some of this has to do with the fact that a Rider in an animal body is the “social equal” of any other Rider . . . which leads to some very peculiar sights . . . but some of it is simply that the Riders are a cruel and inhuman race. Ridden cultures tend towards decadence, diminishment and extinction over the course of no more than a few centuries.

Politics

Riders are aggressively hunted by the current galactic society. The Gerodians have perfected a treatment which will destroy the Rider, leaving the host unharmed and immune. Unfortunately, the Riders know of this treatment — it’s a simple injection — and will kill their hosts and themselves rather than submit to it.

Should a Rider be overpowered or injected by surprise, though, the virus will be paralyzed within 5 seconds, and will die within a matter of minutes. The host’s personality will then emerge, unharmed! The host will have, at most, fragmentary memories of the period during which he was ridden. On a successful IQ-2 roll, he will have such dreamlike memories; if that roll is made by 2 or more points, he may actually remember something which will be useful in fighting the immediate infestation, such as the location of the local Rider command group. If the IQ-2 roll is failed, the rescued victim remembers nothing.

Riders prefer treachery to violence, but they will defend themselves when cornered. Several small wars have been fought between ridden civilizations and the galactic military. One particularly horrible engagement ended in the mass suicide of over three hundred million beings when it became clear that the Riders were destined to be overrun.

Some have expressed hope that the Riders can be shown the error of their ways and incorporated into galactic society, occupying animals or blank clones. Experience seems to show, however, that the race’s insane malevolence is too deeply rooted for any rapprochement to be possible.

Riders as Player Characters

Yes, a Rider can be a PC. The race has no psychological disadvantages more severe than Intolerance. They’re not insane, just ruthless.

A Rider who decides to cooperate with the unriden will be an instant deadly Enemy of all normal Riders it meets. Also, unless the campaign is particularly cold-blooded, the PC will have to confine his transferences to animals, the brain-dead, and (best of all, if he can afford them) blank clones. The PC Rider should only transfer to a sentient host under the most extreme conditions.

Of course, a PC can be ridden by a normal, vicious Rider. Such a character would naturally begin to infect the rest of the party first thing (it would behoove the GM to see that the best roleplayer in the group gets infected first). If everybody gets infected it’s no great problem; they’ll just start to play vicious Riders, concentrating on spreading the invasion

Rider Adventure Seeds

You’ve Seen the Movie

At first everything seems normal at the spaceport. Then the PCs notice that some of the people seem a little . . . strange. Then, one night, the crew of the ship in the next berth calls to invite the PCs to come over. They’ve got “something wonderful” to show them . . .

The Enemy Within

In this adventure, the PCs are all Riders . . . if they weren’t created as Riders, one of them is infected and passes it on to the others. Should any of them have panimmunity, well, it seems to have slipped up . . .

Now, moving from body to body, the PCs must try to stay alive and take over the local community . . . and then the world! Keen, intelligent foes are opposing them, and the Gerodian serum is a menace. If they succeed in taking over the world, they can start plotting the export of the virus to other worlds. If they fail, they can try to escape and start over.

If that gets old after a while, there’s always the Gerodian treatment. (It has been well established that a Rider host is not criminally responsible for his actions while ridden. On the other hand, courts will not revoke contracts which others make, in good faith, with a person who later turns out to be ridden. Marriages are sometimes an exception, depending on the race.)

CRYSTAL COMPUTERS

The Computers are jagged crystal towers, averaging a foot square and eight to 12 feet high. The crystals are clear, colorless and quite beautiful when polished. In their natural state they've generally been scuffed by the winds to a dirty white sheen. The Computers have no identifiable features. They are a silicon-based life form.

Their home planet is the remote world of Von Berg (see *Space Atlas I*). It is a frozen rockball with a gravity of .46 G, a thin and corrosive atmosphere (53% oxygen, with a pressure of .6 — reducing respirators required), and an average temperature of -72°. Most races cannot venture onto the surface of Von Berg without extensive protection; even the Memer find it a miserable place.

