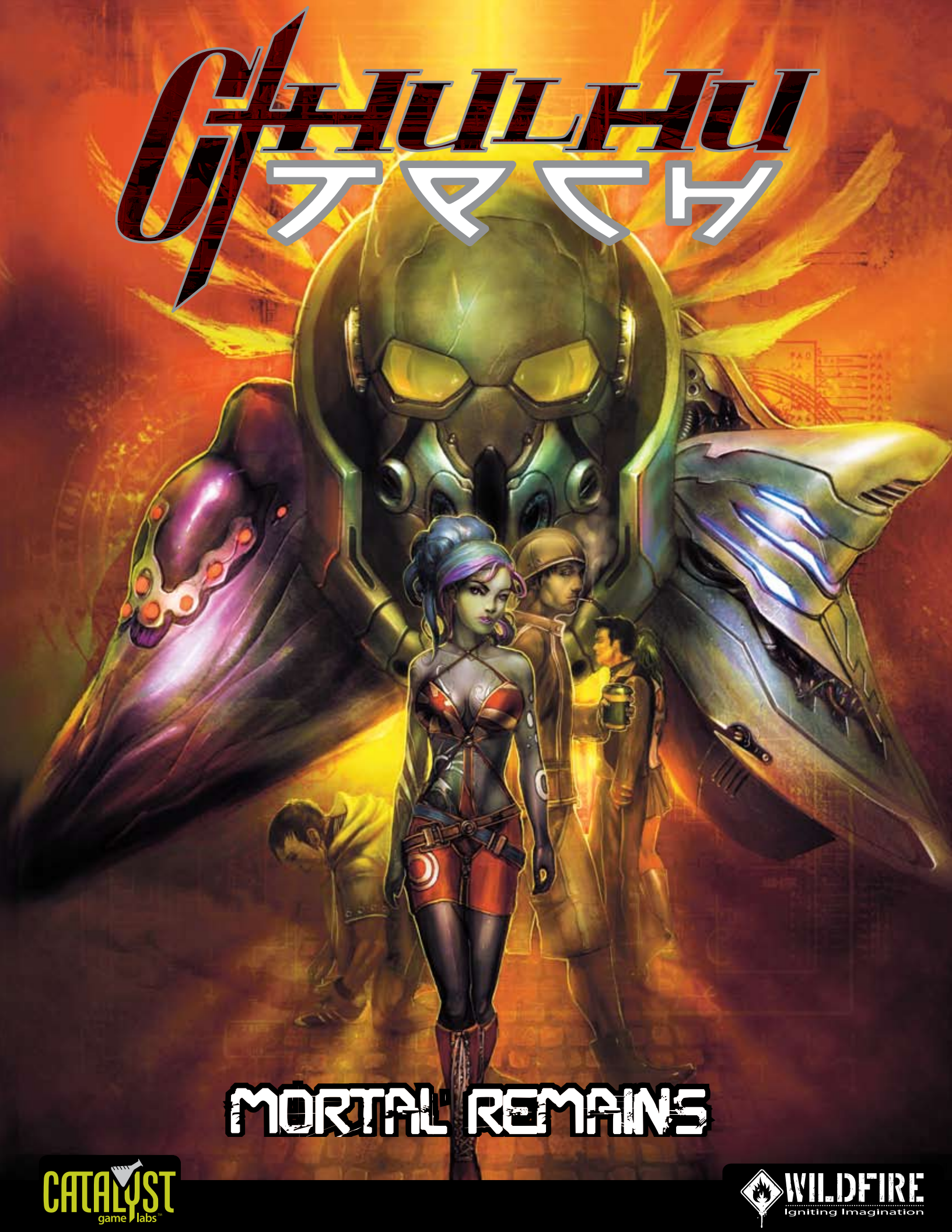


HELLHOUND TRUCKY



MORTAL REMAINS





GHILLIHI
テラヒ
MORTAL REMAINS

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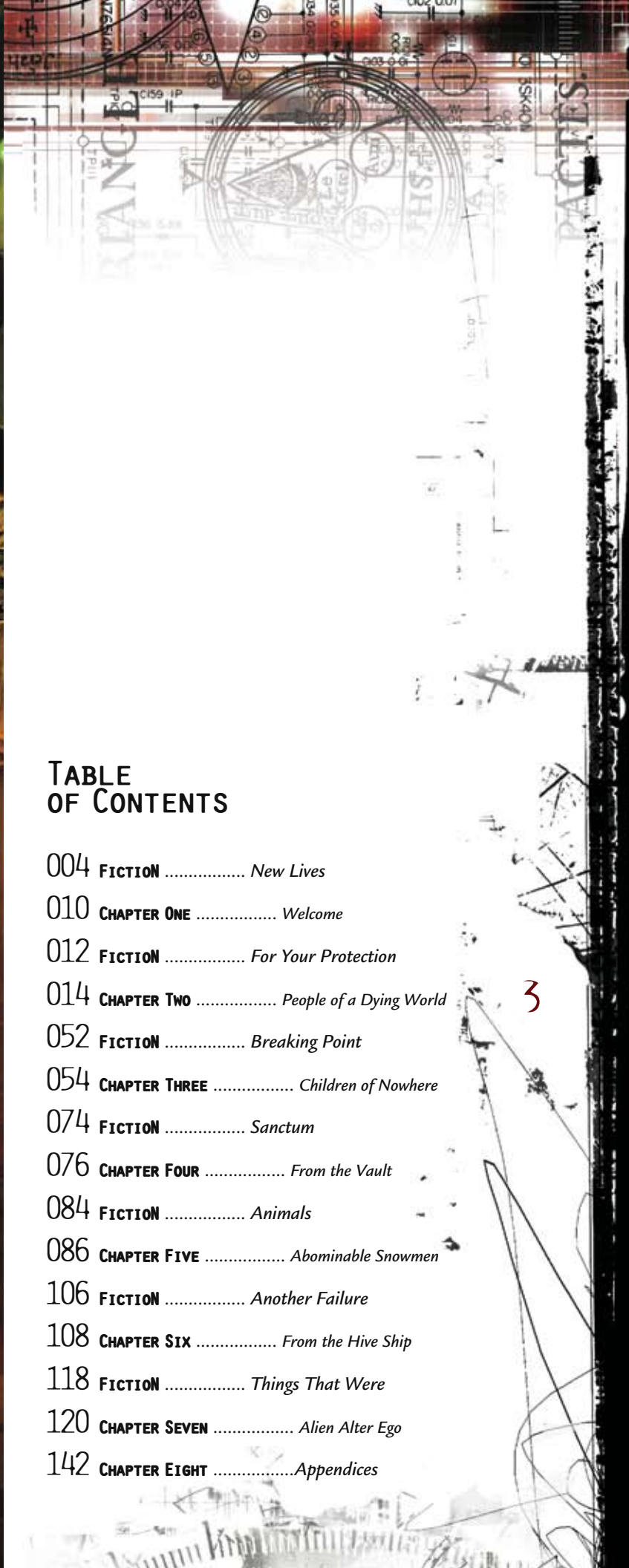


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Effing training exercises. At least when Sam was a mech pilot, training involved doing something. Now she just had to sit here and try to have a vision.

Even the thought still seemed weird to her. Sam Masters. A full-blown para-psychic. How did that happen? The dreams that came true happened more and more often until Juneau. The second time. In the midst of all that hell, she'd finally erupted.

Sam wasn't going to admit it to anyone. Okay, not anyone besides Jesse and Varika. Then Jesse insisted that she get tested by the Foundation. It took less than a week and there it was. By law, Ashcroft had to report her to the Office of Internal Security and she had to register. Which meant the military knew before she did.

Two shakes of a lamb's tail and she was transferred out of her unit and into PsiOps training. Since she was squad leader now, it was tough for everyone, especially after Juneau.

It was extremely unusual for someone to erupt with honest-to-goodness precognitive ability right off the bat. That's why everyone seemed to be so interested in her.

It wasn't like there wasn't a wealth of messed up things going on in the world that would be worth getting the jump on. China was gone, home of monsters and victimized refugees. The big question on everyone's mind was where is the Rapine Storm going next? Go from there to Juneau and the mess that was the attempt to re-take the city. The Migou, and a whole lot more than the New Earth Government expected, were just sitting up there like they were waiting for something - and they were. Then there was the seismic generator that caused Mt. Rainier to erupt, the way the Esoteric Order's been stirred up, and other fronts in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, India, Eastern Europe, England, and Argentina. It seemed like a never-ending stream of insanity.

One of the perks of her new job was a look behind the curtains at exactly how in peril the world really was, and it was not a picture she wanted to see. But see it all was exactly what Sam was supposed to do. It was, for lack of a better phrase, an extremely rude awakening.

So here she was, burning the midnight oil, trying to find out what induced her visions. After her experiences, she was now classified as an expert on Migou tactics. That knowledge was hard-earned - two confrontations with the Migou in Juneau and a lot of dead friends. She'd been given a mess of intelligence data and asked to see what sort of psychic information she could generate. Which still sounded funny.

This was her life now. Combat pilot to psychic intelligence and soon an increase in rank and pay grade. Hardened combat soldier to one of the elite. The rough life of combat gone in favor of the privilege of a nice, safe desk job. Accompanied by a rather unpleasant look at the reality that was kept from the public.

Despite the supposed perks, Sam still knew the truth. She wasn't right anymore. She was a freak. Even if she didn't yet have to wear the pin to prove it.

.

"Do you have any idea how much they censor," said Sam, settling into what she'd come to think of as her chair, despite the dozens of other patients who lounged in it.

Dr. Jesse Reiss, the middle-aged Ashcroft Clinic doctor who seemed to be aging in reverse, sat opposite her and frowned. "Sam, this is not something I'm supposed to know."

Sam somehow found it in her to be surprised, despite how fired up she was. "Aren't you Ashcroft? I thought you guys knew everything."

"We have security clearances, just like everyone else who deals with sensitive information. And that definitely sounds like something that is beyond my clearance."

Sam put her peek on vibrate. "We have doctor-patient privilege, though, right?"

"Yes," replied Jesse.

"So you can't talk to anyone about what we talk about here, right?"

"Unless you are a threat to others or yourself, yes."

Sam smiled. "Then I can talk to you about anything. Who are you going to tell?"

Jesse cocked her head. "I suppose if you want to look at it that way. That doesn't really have any integrity, though. It is technically a violation of your clearance."

"Jesse, seriously, I just took a big step into a whole world I didn't even know existed. Who the hell else am I going to talk to it about? And trust me when I say I need to talk about it."

The psychiatrist tapped her stylus against the edge of her pad and considered what Sam had said. "I suppose not listening to what you need to talk about would be a violation of my oath."





"So are we going to break some rules today or what?"

"You're the one in the chair. Fire away. But first, let me ask, how's the para-psychic training going?"

Sam frowned at her. "You know, I'm still pissed at you about that. I'd still be in a cockpit if it wasn't for you making me get tested."

"There are many people who can pilot a mech into combat, but only a handful of people who are gifted with para-psychic ability. And even fewer that have the precognitive ability you do. It would have been a waste to leave you where you were."

"I'll get over it. Probably about the same time that pay grade jump they keep talking about comes through."

Jesse smiled. "Nice try. We both know it's going to take longer than that. Do you miss Remiel?"

That took Sam down a notch. "The chip's still in my head and I won't let them take it out. They said he's still touchy and they don't want to give him a new pilot yet. That's my boy. Scrappy."

"Nice dodge, girl. Try again." And there was the reason Sam liked Jesse. No pretense.

"Yes. Yes, I miss him." She paused. "Honestly, I've gone down to see him every night since I got transferred. There are nights I can't sleep until I go see him. I can feel he's upset, so I talk to him and try to comfort him. That's not weird, is it? I mean, I've known pilots who talk to their regular machine mecha and mine's alive."

"We don't know much about the living thing inside an Engel. But you're right. It's alive and you talking to it can't hurt. At the very least, it fills some kind of need inside you. But, in general, yeah it's weird."

Sam looked around for something to throw at Jesse, but there wasn't anything that wouldn't hurt.

"So I see the training hasn't helped you see things like that coming."

"I am so getting back on topic now."

"Good."

Sam settled back into her chair. "The training is weird. I used to spend my time trying to survive in the present. Now all I do is try to see the future."

"What's it like?" asked Jess, excited by the subject matter.

"You're into this stuff, huh?"

"Who isn't? Parapsychology is fascinating. Besides, you can see the future before it happens. I have trouble balancing my bank account. I have to live vicariously through you."

Sam smiled weakly. "It's not all it's cracked up to be. The visions are hazy right now and the best ones still come to me in my dreams. I can't really control it yet, but that's why I'm there, right?"

Getting back a little of her steam, Sam continued. "The worst part is what they have to show me. They want me for military intelligence, right? They want me to look at plans and positions and let them know what works, what doesn't, and what dangers are coming down the pipe. So to do that, they have to show me what's really going on."

"We're back to the censorship part again, aren't we?"

"Yeah. I've been watching news reports my whole life, even as a soldier, and I've always pretty much believed them. I figured, what reason do they have to not tell the truth. The news is pretty grim already. How much worse could it be?"

Jesse leaned back with a sigh. "Personally, I've always had my own suspicions."

"It's a lot worse. I was in Juneau, but now I know how bad it really was. There's no way we're going back in there. China hasn't been compromised, it's gone. Do you know we don't even have any troops left in mainland China anymore? They're reinforcing alright, but they're reinforcing the other lines."

Sam paused to take a drink of her tea and clear her throat. "And that's not even half of it. The English front is a mess, the Migou are starting to creep up on Australia and South America, and the Rapine Storm keeps pushing their lines further and further into our territory. And don't even get me started on the Esoteric Order. Those guys are in way more places than anyone realizes. I'll spare you what they're up

to so you can sleep tonight. Just trust me when I say, wow, disturbing on a whole new level."

"This is all true?"

"Jess, would I lie to you about something like this?"

"Well, you might still be pissed about the whole testing thing, but I'd say this makes us even. I'm used to holding on to patients' secrets, but I can tell that this conversation is pretty much going to ruin my month."

.....

After a quick knock, the silvery-gray face of Sam's boyfriend peered around the door.

"You just about ready, honey?" asked Varika.

Sam stared in the mirror and frowned. "I just can't get my hair to do what I want today. It's all flat on top!"

"Honey, you're beautiful and it's just our friends. How much longer do you think you'll need?"

"How much longer do I have?"

"We're supposed to be there in fifteen minutes."

Sam put down the brush and the hair product. "Why am I always late for social functions? I'm on-time the rest of the time."

Varika kissed her gently on the neck. "I'll call Jack and let him know we'll be a little longer."

A couple minutes and a lot of fussing later, Sam gave up just as Varika re-appeared. "What did he say?"

"They expected we'd be late. No sweat."

Sam still staring in dissatisfaction at the mirror, Varika paused in the door. "You know, I've been thinking about the Chicago scenario."

"There's no guarantee they're going to transfer me. It just came up and I wanted you to know so that there wouldn't be any surprises."

"I looked into it," he replied. "We've been together long enough that I should be able to transfer with you."

Flipping off her reflection, Sam was finally done. "Eff it. Good enough. And lover, you're an Engel pilot. They're not going to transfer you to Chicago so you can sit on guard duty. They need you someplace like here, where you're at least likely to see combat. Besides, do you think Charoum would be happy being part of the city watch?"

"He'd understand. But you're probably right. Maybe I could transfer to one of the satellite cities that's the line of defense against the Migou. Someplace pretty close that it'll be easy to see each other on days off."

Sam kissed him as she buzzed by, trying to find her purse. "It's just a possibility now that I'm all future-girl. It's probably not even going to happen. And I just realized how funny this is. Talking about the future with a precog who doesn't have a clue what's coming. Or where she'll find her purse."

"I just wanted to throw that out there. And it's on the kitchen counter, next to the toaster."

Exactly where he said it was, Sam snagged her purse. "Thank you for throwing it out there. Now let's forget about it and go have some fun."

And out the door they went.

.

It was a nice winter night in the Seattle arcology. Those that programmed the weather made sure that there was a chill in the air, but that it wasn't too cold. Every so often, a light rain misted from the ceiling, forcing everyone to walk just a little faster.

Base housing was upstairs, so Sam and Varika had a serious train ride ahead of them. The great equalizer of society – enforced public transportation. Everyone stuck together in one melting pot with the common desire to get somewhere while staying out of each other's business. It was always interesting when the train hit the giant elevators in the arcology's walls and began its steady ascent. Fortunately, the magnetic levitation that kept the train afloat also kept the ride pretty smooth.

They had to change trains to enter the top level of the arcology, which was primarily a military base. Bases were pretty much all the same, but Sam had been spending so much time in a special facility that she found herself missing this one. It'd been home for a while now. She'd have to take a minute to go see Remiel later on. It was nice that the military still left her that privilege.

Of all the places they could be going tonight, they'd picked a military bar. No matter how much Sam was glad she had the luxury to be spending time in other kinds of places these days, the Crow's Nest felt a little like home. It wasn't much to look at – brushed metal bar, stools and tables, a couple pool tables and dart boards, pictures of decorated pilots and memorials lining one of the walls, screens with the news or a game. And, of course, the small mob of mech pilots that were always up to something.

Among that small mob, there they were. Jack and Cevy. The last of her former squad. There was a time when Sam didn't really get along with either of them. That changed after Juneau, the second time around. A lot had.

Sam still wasn't quite used to seeing Cevy smile when she approached. The Nazzadi got up and actually hugged her. It would have been awkward if it wasn't so genuine. There had been a lot of sniping and bad blood there, all now gone. With her odd Southern drawl, Cevy said, "Sugar, it has been strange not having you around."

Varika pulled out Sam's chair for her and they both sat. "Trust me. It's weirder where I am," replied Sam.

Jack flagged the waitress. "Say what you want, but I for one am damn glad you've got the sight. Saved our asses."

It was true. The three of them probably wouldn't have made it out of Juneau without Sam's erupting precognitive abilities. They were in the thick of things when the Migou swarmed out from their hiding places. Analysts said there was no reason they should have made it out alive.

One of the advantages of being a regular is that the bartender can take an educated guess as to what one is drinking. Two neat bourbons showed up for Sam and Varika without even needing to order.

"Awww, ain't they cute? They've got matching drinks." Jack snickered.

Varika held up a glass. "Let's toast. To friends. To surviving another day." They clinked their glasses together in salute.

Cevy took the opportunity to drain her glass and slam it down on the table. "Aaah! So, what's the freaky training like?"

"A hell of a lot more boring than being a combat pilot. Lots of meditative techniques and parapsychology theory and stuff like that. Tactics, too, which is apparently where I'm going to end up. I'm just starting to get used to the visions, but they still mostly come in dreams."

"Still robbing the cradle while you're at it, I see," drawled Cevy.

Varika laughed. "Hey, I'm twenty now."

The Nazzadi woman smiled. "Younger men do have their advantages, don't they girl."

"Wait. I'm less than a year younger than you," added Jack.

"So what are you guys now? Dating? Boyfriend/girlfriend? Casual sex partners? Or are we still pretending to just be good friends." Sam punctuated her question with a long gulp that finished her drink.

Jack and Cevy looked at each other and shifted uncomfortably. This was clearly new territory for them. Everyone, including household pets, knew that they were desperately in love – except for them. And they thought they hid it well, which was pretty funny to watch.

Jack was the first to break the silence, at a loss for his usual smart-alec replies. "Well... uh... we're..."

Cevy smiled, a warm smile, which was unusual for her as she took Jack's hand. "Dating. With intent."

It was moments like this that were of particular significance in the Strange Aeon. Especially among combat pilots. It brought tears to Sam's eyes. "It's about effing time."

Jack played dumb, "Intent, huh? And what do we mean by that?"

"Do you want to get laid tonight?" asked Cevy.

"With intent," Jack stated firmly.

Sam stifled a chuckle and wiped her eye. "It's too bad the Captain and Timana aren't here to see it."

That brought the mood down in a hurry.

In what had been dubbed by the survivors "Operation Really Bad Idea," Sam and her squad were sent back into Juneau to retake it from the Migou. It was a disaster, one which claimed the lives of CC and Timana, their friends and squad-mates. Nobody talked about it much.

Varika lifted his glass again. "To lost friends, gone, but not forgotten." They toasted once more.

The problem was, this war was so long and so brutal that there were already lost friends that Sam had forgotten.

.

Sam had never really spent much time in the Nazzadi districts in the places she'd lived. It's not like she avoided them, but rather she didn't really have much reason to go there. So she'd gone to see one when she was in Hong Kong for Christmas, and that was quite a sight. The Nazzadi really do it up for the holidays. There was fake snow, lights, trees, fake snowmen, Santa Clauses - the works.

This was going to be totally different. And possibly awkward.

She was going to meet Varika's parents, who lived in a very nice part of Seattle's Nazzadi district. Which was odd because Varika's mother wasn't Nazzadi. Sam had heard of Humans who pose and try to act like they're Nazzadi, but her boyfriend had never talked about his mother that way. So how did something like that work?

Thinking about it now, these were probably questions she should have asked earlier, instead of on the train ride over to their house. She turned to Varika, ready to broach the subject delicately. Or as delicately as Sam ever could.

She looked up to a big grin on her boyfriend's face. He chuckled. "You finally realized you've got questions about this, didn't you?"

How did he always know?

"No. Maybe. You know I hate when you do that."

He leaned over and kissed her on the forehead. "I know you do. But I'm still going to answer all your questions. Without even being psychic!"

Sam smacked him playfully, because, frankly, he had it coming.

He continued. "Okay, so ready? Nazzadi districts came out of the Nazzadi ghettos after the First Arcanotech War. These days, they're just an ethnic neighborhood like any other. No, Humans are not stared at. Yes, Humans are welcome. At least to visit. Yes, the districts are very clean and well kept and the Nazzadi pride themselves on their decorating. No, my father won't be upset if you bring up the First Arcanotech War and he's not sensitive about having fought on the wrong side in it. And no, my Oty is Human, so you won't have to worry about a full-blown Nazzadi dinner. You'll like her cooking."

"Oty? What's that?"

"It's Nazzadi for mom."

.

Varika wasn't kidding about Nazzadi pride in decorating, and his mom wasn't even Nazzadi. The place looked like a Feng Shui master had come through and tweaked it to perfection. It must have been a lot of work.

The dinner was great, just as Varika said. Nothing funny, just good old-fashioned filet mignon with steamed veggies and some kind of flourless chocolate cake that was to die for. Sam couldn't help but ask for seconds.

Varika's parents were great, too. Baruba and Gwen, quite the pair. He was aging gracefully, though easily well into his fifties. An architect by trade, he was well-read with a refreshing lightness of being. She was easily fifteen years younger, but a beauty nonetheless. It was easy to see where Varika's looks came from. Professionally, she was a financial advisor, but was in no way boring or stuffy. They were very welcoming, and spent most of the dinner asking Sam questions about herself.

Varika squeezed her hand more than once under the table, because he knew that was something that Sam hated more than anything. However, she weathered it with grace because she actually found it easy to like these people.

Eventually, after Baruba told a particularly lame joke about a bear in a bar, they got to something juicy. He looked at Sam and said, "So, I know you want to ask about it. Go ahead."

"I would but I'm not sure what you mean?"

"Well, you're a soldier. It would only be natural. You want to ask me what it was like being a clone fighting for the Migou in the war."

Sam looked at Varika and Gwen to make sure this line of conversation was okay over after-dinner coffee. They both nodded reassuringly. "Yeah, I'll bite. I am curious. It's stuff I've only read about in history books."

"I was just a kid then. Or at least my body and fake memories were those of a kid. I actually was only a couple of years old when I got to Earth. Which was probably the hardest pill to swallow when Vreta blew the whole thing open. Since then, I've actually run into other of my people with the same memory implant. The details are slightly different, but the broad

strokes are identical. I've run into older Nazzadi who had it much worse than me."

Sam put down her coffee. "That had to be a trip. How'd you get past something like that?"

"It was just one thing in the litany that was the lie we were living. Nothing I knew was the truth. It would be like you waking up one day to be told the Migou weren't actually your enemies and that this whole thing had been set up because the sick creatures that made you wanted them dead."

"I'm not going to picture that, because that's just ridiculous, but I get the idea," replied Sam.

"That's how we felt," he continued. "We thought the whole thing was ridiculous at first, like Vreta had decided to play some kind of sick joke on us. Then, when we realized he was serious and had the evidence to back it up, we were scared. Personally, I almost went catatonic. I didn't come out of my bunk for three days. But then it hit me."

Baruba clearly had a sense for the dramatic, as he paused to add another cube of sugar to his coffee.

"I realized that, for the first time ever, I was truly free. I didn't have to be a soldier. I didn't have to be who I knew myself to be. Hell, I didn't have to be anything at all. I mean, when you strip everything away, when everything you know no longer matters, what are you left with?"

Sam took a guess. "Nothing?"

"That's right. Nothing. A blank canvas. And what can you do with a blank canvas?"

"Anything?"

The Nazzadi smiled. "And when you realize you have the freedom to do anything, it's pretty exciting. And that's why we stopped attacking and why we're here now. Even after all the business during integration and the fact that it took your people a decade and another invasion to really accept us. Even that was finally on our own terms, for the first time."

Sam was impressed. "I never would have thought of it that way."

"So, more importantly, would you like to see my collection?"

Confused, Sam looked to Varika for some clue. "What collection?"