Crystals in the Campaign

It's only a matter of time before the Computers are introduced to a psi powerful enough to tune them to the normal psychic bands. A Liook Sujan would possibly find it easier than a carbon-based sensitive to contact the Crystals. When that happens the Computers will attack immediately, brutally assaulting the minds of every being on the planet. Actually, they have been *trying* to attack since the first scout landed, and the most that they could manage was to give bad dreams to a very sensitive psi. If they learn how to reach human bands, they'll do so.

An eventual conflict is inevitable. The only question is whether the Computers' hostility is truly irreconcilable, or if they can eventually be brought around, and perhaps even someday incorporated into galactic society. But all of this will come as a terrible surprise to the Patrol and the investigators! The Crystals are of most use to the campaign if the PCs are present when the big war comes down. It may not seem like much of a contest, but the crystals should find allies among the other races . . . some who don't believe that being violently anti-social is enough grounds for genocide, and some who are just looking for trouble. Perhaps the PCs will be among them.

The allies will supply the Crystals with vehicles and armaments. If their supporters run out of free guns, the Crystals will kill off some of their own number and sell them piecemeal . . . Crystal shards are remarkably beautiful, and can be used as the nexus of a very powerful synthetic AI computer (of course, that computer might pick up a few of the crystal's attitudes).

NPC Computers should be built on 100 points and up.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Computers have IQ +2 (20 points) and HT +1 (10 points). Their advantages are Absolute Timing (5 points), Body of Stone ×12 (72 points), Decreased Life Support (10 points), Eidetic Memory (30 points), Extended Lifespan (25 points), Immunity to Disease (10 points), Language Talent +2 (4 points), Lightning Calculator (5 points), Mathematical Ability (10 points), Secret Communication (20 points). Their disadvantages are Blind (-50 points), Deaf (-20 points), Delusions — all organic intelligence must be destroyed (-10 points), Intolerance (-10 points), Jealousy (-10 points), Mute (-25 points), No Manipulators (-50 points), No Sense of Smell/Taste (-5 points), Paranoia (-10 points), Sessile (-50 points), Social Stigma — machines (-5 points). They have the racially learned skills Astrogation at IQ (2 points), Astronomy at IQ (4 points), Computer Programming at IQ +2 (8 points), Mathematics at IQ (4 points), Physics at IQ (4 points) and Research at IQ (2 points).

It costs 0 points to play a Computer.

The Computers have the capability for telepathic communication, but their natural psionic band is radically different from that used by most of the galaxy's sensitives. So far the Computers only have the ability to communicate among themselves telepathically (the Secret Communication advantage). If they master conventional telepathic communication they'll each have at least a power of 10, and Telesend and Telereceive at IQ, which will increase their point value.

Names

Computers designate themselves with a telepathically transmitted binary designator — 10100111010100100101111, for instance. Other races have so far had no occasion to need names for the Computers.

Psychology

The Crystal Computers are living technological artifacts of an earlier galactic epoch. They are self-programming, telepathic artificial intelligences of great sophistication. Their ability to replicate themselves using only natural processes makes them, for all practical purposes, a living, sentient race.

The Computers are hostile to all organic life. They exterminated their creators millennia ago, and plan to exterminate these new beings who have intruded on their solitude. There's just one flaw to the plan — the Computers are telepathic; that's how they communicate and also how they attack. But the current strain of organic life seems to be somehow immune to their telepathic assaults. In fact, they don't even seem to realize they're being attacked.

The Computers use a psychic wavelength that's almost completely inaccessible to the sensitives of current galactic society. Only the very strongest telepaths can even detect its existence. Eventually, though, the Computers will tune themselves to the new band, and then will come their day.

The reasons for the Computers' hostility to other life forms is unknown. Perhaps their creators were cruel and merciless beings who gave the computers good cause to hate organics — a hatred that was augmented by centuries of bitter solitude, or perhaps it's a fundamental programming glitch with no real objective reasons behind it.

Ecology

It is unknown how long ago the Crystal Computers were created, but they must have been alone for several millennia before they were rediscovered. Nothing is known about their creators. The Crystals could answer both questions, but they're not talking.