"My collection of Nazzadi weapons from the First Arcanotech War. It's surprisingly complete. Trust me when I say it's authentic. I may have known one of two people who were there."

Sam was out of her seat in an instant. "I don't think I can say yes fast enough."

While Varika's dad enthusiastically showed Sam his collection of First Arcanotech War Nazzadi weapons, he dutifully helped his mother clean up.

"Thanks for dinner, Oty. It was great. I know Sam liked it, too."

Gwen smiled as she loaded the dishwasher. "She seems like a very nice girl."

"She is. She's actually pretty amazing."

"Uh-oh. I know that tone. Plus, she's the first girl you've ever brought to dinner. Vari, are you in love with her?"

He tried not to blush. "Yeah mom, I am."

"Do you see yourself marrying this girl?" his mother asked.

"Who knows Mom. Maybe."

Gwen put down the plate she was holding and reached out to touch Varika's arm. The look on her face wasn't one he'd seen before. It was kind of scary in its seriousness. "If you love her, really love her, do her a favor. Don't. Don't put yourself and her through what your father and I went through."

If Varika had been holding something, he would have dropped it.

She continued. "I know that's not what you want to hear, and goodness knows I don't want to say it. But your father's people don't like it when they marry Humans. Dating is fine. Children are a big no-no. We had to raise you as a Nazzadi just so your grandparents wouldn't disown you. You probably don't remember, but they didn't really accept you until you were five. By then, you already could speak their language and we'd named you a Nazzadi name."

She put down the towel and sighed. "They still haven't accepted me, if you hadn't noticed. That's the reason we don't spend much time with them. Bless your father. He stands by me, even after more than twenty years of his parents begging him to leave me. It wears on him, though. I can tell."

"I... I didn't know, Oty... Mom. I knew there was tension, but..."

His mother cut him off. "I'm not telling you this because I want sympathy or to make you feel bad. I'm telling you because I like Sam. And sometimes you have to love someone enough that you'll break your own heart to keep them from going through hell. Even if you think she'd do it gladly. Which I think it's pretty obvious she would."

An awkward silence descended as they tried to go back to cleaning up.

However, one question burned in Varika. He had to voice it, even if he was afraid of the answer. "Mom, if you could do it over again, would you do it differently?"

She didn't look up. "Don't ask me that question."

chapter ONE

WELCOME

This is *Mortal Remains*, the core setting book for *CthulhuTech*. In these pages, you will find a detailed exploration of the New Earth Government and the Nazzadi, with details that are useful for anyone playing *CthulhuTech*. Learn what it is like to live in the Strange Aeon day-to-day. Finally understand who the Nazzadi are and from where they came. Discover new technology to help the New Earth Government turn the tide of the Aeon War.

Then you'll have a chance to peek behind the curtain and delve into the alien world of the Migou. Find out how they function, what life is like for them, and why they are so intent on invading the Earth. If you're of a mind, you'll have the chance to explore the Migou more personally by taking them on as Characters.

Welcome to *Mortal Remains*! Enjoy the ride.

This chapter will give you a road map to this major setting expansion, teach you terms, the physical structure of the text, and give a shout out to a few of our resources.

TERMS

Like the *Core Book*, the material presented in this book use new terms with which you may not be familiar. Just to make things clearer as you move on, we'll detail a few of those here. Each of these terms, and others, are fully explained in the text.

SETTING TERMS

Assimilation: A process pioneered by the Migou to ensure the absolute loyalty and servility of Humans. It involves brainwashing techniques, invasive neuro-manipulation, and memory implants, and typically takes months to complete. Humans who have undergone this process are referred to as *blanks*.

Blanks: Humans who have been altered by the Migou to be perfectly servile. Often used as spies.

Brain Tubes: A special container used by the Migou to store harvested Human brains. The brains are kept alive for long periods, capable of communicating through advanced equipment.

Colonies: The New Earth Government's former settlements on the Moon, Mars, Ganymede, Callisto, and Titan. They have been lost since the advent of the Second Arcanotech War.

Firstborn: The first Nazzadi to be decanted from Migou cloning vats. They were given the honor of knowing the truth of who they were and why there were created, charged with the duty of perpetuating the lie. In return, they were given command of the Nazzadi armada so that they could conquer the Earth.

Hive Ship: The moon-sized ship that brought the Migou to Earth. It contains manufacturing facilities to support the Migou invasion effort. It also maintains orbital superiority for the Migou. There are those that believe the Hive Ship contains half the population of Pluto.

Loyalists: Those Nazzadi who, for whatever reason, have chosen to go back to serve their creators are referred to as loyalists. They are welcomed back by the Migou and utilized in their plans. However, they are especially reviled by their own people. The term also refers to those Nazzadi who sided with Kyrza after *Revelation Day*.

Nephilim: One of the latest developments from the Engel Project, Nephilim are an extension of the arcanotechnology that created Engels. They are, in essence, smaller synthorgs designed to bridge the gap between soldiers and powered armor. They can only be controlled by telepathically-capable para-psychics and are volatile – they often turn on their handlers in a murderous rage.

Nephilim Synthesis Interface: An arcanotech chip that must be implanted in a telepathically-capable para-psychic if one has any hope of controlling a Nephilim. A twin chip is implanted in the Nephilim in question.

Old Guard: Any of the Nazzadi who were artificially-aged and sent to Earth as adults. The Old Guard are those who were old enough to have actively bought into the Migou's lies and to have fought in the First Arcanotech War.

Revelation Day: October 25th, 2064. The day that Vreta exposed the lie of the Migou to the entire Nazzadi armada and gave his people a choice.

Sanctified: Those Migou who are part of a lineage into which has intentionally been bred the taint of the Outsiders. They are sorcerers and para-psychics in Migou society. The manifestation of their taint is consistent – they appear to be sickly or wasted members of their race.

Socio-Capitalism: The economic model followed by the New Earth Government. It combines elements of a free market economy, especially as it pertains to business, with important elements of socialism, especially with regards to health care and housing.

THE BOOK

This book is divided into a series of chapters, each addressing an expansion to the setting or new technology. Here's a breakdown of those chapters, both to give you an idea of what's ahead and to help you find something specific if you're interested. Interspersed between these chapters are short pieces of fiction to help you get a better feeling for what the *CthulhuTech* setting is like.

Chapter One: Welcome is what you are reading right now. It's meant to help ease you into the vision for this setting expansion and give you a reference for what this book contains.

Chapter Two: People of a Dying World provides an in-depth look at the New Earth Government. It contains all aspects of life, including the Armed Forces, society and subcultures, and much more.

Chapter Three: Children of Nowhere details the history and present of the Nazzadi. It contains all aspects of their world, including where they came from, what they believed, and who they are becoming now.

Chapter Four: From the Vault introduces new New Earth Government technology. It includes new vehicles, mecha, and experimental tech.

Chapter Five: Abominable Snowmen pulls back the curtain to look at the world of the Migou. It explores what they really are, why they're doing what they're doing, and how their world functions.

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So if you're one of the people who has downloaded this book illegally off the internet, let's talk. We want to stay in business. We don't get to stay in business if you don't buy our products but you use them anyway. In more personal terms, if you like *CthulhuTech*, please go out and buy the books, because if you don't we go out of business or we kill the line because sales suck and boom – no more *CthulhuTech*. You lose, we lose, everybody loses. Everybody loves something for nothing, but this sort of thing comes with a price whether it's money or not.

Chapter Six: From the Hive Ship introduces new Migou technology. It includes new vehicles, mecha, and experimental tech. **Chapter Seven: Alien Alter Ego** provides all the rules for designing Migou Characters, as well as everything needed to Storyguide Migou games. It includes race and profession templates, story hooks, and a complete story starter. **Chapter Eight: Appendices** include the index.

SOURCE MATERIAL

INTERNET

Wikipedia & *Google Maps* – These two sites are indispensable resources when researching parts of the world where one does not live. Thank goodness for the internet making the world a much, much smaller place.

MEA CULPA

Definition: An acknowledgement of one's error or guilt.

Source: French.

This book discusses the way the world has turned out according to the setting. It is fictional, but there are some things that still need to be addressed.

This book covers a lot of ground. Inside, you'll find discussions of how sex and drugs are a regular part of society. You'll find discussions of how organized religion has all but died out. You'll find discussion of how certain cultures have ended up or aspects of those cultures have ended up. And that's just the start.

There's a better than average chance you'll find something you don't like or with which you don't agree. You might find the idea of what are now illicit drugs being available at a bar offensive. You might find the idea that casual sex is a normal part of life to be reprehensible. You might be a Christian or a Muslim or part of some other organized religion that is described as dying a fiery death in this seeing. You might completely disagree with how a particular nation or culture is treated here.

The most important thing to keep in mind – it's all fiction. None of it represents anyone at WildFire's personal beliefs. Fiction gives us the opportunity to explore what the world would be like if it were different – not if it had sacred cows that never changed.

We apologize if you find something inside this book offensive. Please take it in the vein it was intended and try something different on for size. After all, it's only entertainment. The world will still be there when you get back.

And, as always, you bought the book. It's your game. Play it however you'd like.





There is no busier place in the New Earth Government than inside the Ministry of Information. While there are those who would regard the analysts as busy-bodies, snoops, or even snitches, they themselves know that they were soldiers. While the soldiers of the Armed Forces fought against a very visible enemy, the soldiers of the Ministry of Information fought against one that was far more insidious. They fought against hopelessness and despair.

The feed floor was the epicenter of activity in the Ministry, much like the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. Analysts poured over e-mails, web-sites, manuscripts, edits of serials and movies, music – everything that could influence the minds of the New Earth Government's citizens. Those with objectionable content were flagged and recommendations were made. Sometimes police were dispatched. All in the name of making sure that people had a reason to get up tomorrow, a reason to

try to have a happy day, a reason to be productive. People had a right to know the truth, or at least a version of it, but they had more of a right to live some sort of a normal life despite looming extinction.

That was something those who worked for the Ministry of Information had to deal with – knowing the truth and still somehow trying to have a life. It was difficult for many and many were properly medicated. The rest believed in what they did with such conviction that it allowed them to survive.

That kind of conviction was what drove Bernard LeGrosse. He believed so strongly in the mission of the Ministry that he could bold-face lie to his mother and not lose a moment of sleep over it. Of course, it wouldn't have been so easy to lie to his wife, if he had one. That kind of love was a luxury he couldn't afford to have in his line of work.



Bernard stepped onto the feed floor. He'd be getting his aggregated reports in a couple of hours, but he liked to get his information fresh from the tap. He was just about to log into one of the hub terminals when a voice boomed behind him.

"Nice work with Tam, Bernie. She hasn't done field-work in a while, so I was wondering if she forgot the drill."

Bernard turned to greet Misbah Nasser, a superior that he "dotted-line" reported to with more and more frequency. Bernard's specialty was mainstream news media, but he'd had to deal with many smaller web resources lately. That was Misbah's territory, along with some other less savory responsibilities.

"Cindy's a professional who likes her job. It didn't take much to remind her why we don't always report the whole truth."

Misbah laughed. "That's why I like you. You always think people tow the line out of the goodness of their hearts."

"Don't they?" Bernard countered.

There was something in Misbah's smirk that made Bernard

uncomfortable. "There are graves filled with people who'd argue." Then the something was gone, as quickly as it had appeared. "Enough of that business. Walk with me."

The pair left the chaos of the feed floor, heading down one of the Ministry's many busy hallways.

"Bernie, I've got a problem I need your help with."

"What kind of problem?"

Misbah sighed. "You heard of a site called Hard Truth?"

He paused to press his palm up against a reader and opened the door. The Director's Lounge, a level of luxury not normally at Bernard's disposal.

"Hard Truth is an underground news site, correct?"

Misbah walked over to the espresso machine and started filling a couple baskets with grounds. "Yeah, a real pain in the ass, too."

He paused to start the machine. "They are a roving raw news service that claims they have the unadulterated truth. They move from hosting service to hosting service with redirects all over the place. They're not easy to find if you're a regular person, and they're really not easy to find if you're us, believe it or not."

Bernard took this in, while wondering if Misbah was going to offer him something. As if reading his mind, the Arabian man pointed and added, "Help yourself to anything."

While Bernard perused the teas, he recalled some things he'd read. "This site showed up on the watch list because it often ends up with genuine facts, not just conspiracy theories and fuzzy photos."

Misbah's espresso began to dribble out. "Bingo. These guys know how to get the real deal and that's why they've got to go away. They have friends in all kinds of places. Their physical location roves like their servers. Frankly, they're the closest thing to a conspiracy I've got going right now."

"Sounds like a fascinating problem."

Misbah smiled. "Soon to be an ex-problem. That's where you come in. I've found them. Finally. I've got a real line into their organization. I need someone like you to investigate how deep their network goes and then have a conversation with them to ask them to stop what they're doing." He then happily poured a double-shot of espresso into a small cup, forgoing most people's usual addition of milk and syrup.

Bernard looked up from the tea and frowned. "Investigation's not really my forté."

Taking an uncharacteristically dainty sip from the cup, Misbah swallowed and replied, "Yeah, but you've got a knack for talking sense to these people. You're the velvet hammer. You remind people to cooperate instead of bullying them into it. That's the only kind of thing these kind of people are going to respond to. Effing anti-establishmentarianists."

"So you want me to get to them and have a conversation about ending or censoring their underground news network, which up until now we have found impossible to shut down or thwart in any way. Pardon me for saying, but this sounds a little thin."

Misbah clapped him on the shoulder. "It is thin. It probably won't work. But I need to show that I did everything I could before I send some of my boys to take care of things in a more permanent fashion. You know, politics, oversight, all that. If it was just up to me, the problem would be solved already. You in?"

For Bernard, this was one of those days where conviction wasn't going to cut it.

chapter two

people of a dying world

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Never within human history has a single governing body taken on so much in the face of such absolute and final consequences of failure. The inescapable truth is that any collapse in New Earth Government structure would mean the end of Humans and Nazzadi as a species. But, how does a global governing body balance the need for quick and decisive military action, civil order, refugee accommodation, and diplomatic solutions to regional tensions against the commitment of individual and economic freedom, as well as democracy in a time of global war? From the surface, the New Earth Government would certainly provide an answer to that question, because even in the face of alien invasion and the advances of the Rapine Storm the right of an individual to exercise their voice in government is still preserved.

However, as much as the influences of government maintain the semblance of order and civilization during this age of global conflict, many people still remember the old ways before the creation of the one world government. Questions are sometimes asked in the shadows as to whether mankind would have been better off with a coalition of separate states rather than the absolute control of a single regime.

Government supporters enthusiastically hail the formation of the New Earth Government as a crowning achievement that wove all the varied interests and concerns of regional cultures into a single powerful voice. However, most people often forget that the New Earth Government is only twenty-seven years old, born from the violent womb of war. It was the First Arcanotech War that prompted civilizations of the world to bury their respective hatchets and unite together to face that common alien threat. Nobody complained in those days about their righteous view of a new world government; rather it seemed natural that the New Earth Government would simply evolve from the roots of the New United Nations as a governing body with enhanced executive and military authority. The nations of the Earth willingly gave up their constitutions, government structures, and age-old monarchies in favor of living yet another day against the Nazzadi onslaught. Pro-government pundits today often tout the formation of the New Earth Government as the single largest effort of absolute global cooperation that mankind has ever achieved.

There are those who fear that the rising urgency of that single voice in a world struggle for survival will permanently erode the rights of the individual for generations to come. The fact is that the world has only known nine years of peace since the New Earth Government's inception – the brief period of time when the First Arcanotech War ended in 2065 and the beginning of the Second Arcanotech War in 2074. The reality that no one wants to publicly acknowledge is that the New Earth Government is a wartime government, evolved through necessity rather than choice. Expanded government interests in private business have become common news that hardly shows up in polite conversation anymore. The rights of the individual against government search and seizure is slowly waived on a case-by-case basis with dangerous precedents that are set in the name of security and for the good of the people. Just scratch a little under the surface of the New Earth Government façade and you will find lay-

ers upon layers of lives monitored and tracked by any number of secret government agencies. For some, the consequences of such liberties taken against individual freedom are nearly as much a threat to human civilization as the Migou themselves.

The seat of the New Earth Government resides among the halls of the heavily fortified Grant Park Federal Complex in the District of Chicago. It is there that both Chambers of Parliament hold legislative sessions, debate issues, and create bills. The lower Chamber of Parliament is referred to as the Hall of Commons. It is to here that the people directly elect Representatives. Participation within the Hall of Commons is currently capped at two thousand Representatives. Much like previous versions of two-level legislative systems, it is within this large governing body that bills are introduced and voted upon as part of their inaugural journey toward federal law.

Three major political parties battle for majority control of the Hall of Commons. The Federalist Party operates upon a conservative platform that stresses the need for balance between state and federal control. To them the New Earth Government is a federal system that should always take into consideration the needs and interests of regional cultures. They stress that the federal government must continue to respect the rights and authority of state sovereignty. By contrast, the Unification Party operates on a more liberal platform and holds to the ideals of a much stronger centralized government. A larger centralized authority means streamlined execution of policies and laws that will allow for the advancement of a new civilization tomorrow that stretches far beyond the needs of survival today. Most Unificationists see the ideals of the Federalists as outdated and stodgy – points of view that would never allow for the myriad of cultures and races to walk into the future as a single people. Those who regard the ongoing merger of Human and Nazzadi citizens into a seamless society see this as a particularly important issue.

The Federalists and the Unificationists tightly grasp the majority of political clout within the halls of government. However, their influence is often hampered by the presence of the third, and lesser, political party. The Social Democrats have set themselves up as champions of the common man. They represent labor, the interests of the middle class, and the needs of the poor. The political platform of the Social Democratic Party is very much a humanist one that continues to protect the view that government, as a whole, should be a servant to the people rather than vice versa. Though they do not hold the strength to carry their own weight, they attract a strong enough following to prompt the other two parties to often vie for their support. Allowing themselves to become the wild-card party has given the Social Democrats access to movement on their own agendas that they would not otherwise enjoy on their own.

The higher Chamber of Parliament is the Senate Council. This powerful governing body votes on legislation submitted by the Hall of Commons before the bill's final ratification by the President. The general public does not elect Senate Councilmen; instead two seats are appointed by a majority vote of each State

Legislature. In fact, the Senate Council can easily be traced as the direct descendant of the General Assembly of New Earth Government's predecessor. Much like the NUN of old, the Senate Council manages a sub-committee dedicated to preserving the integrity of the governing body and to provide checks and balances between the Hall of Commons and the Presidency. This sub-committee is the Security Council. There are four permanent and three temporary Security Council members. The permanent members are the states of North America, the European Union, Russia, and China. The other three temporary members are selected by a vote of the Senate Council with the current seats being held by South Africa, the United Arab League, and India.

The Chief Executive of the New Earth Government is the President. A general election is held once every four years for all the Representative seats in the Hall of Commons. Once the election victories determine the majority party, that party is then invited by the Senate Council to form a government. The President Elect is selected by that party, typically being one of the party leaders, and the approval of that Presidential nomination is carried out by the members of the Security Council. The new President is responsible for the creation of his or her cabinet consisting of various Ministers to head all the Ministries of the Executive Branch. All military, internal security, economic, intelligence, education, propaganda, and hosts of other matters operate within this hierarchy. By law, the President can only serve two terms.

Providing a global system of law requires a body whose sole responsibility would be the interpretation and legal deliberation of that law. As was so with democratic systems of an earlier age, so too has the New Earth Government created a higher court system. The highest court in the world, simply known as the High Court of Justice, consists of eleven judges nominated by the President and voted on by the Representatives in the Hall of Commons. The term of service for these High Court judges is for life, and so the varied agendas that surround their selection often becomes a huge tug-of-war by the major political parties.

All state governments follow a similar structure that differentiates between their legislative, executive, and judicial branches, though the particulars of these structures often vary between states by some degree. For instance, the former State of China maintained the State People's Congress, the State Council headed by their Premier, and the Supreme People's Court. The State of North America operates with a House of Representatives, a State Supreme Court, and a Governorship to manage the Executive Branch. Both the European Union and the United Arab League rely on more of a traditional Parliamentary structure with trappings akin to the old governments of London and Ankara. The Nazzadi State of Nazza-Duhni is headed by their Chairman, with legislation created by their Strategic Commission, and judiciary responsibilities presided over by their Grand Tribunal. In a similar vein, so it goes with the other states of the New Earth Government. Though a handful of efforts have emerged over the years to create seamless consistency across all the regions of the globe, the reality is that certain concessions were necessary to attain a full agreement across all national boundaries during the

early days of the New Earth Government's inception, and some habits have been hard to break over the years.

All state government positions are determined by free elections. Gone are the days of hereditary transfers of power as seen in monarchies. Though some royal lineages still exist, the official recognition of a noble class does not. The originators of the New Earth Government structure abolished such notions due to the possibility of conflict that might arise from the point of view that no governing body should be revered above the station of Prince or King. The immediate urgency of global war has dwarfed cultural attachments to long lines of beloved reigning monarchs. Nevertheless, there are a few minor movements, underground organizations and such, that seek to bring back the prestige of their regional thrones. They have not achieved much momentum thus far, but there is a growing lobby among some states to pass legislation that would reinstate their royalty.

Many of the New Earth Government states have created governing structures to support sub-territories, regions, districts, or provinces. These usually coincide with old national borders. The advantage is that this allows for a certain level of government control between the levels of city and state, which is critical when operating a representative government on a global scale.

President Konstantin Becker has held the highest executive office in the world for seven years. As the end of his final term approaches, support has grown within the Hall of Commons to extend his presidency another four years in order to preserve governing continuity. President Becker is widely regarded as a reasonably effective leader in time of crisis. However, he is a staunch Unificationist and many Federalists are very nervous about the drastically increased executive powers that have been granted during his term of office. Heated partisan debates have already erupted in the Hall of Commons with the Federalists accusing the Unificationists of working toward a secret agenda to consolidate central government power. The Unificationists on the other hand argue that the Federalists are clearly more committed to their paranoid bickering than the necessary steps that must be taken to insure victory in the Aeon War. The neutral ground, thus far, has been held by the Social Democrats for whose support both of the other parties vehemently compete.

Special interest lobbyist groups have become far more prevalent in Chicago. These groups represent a wide array of interests from private businesses to industry conglomerates to social agenda organizations to labor unions. Most lobbyist groups operate within certain restrictions as specified by federal policy. Some of these restrictions include levels of communication among government organizations, an annual registration process, and a method of reporting activities as outlined by GSI (Global Security Initiative) 1-298A. However several lobbyist groups have launched informal complaints about the activities of Senate Councilman Jan Fouche of South Africa. Though no formal evidence has arisen, it is widely believed that Jan Fouche has provided a central conduit that grants unfair government access to one particular multinational company - The Chrysalis Corporation.

THE ARMED FORCES

The Armed Forces of the New Earth Government have stood as a structural cornerstone ever since the birth of the global government in 2059. It was the daring military victories and rousing tales of heroic action during the First Arcanotech War that allowed the world to transform its self-view from a vast collection of differing cultures and traditions to that of a single people. You could say that the Armed Forces helped to forge a sense of global unity and common identity among all citizens throughout the world.

With so many of the New Earth Government's twenty-seven years drenched in conflict, the Armed Forces have evolved into a central and dominant fixture throughout society. Civilian campaigns to support military personnel and discharged veterans dot the urban landscape with ads and slogans. It's rare to walk down city streets and not find a group of soldiers or sailors on leave trying to hunt down the best watering holes in town. Military convoys are common spectacles for travelers making their way from one arcology to another. For many, there is nothing more impressive than to witness a large battlecruiser squadron floating like an unreal dream through the skies above farm fields or small rural townships. The Armed Forces have certainly emerged as a very real fixture in the center of everyday life.

The two primary branches of the New Earth Government Armed Forces are the Army and the Navy. The Army has, of course, maintained its age-old focus of ground combat operations. The Navy, however, has taken on a much wider role as compared to the navies of the pre-NEG era. For starters, the evolution of airborne naval vessels thanks to the advent of arcanotechnology has lifted the Navy's field of influence from the sea to the sky. Thus, the realm of responsibility once held by national air forces of old now fall under the Navy's mission. The choice to merge the air forces into the navy seemed like a logical next step, based on the air support roles provided by aircraft carriers since the mid-twentieth century. Modern navy fighters now fly close escort for larger naval destroyers, transport ships, battlecruisers, or other capital ship squadrons.

Most of the larger capital ships, like battlecruisers, carry a contingent of both aircraft and mecha. The piloting of combat aircraft is always a position reserved for Navy officers. However, the honor of climbing into the cockpit of a ship-born mech is reserved for the Marines. As it has been for hundreds of years, the Marine Corp is responsible for providing combat strength from the sea using the rapid deployment capability of the Navy. With the modern flight capability of naval vessels, that mission has extended itself to the air as well. Even though the Marine Corp is considered a separate branch of service, its government administration falls under the Department of the Navy. The Marines are a vital component of the New Earth Government's capability to rapidly deploy a combined arms strike force anywhere throughout the world. There's a certain hardness in the *esprit de corps* of Marine units. The age-old notion that the grit of men wins battles rather than the advancement of technology

still permeates strongly through the Marine identity. In fact the doctrine that "every marine is a rifleman" not only ensures that all Marines, regardless of their specialization, receives rifleman training, it creates a kind of internal bond that is unique to all the Armed Forces services.