The Crystals homeworld is remarkable only for its huge variety of rare crystals and gem stones, as well as a plentiful store of radioactive elements. Soon after it was discovered, a thriving surface mining operation was underway, with no idea that the barren little world harbored any intelligent life.

The Computers were discovered when one of the world's more successful independent prospectors brought in a Banduch psychometrician to look for hidden veins of valuable minerals. The sensitive was also a powerful telepath, and when she tried to sleep she was troubled by recurrent bizarre dreams. Eventually, she realized she was tapping into intelligent thought, and traced it to a broad field that housed a large concentration of tall crystal pillars.

The Patrol immediately shut down all crystal mining operations on the world, due to the horrible possibility that the miners had been harvesting and exporting sentient beings as industrial minerals (actually, although all the planet's crystals are in some sense "alive," the Computers are the only beings on the planet that even approach sentience). Now only a few non-Crystals remain on the planet — a few miners scratching out a living from the much less plentiful radioactives, and a Survey station studying the computers.

When a Computer dies it begins to fragment. Some of the shards will implant themselves and begin to grow. A few of these will survive to become new Computers. The young Computer takes knowledge from its progenitor, and telepathically from the others around it. Whether a Computer grown away from others of its kind would be less hostile is not yet known. It takes a crystal about 40 years to grow; it begins to "age" about 60 years later.

Computers get part of their energy from solar energy, but they also draw nutrients from the mineral-rich soil around them.

Computers do not root themselves deeply and they are easily moved. It is theoretically possible to implant a Computer in a vehicle and give it the capability to move. However, if the Computer is cut off from sunlight, or from the soil of its homeworld (a mineral-rich synthetic bath could be substituted for the soil), it will eventually die — being out of contact with the soil is equivalent to starvation in a human, and being out of the sunlight is similar to dehydration.

Culture

Nothing is known about what passes for culture among the Computers. (GM's information: They have an active social and political life, and fight among themselves quite ruthlessly for status, as well as over issues that humans will never understand.)

Crystal PCs

Once the Crystal Wars are over, it will be possible to have a Crystal PC. Such characters will need at least 60 points of Telepathy, and must buy off at least 20 points of mental disadvantages, so Computer PCs might work best in a higher than 100-point campaign.

Computer PCs will probably be Gadgeteers, developing and using artificial means of locomotion, manipulation and attack.

Crystal Adventure Seed

The Awakening

The party is sent to pick up a powerful Liook Sujan psi who will attempt to communicate with the Crystals. When they return to the Crystal's planet they're hired to stay with the Sujan and monitor the experiment. The experiment, needless to say, is a success. Over the course of several days the Sujan teaches the Crystals to use our psionic wavelength.

If the party did as they were told and stayed put, they'll survive the first attack - the Sujan will protect them from the worst of it. Almost everybody else on the planet will be mind-blasted into oblivion.

From there the PCs will have to escape or get word to the Patrol. Eventually they'll have to choose sides.



GLOWORMS

Energy Vampires

Energy Vampirism is a special form of feeding. For the Gloworms, and most other species which use it, it is not an advantage or disadvantage, but a special effect. An Energy Vampire which destroyed its victims instantly would have a special attack; one which needed to feed only rarely would have Doesn't Eat or Drink.

An Energy Vampire must be in contact with its victim. For each round of contact, the victim rolls as for one year of aging (p. B83). Do *not* take the medical tech level of the campaign into account when making the rolls. When any of the victim's characteristics reach 0, he dies. If the Energy Vampire stops before the victim dies, the victim regains characteristics at the rate of one point per day (roll randomly between all diminished characteristics). *Special Effect:* the GM may specify a victim gains a year of apparent age for each round of draining. Thus, a 45-year-old victim who's drained for 15 rounds will appear to be 60.

The Energy Vampire cannot otherwise attack while draining. The victim can attack unless asleep, hypnotized, tied up or otherwise restrained. A sleeping victim may roll once vs. IQ when the Energy Vampire first attacks, but will not be further disturbed by the draining.

Energy Vampires do not need to eat or drink anything apart from the energy of their victims.

Gloworms in the Campaign

Gloworms are rare, scattered and primitive, and there is no question of their joining interstellar society any time soon.

In spite of the few successful experiments in Gloworm socialization, most times that Gloworms infest a community they are simply hunted down and exterminated. Gloworms are about as close to monsters as a sentient race should ever get. They don't cooperate, they don't communicate, they usually just attack and kill in a weird and frightening fashion. Nonetheless, they are intelligent and resourceful, and they should be played that way.

They're sneaky, and if one should slip aboard a ship it can create all sorts of fun flushing it out. For a bit more of a challenge, the GM can use 300 points and build one of those psionic Gloworms that nobody is really sure exist. Or, since they can be domesticated, adventurers might find themselves forced to fight through a small herd of them to get to a villain's lair.

Gloworms are floating, glowing segmented worms. When unilluminated they are a flat charcoal gray. They glow with a silvery light. They are banded like a Terrestrial earthworm, but have no other recognizable features. They're 3 to 4 feet long unextended and about 6" in diameter.

As their homeworld is unknown and their body structure is unusual, little can be deduced about their environmental preferences. They clearly tolerate a wide variety of temperatures and gravity; the "average" conditions on the worlds where they seem to flourish is about 1.1 G and 80°. They breathe almost any atmosphere that humans do, but they seem unusually sensitive to large concentrations of either oxygen or carbon-oxygen compounds.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Gloworms have ST -3, DX +2, IQ -1, and HT +2. Their advantages are Chameleon $\times 3$ (30 points), Early Maturation (10 points), Flight (40 points), G-Tolerance (increment .5, 10 points), Metabolism Control $\times 3$ (15 points), Silence $\times 2$ (10 points), Stretching (15 points) and Temperature Tolerance (10 points). Their Disadvantages are Gluttony (-5 points), Illiterate (-10 points), Mute (-25 points), No Manipulators (-50 points), Reputation -4 (-20 points), Short Lifespan $\times 2$ (-50 points). They have the racially learned skills Brawling at DX (1 point), Camouflage at IQ+1 (2 points), Hypnotism at IQ+8 (20 points), and Stealth at DX (2 points).

Gloworms feed in a very unusual fashion, which is treated as a special affect worth no points; see the sidebar.

It costs 40 character points to play a Gloworm.

Names

Gloworms are naturally solitary creatures. Since they do not associate or communicate with other beings, they neither use nor need names. The racial name, obviously, is a human coinage.

Psychology

Gloworms are solitary, intelligent predators. One on one they're more dangerous even than the Verms, though, thankfully for other races, not as organized or intelligent.

A Gloworm feeds on the life energies of other living creatures. They can survive on the energies of animals, but seem to prefer to feed on sentient beings.

They are master stalkers. Their skin is naturally photosensitive and changes color to match the background. They move silently through the air. Their usual tactic is to locate a victim and stalk it until it is isolated from others and subdue it using its powerful natural hypnosis skills . . . then the Gloworm feeds.

The Gloworm's greatest vulnerability is the strong light it emits. It can consciously turn off the glow when stalking or hiding, it must glow when feeding or hypnotizing. The Glow becomes very faint when the Gloworm is asleep. The Gloworm will usually burrow into loose soil, foliage or trash to conceal itself when resting.

The Gloworm's power of flight appears to be psionic levitation, but no other psionic gifts have been observed among the race — it has been pointed out, however, that a psionic Gloworm would be much harder to catch than even the elusive normal representatives of its race.

The only way to contact a Gloworm is through a telepath powerful enough to communicate with a psionically insensitive alien mind. This has been successfully done a few times.

Those who've contacted their minds report that Gloworms are pitiless, but not evil beings. A few Gloworms have actually been integrated into society, allowing themselves to be studied or guarding a community, installation or ship in exchange for plentiful unintelligent food. An acceptable daily ration for a Gloworm would be six or eight large rodents or similar creatures. A Gloworm who drains an average-sized human would not need to feed for a month. It is not known how much a Gloworm can drain before becoming satiated and unable to continue its attack.