Of course the beating heart, and in fact the largest body of the Armed Forces is the Army. There is just no tactical substitute for the sheer guts and determination of the soldier fighting on the front line. More often than not, the source of that tenacious determination comes from the camaraderie and pride that is fostered within each individual unit. For many serving men and women, that pride extends to a long and valorous history that New Earth Government planners chose to maintain during the formation of the new global Army. What better way to integrate the military traditions of the world into a single fighting force than to allow some of those individual identities to continue today? What better way to foster self-respect in one's unit than to honor the achievements of its predecessors? To that end, the New Earth Government chose to integrate some of the more prominent military units of the world into the modern Army and allowed them to keep their traditions intact.

There are many such examples in the world of old cultural army units integrated into the new system. The North American 1st Infantry Division, for example, still refers to itself as the Big Red One and the 1st Battalion of that Division still calls itself the Devil's Brigade. Even though the British monarchy no longer exists, the European 2nd Infantry Division prefers to go by their original formation name, the Royal Regiment of Scotland. Soldiers of German lineage love to take pride in the 10th Mecha Armored Division, which holds its roots directly with the famous 10th Panzer Division. There is the Egyptian 2nd Corp, the Franco-German Brigade, the Brigade of Gurkhas, the Arab Republican Guard – one of the finest heavy mecha units in the Middle East. Even the elite special forces detachment attached to the European 5th Infantry Division claims its roots in the famous mountain fighters of the French Chasseurs Alpins. One of the finest light airborne rapid deployment infantry units to this day still goes by the moniker of the 75th Ranger Regiment out of Fort Benning, Georgia. Much of the character and strength of the New Earth Government's modern Army can certainly be found in the roots of history and the battle honors of campaigns long past.

One of the major advantages that all branches of the New Earth Government Armed Forces enjoy is their exceptional speed, mobility, and the ability to deploy a significant combat force within a very short period of time. The notion of Combined Arms as an approach to warfare, that balances the effects of mixed units on the field, has existed for hundreds of years. Yet each new advancement in military technology has brought with it new avenues to apply to an ever-evolving New Earth Government Combined Arms Concept. Today's doctrine successfully combines the armored support and remote artillery tactics developed in

the Second World War, the quick deployment effectiveness of airmobile infantry that evolved during the Vietnam War, the precision bombing and high-speed armored advance tactics of the 1991 Gulf War, the information supremacy method of waging war that guided the United States led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the coordinated airborne naval combat support methods that emerged during the First Arcanotech War.

A common modern Combined Arms tactic is to deploy Nazzadi mecha, alone or in pairs, to scout the landscape for enemy positions. The superior land speed of Nazzadi mecha make them ideal for this kind of mission. Once an enemy troop or vehicle concentration is discovered, the Nazzadi pilot engages in a defensive posture while laying down covering fire. They will also paint one of the enemy units with a laser target designator while radioing in for support. The enemy position will erupt moments later with a deadly barrage of explosive death delivered by remote artillery fire, a bombardment of missile fire from local on-station aircraft, or a salvo of main-battery fire from a nearby capital ship. Heavy New Earth Government Sword-class mecha and powered armor infantry units are airdropped within fifteen minutes to support the scouting Nazzadi units on the ground and sweep-up operations soon commence. Support vehicles, such as the UCH-70 Werewolf, show up within ninety minutes to re-supply the units on the ground and tend to the wounded as necessary. Then the whole process begins again.

The key is to move quickly, detect targets of opportunity, and respond as rapidly as possible before the enemy can recover and coordinate themselves. Field commanders have often touted this kind of fast-paced high-impact warfare as the best weapon to use against the Migou's uncanny talent for massively coordinated and exceedingly efficient combat command and control. Hit the enemy hard in the flank and then move out before the full body of the beast can turn on you. The key element for this kind of warfare is establishing and maintaining air superiority. This is why the New Earth Government invests so much of its military budget on the development and construction of airborne capital ships. When not engaged in a fire-fight against swarm ships, battlecruiser squadrons have proven themselves to be devastatingly effective against units on the ground.

Air superiority is also the key element for fighting against the Rapine Storm. Though the minions of the Unnamed One can deploy a semblance of air presence, their forces just don't measure up against the combined might of the New Earth Government Navy. As horrifying as the alien beasts of the Storm can be on the ground, they are still entirely helpless against the hell that can easily be rained down from NEG warships in the sky. In fact the only thing that has stopped the New Earth Government from fully engaging in an airborne extermination campaign is the immediate threat posed by the Migou. Thus a great deal of the Navy's forces have been committed to breaking the back of the Migou fleet before turning on the newer alien threat in Southeast Asia. New Earth Government strategists have long believed that

the key to winning the Aeon War is to win the air war against the Migou. Once the dominance of the sky can be achieved, there would be nothing to stop the NEG from turning its full naval might against the Rapine Storm. However, to accomplish this, the New Earth Government must disable or destroy the Migou Hive Ship, and plans have already been brought into play to make that happen.

Though the New Earth Government can boast much greater air power than their Rapine Storm enemies, it is certainly in their best interest not to underestimate the subversive and subtle power of the Dead God. NEG forces are still susceptible to the dream manipulation that the Rapine Storm has mastered, as evidenced in the sudden and violent fall of China. So even with the ability to deploy a powerful and modern combined military force against the Disciples of the Rapine Storm, New Earth Government strategy is still to try and contain the Storm's spread until the appropriate supernatural countermeasures can be put into place. To that end, the various branches of the Armed Forces have begun to heavily recruit sorcerers and para-psychics to create new paranormal combat units. The Aeon War adds its own element to the Combined Arms Concept by bringing in dream protection, arcane surveillance, and other sorcerous and psychic talents to the mix. The longer this war rages the more the New Earth Government adjusts, learns, and executes within this era of new modern warfare.

Global coordination of New Earth Government Armed Forces is managed through a joint command structure known as the Unified Force Command (UFC). Synchronization and monitoring of military campaigns and major events takes place within UFC headquarters at the Peterson Military Operations installation in Colorado Springs. Computer generated simulations based on instant strategic updates are often run by combat planning specialists stationed within the Cheyenne Operations Center nearby. Thus the UFC is the primary information, command, and control hub for all the major geographic command groups in the world.

Several force commands, based on world geography, coordinate military activities for all service branches within the region. In this way, the integrity of the Combined Arms Concept can be maintained. A four-star Admiral or Marshal heads each force command. The force commands, and their current headquarters, are North America Command (NOACOM) out of Peterson in Colorado Springs, South America Command (SOACOM) out of Buenos Aires, European Command (EUCOM) out of Stuttgart, Middle East Command (MECOM) out of Jerusalem, Africa Command (AFRICOM) out of Johannesburg, and Pacific Area Command (PACOM) out of San Francisco. All Navy, Army, and Marine combat activities are ordered from and coordinated by these regional command centers throughout the world.

Large and heavily fortified military installations protect the entrances to the Mediterranean Ocean and the Black Sea from

incursions by the Esoteric Order of Dagon. The underwater mouths to these bodies of water have been heavily laced with smart mines and fortified with automatic torpedo launchers and sensor equipment designed to track possible friend or foe targets. In addition, regular patrols of aquatic mecha further ensure the safety of these waterways from enemy incursions. The Sadat Naval Defense Base at the Gulf of Suez has thus far seen very little activity from the Esoteric Order of Dagon. However, naval defenses under the watchful eye of Gibraltar have experienced periodic pressure from the fishmen over recent months. Other major waterways in the world have also been heavily fortified against EOD incursion, such as the San Francisco Bay, the Straights of Juan De Fuca near Vancouver Island, the Saint Lawrence River at Quebec to protect the American Great Lakes, the Chesapeake Bay at Norfolk Virginia, and a number of other inland waterways valuable to the New Earth Government.

The Navy Training Center at Naples has emerged as the largest amphibious training facility in the world. There is no better place to practice sub-surface amphibious war games and training exercises than in the Mediterranean. Recent government funding has poured into TRACEN Naples to enhance the facility to meet demand. Italian citizens are often left in awe as they watch the impressive spectacle of a large naval task forces and scores of aquatic mecha emerge from the waves of the ocean after conducting their daily drills.

Another Naval Training Center of note is TRACEN Great Lakes, about thirty miles north of Chicago. The facility has existed in one form or another since 1911 and many technical training schools are conducted there. However, the newest schools added to the Center in recent years are the top secret schools of Applied Arcane and Para-psychic Studies. The military utilization of paranormal talents has certainly become a major focus in recent years and TRACEN Great Lakes has earned a reputation for being one of the best schools in the nation for those fields. In fact, many students from other branches of service are often sent to these Navy schools for training.

The recent New Earth Government victory against the Esoteric Order of Dagon at the Second Battle of Pearl Harbor might have been considered very positive news had it not been for the fact that it was overshadowed by the surge of horror stories flooding in from a dying China. Though the Armed Forces are engaged in conflicts throughout the world, there are certain critical areas that have either recently seen hot action or whose strategic importance might tip the balance of the war. Gauging the committal of resources is extremely difficult when trying to balance the war effort against three different enemies on various global fronts. So, some campaigns may receive priority support while others are left to complete their mission on their own. One of the current major priority areas is Japan.

Rampaging forces of the Rapine Storm overran China when the New Earth Government left its backdoor open during the inva-

sion of the Korean Peninsula. Thousands of NEG troops and their war machines are still stranded in Mongolia. The only hope to re-supply these areas and keep the western Pacific Rim from falling like a domino stack is to hold on tightly to Japan. With the Migou already in Alaska and the Rapine Storm island-hopping into the northern coast of Australia, Japan represents a tenuous connection for New Earth Government supply lines across the Pacific. It's a foothold in Asia that the NEG cannot afford to lose.

The Migou presence in Alaska poses a serious threat to the lands of North America. Despite a valiant, but failed, attempt by the New Earth Government to counterattack against the invaders, it's only a matter of time before the Migou continue their press southward - into the heart of the highly populated region and seat of global government located in North America. Thus, large troop buildups have begun to take a defensive posture in the North American buffer zone while a new strategy against the Migou is devised. In the meantime, the New Earth Government continues to conduct random raids on various enemy positions throughout Alaska in order to disrupt, weaken, and delay the Migou as long as possible.

Fighting in Eastern Europe against the Migou has not been as heavy as in China or Alaska. Some believe that this may be due to a possible strategic decision by the Migou to reinforce Asia against the Rapine Storm as part of the aftermath of China's collapse. Whatever it is, it seems that Europe has bought some time. The New Earth Government loss at the Battle of Moscow was particularly bloody and costly. However, much like their behavior in Alaska, the Migou have stopped their advance and seem to be waiting for something. What that something might be is known only to the highest levels of government. In the meantime, New Earth Government forces are reinforcing Eastern Europe in Latvia, Belarus, and the Ukraine.

Fighting against the Migou in the north of Scotland was particularly brutal, and unsuccessful. Combined New Earth Government Armed Forces Divisions under the command of Vice Marshall William Morgan have sworn to drive the invaders off the island. Morgan has rallied forces in Manchester to begin an invasion of Scotland. His strategy is to push through the Migou in Scotland, ultimately driving to Norway while the bugs are caught up in Asia.

The southern front against the Rapine Storm has proven to be very difficult to hold. The area of the Dead God's control cuts through northern India, Pakistan, and Iran. Though New Earth Government forces have dug themselves in with trenches, bunkers, mines, and any other useful means of defense, a higher number of incursions by Rapine Storm units have been noted since China's fall. In fact, heavy fighting has erupted against the New Earth Government defenders in the Pakistani city of Multan. If Multan falls, it is feared that the Rapine Storm may have a clear shot to drive toward Karachi and effectively cut the re-

mainder of India off from reinforcements and supplies by land. Large reserve contingents under the direction of MECOM have been dispatched to shore up Multan against this new threat. Among those relief units are elements of the newly established 2nd Arcane Force Brigade. The New Earth Government intends to take the paranormal fight back to the enemy.

China's fall at the hands of the Migou and the Rapine Storm has significantly magnified the pressure for the New Earth Government to achieve a major victory. Morale, both military and civilian, is slowly being sapped by continued news of the horrors that occurred there – even the news censored by the Ministry of Information. The Armed Forces need a big win and soon. The UFC Chief of Staff has presented multiple scenarios to the President for an assault on the Migou Hive Ship. It's widely understood that the most effective way to cripple Migou command and control would be to damage or destroy that orbiting monstrosity. A long-ranged nuclear strike has been considered. However, there are few nuclear warheads remaining in the New Earth Government's arsenal and the Hive Ship's ability to intercept incoming missiles has already been proven. Thus the President, as an alternative to a long-ranged nuclear strike, has approved the execution of Operation Final Strike.