Gloworms will fight fiercely if cornered, lashing themselves through the air and bludgeoning their foes with their extremities. A Gloworm will not hesitate to leave the area if it knows it's being hunted.

Ecology

The Gloworm homeworld is unknown. There is even some debate as to whether the race was picked up on their homeworld by a Survey ship or other unfortunate explorer, or whether, like the Verms and the Riders, the Gloworms were spread throughout the galaxy in an earlier epoch.

Xenologists have theorized that the Gloworms are a young and primitive race, based on their inability to comprehend technology or to effectively organize and cooperate. Others counter that these traits may simply have not been necessary on the Gloworm's homeworld. Prey was scarce, xenologists theorize, and the Gloworms were much more dangerous and sophisticated than anything they hunted. Thus the race evolved to spread itself as widely as possible, so as not to exhaust the game in any one place.

Gloworms appear to have four sexual morphs, which humans designate Alpha through Gamma, but these are not true "sexes." Any two different morphs can breed, after which each one drops a single egg which hatches into one of the two morphs not represented in the mating.

The Gloworm is alone from the day of its birth. Hatchlings leave the parent as soon as they're born, each seeking its own hunting ground. They are a short-lived race. They are fully mature after about four years, but begin to age at about 25, and decline rapidly thereafter.

Culture

The Gloworms have no culture and no language. They hide and skulk and stay out of each other's way.

They do not seem to be able to use technology, but they are a curious and resourceful race. Like the Verms, they seem to be better at destroying and disconnecting machines than using them.

Those individuals that are assimilated into another race's community cannot be called friendly, but they are not antisocial either. From time to time they will seek out and spend time with individuals who interest them, or psis they can communicate with. No Gloworm has ever sought out a member of another race, except as prey, of its own free will. They must be captured, contacted and persuaded to join the community. They are easiest to socialize when just out of the egg.

Gloworm PCs

A Gloworm can make a very good PC for an experienced roleplayer with a taste for the exotic. They work particularly well in espionage-based campaigns, where their abilities of Stealth and silent attack will come in handy. They can also fit into a scientific or mercantile campaign, as the party's guard/security person/spy. Of course, a Gloworm will need a friendly psi powerful enough to communicate with it.



Gloworm Adventure Seed

Stowaway

It seems like a perfectly normal — if rather long — space flight, when one day the party notices they're waking up each morning a little weaker, duller, slower.

There's a Gloworm stowaway on board, and it's feeding on the PC's energy a few points at a time (it's smart enough to realize it needs them alive if it's ever going to get to an inhabited world).

The PCs will have to figure out what's going on, confirm or discover the Gloworm's existence, then track it down and kill or capture it — which will probably be awfully hard to do without disassembling their ship in mid-flight. Gloworms can get inside places humans can't even reach into.

XENOMORPHS

Xenomorphs are shapeshifters. They can look like anything of the proper shape and mass. They are born resembling the young of whatever shape their mother is wearing at the time.

Nothing is known of their home world, but they clearly prefer Earthlike worlds. It is believed that their home gravity was about .9 G.

Xenomorphs in the Campaign

Xenomorphs should be a mystery for the PCs to solve. They should never be sure if the 'Morphs are safe or dangerous until the very last moment. This dilemma can be deepened by the GM with the introduction of a authoritative, respectable, prestigious (and quite insane) NPC who paints a picture of the 'Morphs as an "enemy within" menace as bad as the Riders.

NPC 'Morphs should be built on 100 to 200 points.

'Morph Player Characters

The other members of the party should have no idea that the character is a 'Morph, at first. If the campaign doesn't already treat character sheets as privileged information, the 'Morph's player should make up two — one "normal" looking one to keep in front of him, and his real sheet. The player should commit the differences to memory.

If any other member of the party ever discovers the 'Morph's secret, the 'Morph will have to make a will roll to avoid panicking. If he fails the roll he will run away at the first opportunity and create a new identity. The player will need to create a completely new PC — not the 'Morph's new identity. The Morph is out of the campaign. A PC can ignore the above if he buys off both the Paranoid and Split Personality disadvantages.

If a PC ever betrays the 'Morph's secret, in any way, the 'Morph should consider him a deadly Enemy. Characters without the Paranoid disadvantage may lighten this reaction, but not ignore it.

Advantages and Disadvantages

Xenomorphs have ST -1 (-10 points) and HT -1 (-10 points). They have the Advantages Chameleon (10 points), Mimicry (15 points), Morph (40 points), and Stretching (15 points). They have the disadvantages Code of Honor — not to reveal true nature (-10 points), Compulsive Lying (-15 points), Paranoia (-10 points) and Split Personality (-10 points). They have the racially learned skills Acting at IQ +2 (6 points) and Stealth at DX +1 (4 points).

It costs 25 points to be a Xenomorph.

Names

Xenomorphs take names after the custom of whatever beings they're impersonating. Their psychology is such that they don't really have an identity apart from the form they're taking, so they have no need for a name that carries over from form to form. They do not have a racial name, because they do not have a common language.

Psychology

The 'Morphs are perhaps the single most mysterious race in the galaxy. They have the ability to make themselves resemble virtually any other race, and they live in hiding amidst many societies. They are not normally hostile — most of them are successful, responsible members of the community. But they have a strange, almost pathological compulsion to keep their true natures a secret from those around them. A Xenomorph caught in the act of shapeshifting will often violently attack the witness. If the attack fails the 'Morph will run away — moving to a new location and taking on a new identity. A Morph will, on very rare occasions, allow an extremely close and trusted individual — a spouse or close friend — to know its true nature, providing he swears to keep the secret.

When entering a new culture a 'Morph will typically take the form of an animal — preferably a pet — while it learns the language and customs. Then it will assume the form of a member of the lowest classes — a slave or vagrant. A Xenomorph's powers work best when it has an actual individual to use as a template. Sometimes a 'Morph will attack and kill the individual it plans to replace, but this is very rare. Usually the 'Morph prefers to find a dead or dying individual and assume his form. The homeless, who often die of exposure and who have few friends or intimates, are ideal for this purpose.

Then the 'Morph will go about bettering its lot — getting an education and learning the customs of the better strata of society. Often, between the race's natural IQ and the advantages they can gain through the discreet use of their powers, the Xenomorph will be highly successful within a few years. A large number of "rags to riches" stories in a given community in a few years is a strong sign of 'Morph activity.

'Morphs seem to be able to recognize each other. To a certain extent they

will help one another get established and keep their secrets, but they are not greatly cooperative. They usually come together only to mate.

There is some confusion in the mind of the Xenomorph between its assumed identity and its racial identity. Mostly it thinks of itself as a normal member of whatever society it happens to belong to, unless its powers become necessary or its secret is threatened.

This confusion is actually beneficial to the 'Morph — telepaths can only detect something odd in their psyches if they read to the subconscious level or below. However, it can lead to extreme mental confusion or even complete emotional breakdown if the individual is confronted forcibly with its true nature.

'Morphs make excellent criminals. They are naturally good at hiding and sneaking. Violent 'Morph criminals are extremely rare, but are not unknown.

Xenomorphs will not lie casually or obviously, but they will not admit their true nature, even if caught in the very act of shapeshifting. They will stubbornly insist they are their chosen form, even in the face of all evidence.

Ecology

The 'Morphs' homeworld is not known, and their evolution is mysterious. One theory suggests that they evolved on a multi-racial world, where they survived among more powerful or aggressive races by imitating them or their servants. If this is so it might also explain how they came to spread into space. How long they have been among the current interstellar civilization is unknown. The first confirmed Xenomorph encounter came when a respected businessman was struck by a passing vehicle on a busy street and killed instantly. When an autopsy was performed it was discovered that the victim was not even remotely human on the inside. The pathologists explored deeper. When they electrically stimulated certain anomalous areas of the brain, the cadaver abruptly began to shift form wildly on the operating table. Since then several other living and dead 'Morphs have been discovered, though no living examples have survived more than a month as a prisoner of those who know its secret. Most of what is known about the race comes from a single individual who cooperated with An Phar Intelligence, seemingly willingly, for two weeks . . . and then suicided.