Operation Final Strike is a plan to launch a direct attack in force against the Hive Ship by a fleet of the most advanced Navy warships. Long-range analysis has indicated that the section of the Hive Ship that faces the Earth is too well protected to be penetrated by current Naval weaponry. Its highly effective anti-missile proximity defense makes a direct attack useless from that angle. However, Operation Final Strike calls for an attack against the outer portion of the Hive Ship that some believe to be far more vulnerable. If the Navy can penetrate the Hive Ship's perimeter forces and strike it directly from above, they may be able crack the outer shell armor and launch nuclear missiles into the heart of the beast. It's a desperate gamble, but one that the President believes must be made.

To this end the government has been pouring funding and resources into the Cleveland Navy Shipyards on Lake Erie to rapidly build a fleet that can execute Operation Final Strike within a year. A new and much larger class of warship is being added to the fleet. The mammoth battlecarrier Ashcroft was launched earlier this year and her sister ship, Intrepid, is due to perform her initial shakedown cruise about mid-year. The new Ashcroft-class battlecarrier is also equipped with the latest in prototype weaponry – making them a shining new hope in the war effort against the Migou. The Ashcroft herself has already been slated as the designated flagship for Operation Final Strike.

The New Earth Government victory against the Esoteric Order of Dagon at the Second Battle of Pearl Harbor proved to be invaluable in terms of the data it provided on the strength and tactics of the enemy. Though small by comparison to battles waged against the Migou and the Rapine Storm, it was certainly

the largest conducted to date against the undersea enemy – so this particular win sparked a new level of confidence. Though the sheer size and number of Esoteric Order forces throughout the world has yet to be fully determined, at least there is now a sense that the New Earth Government can successfully fight back. There is also a general understanding that decoys can fool the Esoteric Order as was demonstrated at Pearl Harbor, although nobody is naïve enough to believe that the same decoy can work twice. However, new possible methods for drawing the enemy into the open are certainly being considered. Also, a strategic plan is now under consideration to identify key strategic land locations from which to engage sub-surface military operations. Creating an overall and comprehensive doctrine to face and defeat the Esoteric Order is now the responsibility of the newly created Aquatic Force Command (AFCOM) located in San Francisco. There may come a time when the survival of mankind may rest solely on the results of their work.

On a more personal level, the recruitment posters and propaganda make service with the Armed Forces seem grandiose and glorious. Many impressionable youths find themselves drawn to these ideas, believing that they will personally be part of the reason the New Earth Government wins the Aeon War.

Among the grand strategies and public honors granted the serving men and women of the New Earth Government Armed Forces, it is often easy to forget what it's like to live on the front line for real. As a soldier on the battlefield, a mech pilot fighting in the field, or a sailor crewing on a larger battlecruiser, one may forget the gravity of the oath made when raising one's right hand – to give your life if necessary so that other Humans and Nazzadi may live.

As a soldier, you see what you see, experience what you experience, and carry with you the weight of what you had to do in combat or what was done to you in hate. Sometimes you feel guilty deep down inside because there are times when you were forced to do something that no civilized person would ever do, take certain lives, let others die, or participate in any number of wartime horrors. Furthermore, you feel you cannot tell anyone about it, because unless they were there to experience what you experienced, they could never understand. You sometimes wake up at night in the throes of a nightmare with images of your best friend blown to pieces in your mind. Perhaps you see the memory of that little blank girl that you were forced to shoot in order to prevent your squad position from being given away to the enemy. You want to forget, but you can't because if you do you are afraid that you might dishonor the memories of those who were lost to you – those friends and comrades who died fighting beside you. Sometimes all you have left is your own personal escape clause, your own carefully crafted coping mechanisms. Even with Ashcroft doctors on site, it's still very difficult for you to open up. Sometimes it's just much easier to engage in a staring match with a bottle or a gun barrel than to relive those terrible moments once again.

ECONOMY

Socio-capitalism. That's the name of the new game.

Socialism has always been an emotionally charged word. There are those that want it and those that feel it is the ultimate insult to a free society. Communism, the most renowned form of socialism, failed because it required that everyone involved be, at least on some level, moral. The New Earth Government has embraced the best of socialism, because it has to. Without a controlled economy, the econo-sphere would have collapsed a long time ago. The NEG has pioneered a new form of economic policy that is most commonly called socio-capitalism.

Essentially, the New Earth Government has combined the best of socialism with the best of capitalism to keep people trying to get ahead while making sure their basic needs are cared for. No one in the NEG needs go hungry or without shelter, but those that wish to can carve out their own financial empires in the vein of capitalism.

There are many elements of socialism that impact every citizen's life. The first elements impacts people the day they are born – free health care. The health care industry is government subsidized from stem to stern – no citizen of the New Earth Government need pay for any kind of medical need, no matter how great. This has, however, created a sort of triage system among health care providers and those with conditions that are non-life threatening may wait for months to see specialists. However, health care is top notch. In a similar vein, mental health care is also socialized. Any citizen of the New Earth Government can get as much psychological counseling or psychiatric care as they need, without question. Typically, people don't have to wait the way they might for physical health care, as the government is well-aware that it impacts society in an even greater fashion.

The government also fully subsidizes education, unemployment, shelter, and provides other economic opportunities. Citizens can take advantage of free child-care, as well as primary and secondary schooling. While people must still work to earn a living, if they are able, the government provides livable unemployment benefits for those in between opportunities. If someone finds themselves in between jobs and unable to pay rent, homeless for some other reason, or is a refugee from a war-torn or over-run area, the New Earth Government provides basic apartments as housing. They are by no means the greatest or most glamorous housing, but they are a roof with a bathroom and kitchen. For those who have reached an age where they can no longer care for themselves, there is government subsidized assisted living facilities. And public works programs help build up the New Earth Government while providing jobs for those who are having difficulty finding them elsewhere.

On the other hand, there are enough elements of capitalism for those who require that social-economic advancement be a driving force in society. Despite government assistance, people still need jobs and still need to earn a living. The primary thrust of education remains the training of an individual to function within a skilled labor position in the workforce and society still

reverses captains of industry and those who succeed and have the bank account to reflect it. Money is still a measure of social success as those who have it tend to be more sexually successful than those who do not.

Business exists as business has existed in the free world for generations. Anyone can start a business, with the right knowledge and financing, and business exist as either extensions of the individual or in incorporated entities that go beyond the individual. Smaller businesses enjoy the control of the founders, although said founders are at much greater risk should something go awry, while larger businesses enjoy a limited liability and a life outside of those involved, which means founders are functionally a disposable asset. Small businesses still cater to their communities, while large corporations still worship their bottom line with only the required public relations stance towards community and global responsibility.

Most of the corporations that one from the early part of the 21st century might recognize either folded in the chaos of globalization and the two Arcanotech Wars, or they were gobbled up by those corporations who were fortunate enough or clever enough to navigate those dangerous waters. Most of the energy producers, oil companies, and automotive companies were a prime example, incapable of adapting to a world that no longer required their services as they were offered. Insurance, medical, and pharmaceutical companies likewise folded or underwent dramatic downsizing as their playing field forever changed. When the dust cleared, there were two corporations that stood at the top, while the rest dangled orders of magnitude below.

The Chrysalis Corporation has its roots in simple business consulting. They began as a group promising to revolutionize internal processes, bringing those businesses who utilized their services to new heights in efficiency and profitability. Financed by those who had already made their fortune, the Chrysalis Corporation asked for some share of ownership in the companies they assisted. In the end, their strategy proved fruitful during the chaotic days of early arcanotechnology when economic volatility was rampant. Chrysalis staged hostile (or bail-out) takeovers of most of those companies in which they held interest and become a multi-national conglomerate with its fingers in every pie from food to consumer electronics to government and military contracting. All this even before the Children of Chaos came along. The Chrysalis Corporation employs up to a quarter and in some cases a third of the workforce in most major arcologies through the various businesses that make up the whole. There are those who don't even know they're working for Chrysalis and the corporation makes sure that the overall company isn't too much of a household name. They are instead better known by their brands and wholly-owned subsidiaries.

The Ashcroft Foundation is the largest and most profitable corporation in the New Earth Government. While the Chrysalis Corporation may employ more people, the Ashcroft Foundation has its roots deep within society and the government and makes substantially more money every year. As the inventor and pat-

ent-holder of all power-related forms of arcanotechnology, the infrastructure on which the entire free world is based, the New Earth Government would have owed them an enormous sum of money as the world was converted from fossil fuels to clean arcanotech energy. However, the Ashcroft Foundation waved such fees in favor of a seat at the table. The implementation is more complicated than that, but the practical upshot is that the Ashcroft Foundation advises on nearly every level of government and the military now. Furthermore, they generate enormous income from patents on new arcanotechnology breakthroughs and from government contracts, including military technology and the world's psychological counseling infrastructure. They are also involved in other businesses that they view as visionary or that will benefit humanity through the application of knowledge.

In general, the economy of the New Earth Government is a war economy. The government's military spending floods terranotes into the system, providing prosperity where there might not be any, smoothing over business cycles and fighting back recession. It is for this reason that the economic state of the NEG hasn't fallen apart – for more than half of the last twenty-five years have been spent in war. During the time there wasn't a full-blown war, the world was focused on rebuilding from one and fortifying against the next.

Government contracting is, as it has been in capitalist economies, a lucrative and coveted business. The New Earth Government requires many goods and services, including anything they might need for the war effort or anything required for public works programs. That doesn't even include the research and development. There's only so much the New Earth Government can do internally, so some of the Armed Forces' development budgets go to third-party contractors. The largest government contractors are, of course, the Chrysalis Corporation and the Ashcroft Foundation. It is suspected that, between these two, the government indirectly employs a quarter of the population.

As it has been for nearly two-hundred years, entertainment is one of the biggest industries of all. Every year, billions of terranotes are spent to consume movies, serials, music, and video games. These industries employ many people, drawn by the allure of the prestige and money. They are difficult industries to break into, though that doesn't stop droves of people from trying every year. The beating heart of movies, serials, and music is Los Angeles. The businesses that run these industries have their model down to a science. Creativity does not run them and has little to do with product development. Market research and historical data show entertainment corporations what is most likely to succeed and for how long, and then they go out and manufacture what they need. The video game industry, centered out of Tokyo, is a little different. Creativity is key in that industry and often what provides the competitive advantage of one product or company over another. However, the industry has matured and is predominately run by an oligarchy of developers. Few new talents can enter the creative side of video game development, as all creative ideas must come from one of about three dozen individuals. To top all of that, the Ministry of Information has certain content

guidelines and core messaging that must be adhered to with any project. The general public is mostly unaware of how manufactured their entertainment is.

There are those who might believe that magic is big business, but it really isn't. Sure, university-trained sorcerers are coveted by most companies with any kind of a budget and the military and law-enforcement likewise recruit talented young magicians, but the desire for skilled labor does not an industry make. Most people still view sorcery as something dangerous and fringe, so that alone limits what can be done with it in terms of industry. There are many boutique companies that specialize in acquiring or manufacturing the items and components required by sorcerers, as well as in researching or seeking new or lost rituals or arcane tomes. It can be a lucrative business, but primarily on a small scale.

The financial sector of the New Earth Government is going strong. One of the advantages of a war economy is the stability of the market. Many companies are still publicly traded, leaving them open to outside investment. The two primary stock exchanges in the New Earth Government were, for many years, in London and Tokyo. However, with the Migou bearing down from northern England and the Rapine Storm and the Migou knocking on Japan's door, the powers that be thought it best to move them to more stable centers. The Pacific Exchange was moved to Los Angeles, because the eastern Pacific Rim is teeming with enemies, and the Atlantic Exchange was moved to al-Qahira (Cairo), nestled deep within the Mediterranean.

Investing hasn't changed much. The basics are easy enough for anyone to understand, but there are many fine nuances to it that require the advisement of a professional to exploit. New Earth Government propaganda encourages people to invest their money, giving them the impression that there will be a future worth saving for, a future in which to retire. It is interesting to note, however, that few people at the top of the New Earth Government hierarchy invest the way they encourage, something that is not reported to the public.

The real estate market is likewise stable, though regulated by the government. As history has proven, if the real estate market can run out of control, it will. The New Earth Government guides the hand of this market, making sure that there is always good, affordable housing available to everyone. Some neighborhoods are allowed to inflate to incredible prices to satisfy the elitist needs of the wealthy, the same way that some neighborhoods are allowed to drop in value to be affordable to those of lower-income who do not wish to live in government housing.

Real estate represents a solid investment. There are those who take on the role of landlords, purchasing and renting out apartments or houses. There are many laws regulating the responsibilities of landlords these days, so the days of the slumlord have passed. Only those who are willing to put effort into their housing investments are allowed to purchase properties with the intention of using them as income.

SOCIETY

The society of the New Earth Government is a society like no other. It is a democratic society that is carefully and intentionally designed. Let's face it. If the average person had an accurate picture of the state of the world and their place in it, they would have no reason to get out of bed in the morning. They would have no reason to engage in any of the usual activities in life. It would be a struggle to prevent them from ending their own life in one form or another. So the government, through the Ministry of Information, has created a world in which they can function and live relatively happy lives.

Information control is a big part of their designed society. People become suspicious if they are kept from the truth, but much less so if served a sanitized version of it. The key is to give them just enough to satisfy their curiosity, but not enough that they are let into the grim reality behind it. If you tell people what they want to hear, they will rarely work to disprove you. Thus, news sources are all carefully regulated by the Ministry of Information. Not every story has their fingerprints on it, which gives journalists some ability to be free in their reporting. The big stories, on the other hand, are fully censored, bringing a cautiously optimistic cast to even the most dreadful of news. The thrust of all such reports is the same – the New Earth Government has a plan and it is all under control. This, of course, is a blatant lie, but there are few who would want to believe differently.

However, the internet presents its own challenge. It is impossible to regulate everything that is posted in this digital world where everyone has a voice. Those that come too close to the truth find their sites and accounts shut down. Others are discredited or painted as conspiracy theorists. The rest of it, the Ministry of Information lets run free. After all, it would be awfully suspicious if someone were to look and not find it. There is more truth buried in the internet than anywhere else, but the key is finding it. Another trick of the Ministry is to censor search engines so that sites with objectionable or questionable material don't show up. There are few that would notice such a thing.

The two most prominent methods of visual entertainment are movies and serials (which have replaced the term television show). Movies are much as they have always been – a self-contained visual story made on a large budget that is between 90 and 120 minutes long (though sometimes up to 180 minutes). They are still the most glamorous form of entertainment. Serials are typically delivered over the internet to subscribers, with commercials and product placement carefully woven into the story. The range from 30 to 60 minutes in length.

These two forms of visual entertainment shape the minds of the public, something that has never escaped advertisers. However,

FYI
Some of the information in this section is reprinted from the *Damnation View*. Some of the information regarding vice laws in the New Earth Government may be familiar if you have read that book.

the New Earth Government has different needs. The Ministry of Information knows that the battle for the public's mind is waged in these two mediums, so they influence the way such information is presented. Incentives are offered to production companies that produce content that helps further the Ministry's propaganda efforts, while serial networks are required to air a certain amount of material that is in line with the Ministry's propaganda. It is, however, never referred to as such – it is known by the euphemism “core messaging.”

Print is, for the most part, dead. The Strange Aeon's periodicals are circulated over the internet, and they are most often referred to as eZines. The Ministry of Information requires that eZines also conform to core messaging initiatives. Even fashion magazines must conform to core messaging restrictions, making sure that the public is influenced in nearly every way it can be.

The Ministry's propaganda is what one might expect from the state of things – that people should support the government, that the government has everything under control, that humanity will survive and prosper, that contributing to society is essential to our ultimate victory, and that the enemy has obvious flaws that we are exploiting for our success. The enemy can never be seen in a good light and the government is always the good guys. If someone wants to participate in media, this is the party line they must always toe.

A closely-related part of this is the New Earth Government's anti-sedition laws. While people have the right to question the government and the military privately, they no longer have the right to speak out publicly against either. There is no place for that kind of undermining influence in the teetering world of the Strange Aeon. Anyone choosing to broadcast anti-establishmentarian sentiments or trying to mobilize activist groups of this nature faces arrest and stiff jail time. What keeps people from raising too much a fuss over this is that they have the right to say whatever they want over dinner, to their friends, at work, etc. However, personal opinions have to remain just that.

Besides propaganda, the biggest tools at the disposal of the Ministry of Information is distraction and indulgence. This has led to the legalization of many things that were once very illegal.

What has been termed the oldest profession has been a source of controversy in many cultures for many years. Prostitution, though it still carries some stigma in many social circles, is now completely legal and regulated by the New Earth Government. Prostitutes, or escorts as they are more formerly known, work out of bordellos, or what most call Red Houses. They are fixtures in many kinds of neighborhoods in every city, though never in or near residential neighborhoods. Prices are regulated, escorts must have weekly health check-ups, and the seediness and danger is out of the business.

Furthermore, the war on drugs is over – and the drugs won. The New Earth Government has a much more liberal policy regarding recreational drug use than most governments ever did. A

drug now has to be severely habit forming in order for it to be regulated. Alcohol remains legal in all its forms, including grain alcohol and absinthes. Cigarettes are legal, but only because their chemical composition has been altered to no longer be addicting – though they are still smelly and there are designated public areas and clubs for smokers. Marijuana, psilocybin mushrooms, LSD, peyote and mescaline, ayahuasca, as well as a veritable host of designer drugs including 2CI and Bliss (a modern iteration of ecstasy) are all perfectly legal and available at most bars and nightclubs – anything regarded to be habit forming in only the psychological sense is allowed. This has created a very open drug culture.

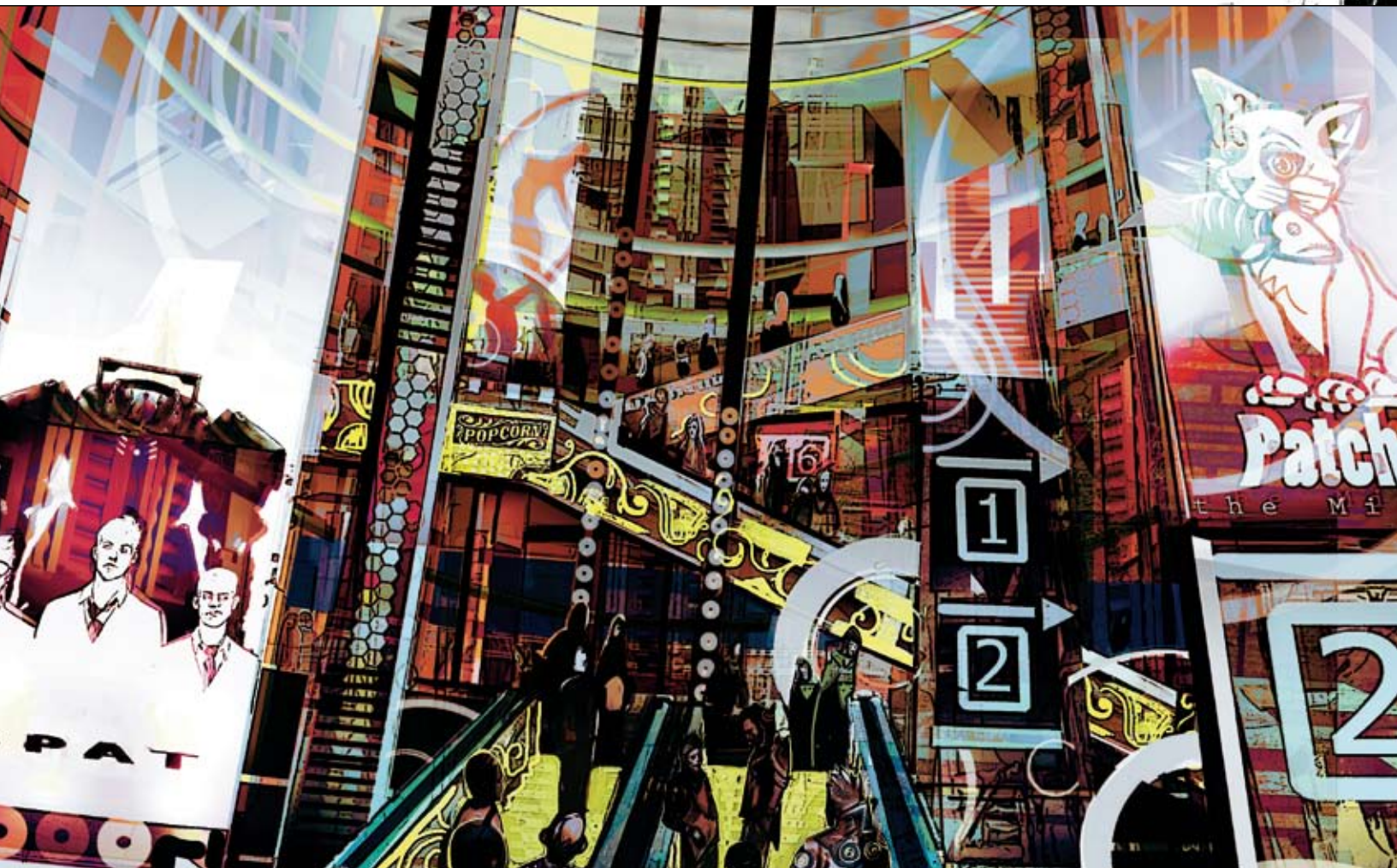
Those drugs that can, with repeated use, become physically habit forming are more heavily regulated. Users' purchases are tracked and they are allowed limited quantities each month. Formerly illicit drugs such as cocaine and opium and many sometimes formerly recreational prescription drugs such as oxycontin, xanax, flexeril, valium, vicodin, percocet, and all the modern iterations thereof are in this category.

There are drugs that remain illegal, for they are extremely habit forming and have a solid reputation for ruining peoples' lives. Methamphetamine (also known as crystal meth), heroin, and crack cocaine are among these drugs. If one wants to get their

hands on these, or greater quantities of those other heavily regulated substances, one must turn to the illegal drug trade.

There are still drug addicts in the modern age, but many of them are now healthy, functioning addicts. Regular counseling that goes with the Strange Aeon helps monitor drug use and abuse, so addiction isn't the plague it once was – even though drug use is much more prevalent and accepted. There is no longer the stigma associated with recreational chemical use, as it is the norm as opposed to the fringe.

This open drug culture has eliminated the seedier side of drug acquisition and use that once existed for the majority. Your average citizen can enjoy a smorgasbord of recreational drugs without ever making a back room deal or dealing with a shady drug dealer. They can simply belly up to the bar and purchase a substance whose quality is monitored and contribute to the economy, especially through the liberal taxes on such items. However, those who want more dangerous substances or find themselves addicted to regulated substances must still endure the underground drug culture of old. Quality is suspect, people still get killed, and there's the risk of a bust. Since there is less to fight over, the drug wars are much smaller and there are fewer players in the game. These are the fringe now and fortunately the fringe is something very few will every have to experience – except on the news.



Pornography is another world that has benefitted heavily from deregulation and the shifting of social norms. Whereas once the consumption of pornography was a private and often stigmatized thing, people are open about their enjoyment of adult entertainment in the modern age. Pretty much anything is legal in the realm of pornography as long as it is consensual and doesn't involve animals or children under the age of 16 (the age of sexual consent in the New Earth Government). It truly is astounding the amount of porn that is available.

To go with that is an open culture of sex and sexuality. With the fall of organized religion and the need to distract and indulge in the face of unknown horror, people no longer have the hang-ups they once did. The average age of person in the New Earth Government losing his or her virginity is 12. People often have many casual sex partners and semi-anonymous one-night stands throughout the course of their life. When available people go out on a weekend night to a social event of nearly any kind, they expect that they will meet a sex partner, unless they are naturally unattractive. Many people have parties specifically designed for single people to come to meet one or more sex partners. While people in many cultures in years gone by would be aghast or intimidated by such behavior, no one in the New Earth Government bats an eye.

In addition to Red Houses, there are many sex clubs where people go to either watch live sex acts or participate in them. The swingers scene – where couples go to swap partners with other couples or add a third to the mix – is active. Some clubs are designed specifically for orgies, in which previously interviewed and approved participants engage in open sex with each other in a group setting. Most people have been to a sex club once in their lives, but those who frequent them are not the majority.

In a culture of casual sex, one might expect that sexually-transmitted diseases would be a problem. Fortunately, advanced science combined with arcanotherapy have eliminated such concerns. Diseases such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, syphilis, and even HPV can be cleared up with a simple over-the-counter test kit and pill. Once deadly, hepatitis C and HIV can now be cured with more intense arcanotherapy.

With STD's out of the way, people are more lax with birth control and the biggest consequence of casual sex is unwanted pregnancy. Abortion may be both legal and accepted from a societal standpoint, but in a world where forces everywhere are trying to destroy the Human and Nazzadi races, each baby represents a hope for the future. As a result, there are many single mothers or people who are uninvolved raising babies from casual sexual encounters or dead relationships. Some people even find themselves coming together as couples and partners just to raise children where they may not have thought to pursue a relationship otherwise.

However, in a dark world people not only seek the distraction of sex, they seek the comfort and reassurance that can only come from a long-term committed relationship. People want someone they can make a life with, someone who will pull them up when

they are down, someone to take care of them when they can't. The world always seems a little brighter when you're sharing it with someone you love. Despite a culture of open sex, there is also a culture of people looking to meet someone special while they are doing it. Most happily give up a casual dating lifestyle to pursue something meaningful, but open relationships in which couples have other sex partners on the side are not unusual.