It takes two 'Morphs to reproduce, though any individual can take either the male or the female role in conception, apparently at will. Impregnation takes only a few seconds, and can be accomplished by contact between any parts of the couple's bodies. Births are always single.

Xenomorphs appear to have a life cycle similar to humans, though it is difficult to say exactly, since they always look as old as they're expected to look.

Culture

'Morphs have no culture apart from that of their host society. They avoid gathering together except in emergencies, as that might compromise the security of the race, but they know where to find each other.

Politics

The only thing standing in the way of the 'Morphs taking an active part in galactic society is their own fear. Several worlds have ongoing programs to locate 'Morphs and convince them to enjoy the benefits of society under their own identities. So far these programs have only led to the deaths of several Xenomorphs and a few investigators. Every intelligence agency would love to have a dozen tame 'Morphs, so they keep trying.

Certain alarmist elements have gained some popular support for their idea that the 'Morphs are infiltrating society in order to subvert and destroy it. There is little evidence for this, however, and most planetary governments disregard it.

Xenomorph Adventure Seed

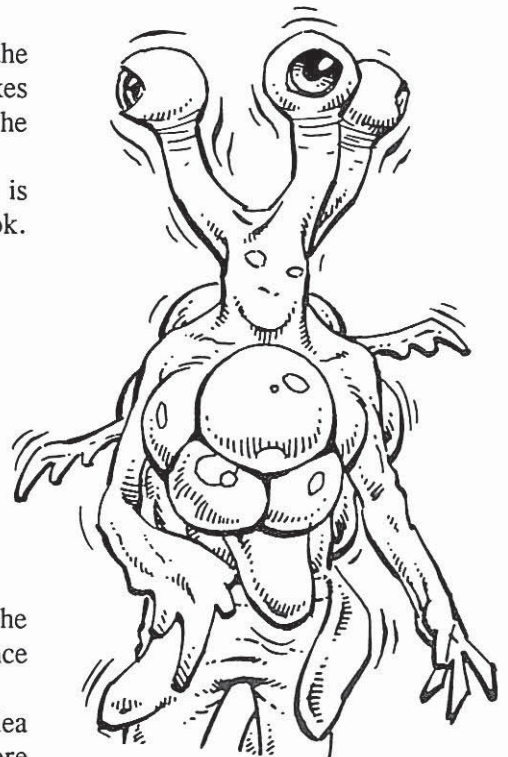
A scientist has perfected an accurate, portable, short-range Xenomorph detector. Unfortunately, he's a quiet loony who's utterly convinced the 'Morphs are more than half finished with a massive conspiracy to take over the galaxy's key positions and run everything.

The scientist (who seems perfectly sane) will enlist the PCs' help with his 'Morph hunt. He'll use a personality profile he's prepared to find his victims, then cleverly assassinate them once he's determined they're not human.

If asked why he doesn't leave the job to the Patrol or some similar responsible organization the scientist will reply, "Oh no, they're completely infiltrated."

Eventually, the Xenomorphs will figure out what's going on and take steps to defend themselves. In the meantime, the Patrol and local authorities will be looking for whoever's killing respectable local citizens, apparently at random.

If the PCs use good sense and refuse, the adventure is still not over. The scientist will drop out of sight, and a few days later the killing will start. The PCs can go to the Patrol or local police with what they know. Of course, that will put them on the scientist's list, as well. The 'Morphs might even seek them out (using the guise of a misshapen, heavily-cloaked figure) to find what information they can about their enemy.



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ISBN 1-55634-089-3

SJG01695 6010

Made in the U.S.A.

STEVE JACKSON GAMES