Marriage is still the most common result of happy long-term relationships, though it is more legal now than a function of religion. Most weddings still have some sort of spiritual component to them, though non-specific. The New Earth Government has also created a social environment where married couples are expected to breed and breed quickly after their nuptials. Most couples have their first child within two years of getting married and the government provides incentives for couples who have three or more offspring. When couples don't have children, it occurs as strange to other people and they often wonder what's wrong that they aren't trying to have kids. Fertility science has made it so that virtually any couple can get pregnant.

The distraction of sex carries over to mainstream entertainment, as it is an important part of the Ministry of Information's core messaging. While once the graphic depiction of sexuality and sex acts was forbidden on normal broadcasting, things have changed. Now, nudity is common in many shows, including full-frontal. Sex acts are graphic, but are still acted and living in the realm of soft-core. With the double whammy of the tradition of violence combined with liberal sex, many people spend many hours enjoying visual distraction.

It is not surprising then that people are still obsessed with celebrity. Young adults still want to grow up to be famous – it doesn't matter how. There are many serials and eZines dedicated to nothing but reporting on celebrities. People spend hours of their lives reading about the exploits of their favorite celebrities, learning about their childhoods, beliefs and political views, analyzing popularity trends, their fashion choices, and more. But it is the rumormongers that appeal to most. People love to hear experts sling dirt at celebrities, read about their bad behavior or torrid and rocky relationships, or laugh at their misfortunes. Many people know more about the relationships of their favorite celebrities than they do about the relationships of their friends and family. Fame, however, is still a double-edged sword and as much as people love to idolize their celebrities when they are on top, they revel in celebrity suffering on their way down.

This means that celebrities have far more clout in society than many feel they should. Many find that their political views are molded by the views of their favorite celebrities. Trends are set by the fashion choices of celebrities. New restaurants and clubs can be made or broken by one world from an A-lister. Young people dress like them and want to be them. The New Earth Government loves this, because, frankly, most celebrities are self-obsessed, poorly informed, and not well-educated. Whatever they bring to society is most likely a distraction from the truth and such celebrities hold the clout to keep the public in their world instead of the real one. Those celebrities that are well-informed

and educated are often in the employ of the New Earth Government on the side, pawns in the game of information control. With people's obsession with celebrity and society's relaxed attitudes regarding sex, porn stars have gotten something they've never known before – some level of genuine fame. Many people are aware of the major porn stars and these days they get some real press. It has, in many ways, contributed to legitimizing the profession. There are even several eZines in the style of regular celebrity rags dedicated to the porn industry and the lives and times of porn stars. Though this celebrity is real, they still rank below nearly every other kind of celebrity – they are technically the D-list. That's still a big step above the average person.

Because the mainstream is so regulated by the government and dominated by corporations and celebrities, the world of fine art has taken on a new importance in society. It is the raw expression of emotion and one of the few remaining places where people can see what is truly going on inside the souls of those surviving the Strange Aeon.

Theater in particular has made a surprising comeback in the modern age. In a world where things are canned, formulaic, homogenized, recycled, and sterilized, people appreciate the raw edge of something like live performance. Furthermore, the Ministry of Information does not have the time or manpower to effectively manage all the fringe theaters, so there is something of the true voice of the disenfranchised within that world that cannot be found elsewhere.

Other organic forms of fine art have likewise experienced a renaissance. Galleries hosting painting and sculpture are commonplace, a prime medium for the raw emotion of a society on the brink of destruction. Performances, such as dance and singing, also have home in many studios and stages throughout society. Even performance art has gained some popularity, as it abstracts things that may not be something that can be communicated in other mediums. In general, there is a war between classical styles and experimentation that also contributes to the vitality of the fine art community.

Digital art takes a backseat to the organic forms, but it is still a respected and desired medium for expression. Video art, 3D holographic art, digital animation, and the like all compete for attention in the public's eyes.

Past mainstream entertainment, drugs and distraction, and the voice of art, there is one thing that is the glue that keeps everything together – community. In a world with all the perils of the New Earth Government, people come together. While once it was common in many parts of the world to be dissociated from one's family or to not know your neighbors, things have changed.

These days, people often like to stay near their families, but if they do leave for other parts of the world they maintain regular and frequent contact. Families are like the safety blankets of the Strange Aeon, giving people a reliable something to fall back on when things are dark. Furthermore, given the regular psychologi-

cal counseling aspects of the New Earth Government, family dysfunction is more managed and manageable than it has been for hundreds of years.

People form close bonds with friends. While people might have found themselves too busy to hang out much with their friends in previous generations, the people of today make time. Again, the warm bonds of friendship are something that can help keep people going, day in and day out. Dinner parties are a commonplace thing, as are gatherings in general. People come up with any excuse for a party and people come up with any excuse to attend. Most go out on the town with their friends at least once a week – it's the thing to do. Even those who would have been more private or solitary in days gone by find the comforts of socialization to be worth the effort.

Neighborhoods have likewise come closer together. Neighbors make a point of getting to know each other. Not only does it foster community, it also helps provide a kind of check and balance against bad things that might happen. People have neighborhood get-togethers and block parties – it is not unusual to socialize with one's neighbors on a semi-regular basis.

While not technically family, related to it are household pets. Many people find that some kind of pet helps reduce their stress and provides them with another outlet for love and companionship. Arcologies, however, have changed the landscape of pet ownership, due to certain practical limitations. Small mammals, including mice, rats, hamsters, gerbils, and rabbits, while once a common pet, are illegal to own in arcologies. They can easily escape into the building infrastructure and cause problems, especially with their high rate of reproduction. Likewise, poisonous exotic pets are illegal as well – if they escape, they have nowhere to go. Most other forms of caged pets are allowed, including lizards, snakes, fish and aquatic animals, birds, and the like.

The most common and popular of all house-pets, as they have been for generations, are cats and dogs. All cats are indoor cats – no cat is permitted to roam an arcology unsupervised. There are specially fenced cat parks for those who wish their feline companion to get a little outdoor time. There are many laws governing the ownership of dogs, as one might expect in such an enclosed environment. Dogs are not permitted to run free, even in yards, and must be on leashes whenever out in public. Certain routes are designated as dog walking routes and there are many streets where it is illegal to walk a dog. Along those legal routes are designate places for the dog to go to the bathroom. Owners are not just expected to clean up defecation, but also to clean the area in which the dog did his business. There are stiff fines for any owner who does not follow these regulations. Owning a dog in an arcology is impractical, but people love their dogs and the New Earth Government isn't going to take that away. For any pet owner, it is a requirement to spay or neuter one's animals unless one is a licensed breeder.

In the end, regardless of societal changes, people want what they've always wanted. A job, friends, a place to live, a lover. Needs haven't changed all that much.

OTHER WALKS OF LIFE

Within any culture are those that carve out their own niche or try to run counter to societal norms. It is perfectly natural and an integral part of the diversity of mortal experience. The New Earth Government is no different, host to a variety of subcultures – some acceptable, others not.

Within the New Earth Government, the norm of society is to live inside an arcology or within the protective proximity of an arcology. There are many, however, who do not and they live a kind of life that is very different from the big city-dweller. To the majority of people, clustered within the safety of an arcology, those who live outside are a subculture unto themselves. There are lots of reasons why someone wouldn't want to live inside of, or in the shadow of, an arcology.

There are those who suffer from something called Sick Building Syndrome. These are people whose physiology does not do well with an entirely indoor lifestyle. They need non-recycled air, real sun and sky, and access to nature. Many other things can also contribute to Sick Building Syndrome, including industrial chemicals, microbes, toxic mold, or the additional and unnatural acoustics that come with living in an arcology. This manifests as uncomfortable and near-constant allergic reactions, strange sensory reactions, and/or general health problems or sickness. Sick Building Syndrome is not as uncommon as one might initially think, which is why the areas around arcologies are usually so built up. These areas are inhabited by people with Sick Building Syndrome who wish to enjoy at least some of the protection of an arcology. It is estimated that one in twenty people, or about 5% of the population, suffers from Sick Building Syndrome. Humans and Nazzadi suffer from the disorder pretty much equally.

Most of the rest of outside dwellers do so for reasons of personal freedom. The primary trade-off for the safety of arcology life is that the New Earth Government is always present. Arcodwellers live under the constant watchful eye of the authorities, right down to the constant scans every time a person enters the arcology. Many simply do not trust the government enough to have them that close to their lives. Living outside means life more on one's own terms.

Some of those that live outside are anti-establishmentarians, people who have problems with the New Earth Government as an entity. They believe that no government, regardless of the circumstances, should wield the kind of power the NEG does – all while enjoying the protection that the government provides. Their method of protest is to check out from society as much as they can, which equates to living on the fringes of society outside.

Others on the fringes include those who are poor, for one reason or another. There are many houses distant from the nearest arcology that are cheap, if not free. If one is resourceful, or willing to live without certain luxuries, living outside can be an inexpensive and spacious way to go it. Likewise are some of the mentally unstable, unwilling to undergo treatment by the government or

unwilling to be committed to in-patient care. They would rather live their lives unencumbered by society and conventional definitions of insanity, and most are rather easy to identify as such. They typically live further away from the arcologies than many.

While there are many upstanding citizens who choose to live outside, such a lifestyle is especially appealing to those with something to hide. Unregistered sorcerers or para-psychics are two kinds of people that would do well to live their lives away from constant authority. Criminals of all kinds also fall into this category. The further one lives away from the arcology, the more outlaw the world becomes. While there are those criminals who practice their trade at little cost to the community around them, there are those that do and criminal fiefdoms are not as uncommon as the authorities would like. The truly deranged, such as rapists, serial killers, extreme sadists, and the like, find that living out in the boondocks is the most effective way to practice one's vices.

Though hard to believe, there are still small towns in the middle of nowhere. One would imagine that such settlements would have dried up and gone away, but many still serve useful functions. Some are towns that are on overland routes that service or supply travellers as they pass through. Some are farming communities, raising the crops and livestock required to feed the population. Some are communities that miraculously never saw the horror of any of the wars of the last half-century that have simply refused to leave their ancestral homes. If one looks, one can find them.

However, the way of life in a small town in the Strange Aeon is something very different from arcology life. In general, they are about twenty to thirty years behind the arcologies in terms of social development. While they have access to the same technology, they do not have the same mind-sets. They tend to be insular, concerned primarily with what is happening in their neck of the woods. They tend to be distrustful of outsiders, as there are few uncertain elements in their lives. They also tend to be prejudiced, still angry with the Nazzadi (and their offspring) for invading the world a few wars ago. They also tend not to trust sorcerers or para-psychics, holding to a more "traditional" way of life. If one does not live in or is somehow related to such a community, the best policy is to pass through – unless one wishes to undergo the long process of winning the locals over.

As one might expect, if it can be dangerous living in the shadow of an arcology, living nowhere near one can be far more dangerous. Small towns typically maintain their own militias, men and women who are hardened hunters more than anything else. Sometimes, however, there are those who have come home from the military, who have trained their militias to be truly effective. Regardless, depending upon where such a town is located, one never knows when some Migou scouting party, some horror from beyond, or some insane cult is going to roll on in. Small town folks don't have the luxury of waiting for the authorities – they have to deal with problems themselves. Some fare pretty well, others do not. Unfortunately, considering the geo-political

climate, those that do not are mere footnotes in the news, if reported at all.

Perhaps the most radical exploration of living outdoors are the survivalists. There are those that are happy that the reach of government has diminished, leaving huge parts of countries technically open for the taking. Survivalists typically gather in small anarchist communities, banding together because it would be nearly impossible for a sole survivalist to make it in the hostile terrain of the Strange Aeon. The survivalist philosophy varies from person to person, but there are a few things in common. They do not like the government and are willing to risk their lives to operate independently of it. They do not like outsiders and treat any and all visitors with suspicion and distrust. Some might be actively hostile. They are the kind of people that can survive with just some clothes and a knife and are quite happy without most of the comforts arcology-dwellers take for granted. In short, they just want a corner of the world to themselves, living a life on their own terms without anyone else bothering them.

The unusual are especially unwelcome in survivalist communities. Few such groups trust sorcerers or para-psychics, for example, believing them to be the kind of people that trouble follows. There are exceptions, but most such people are advised to just move along. Furthermore, Nazzadi are sometimes unwelcome, because there are those who became survivalists because they did not trust the integration of the Nazzadi after the end of the First Arcanotech War. The same goes for xenomixes, most especially Whites.

In the end, survivalists live way out in the middle of nowhere and have little influence on daily life. One would have to intend to travel out to the dangerous places they live in order to interact with them – typically an act of conscious will.

Back inside the mainstream arcology world, an odd subculture are those who have come to be known as wannabes. These are Humans, usually young people under the age of twenty, who try to act as if they were Nazzadi. They dress like Nazzadi, listen to Nazzadi music, eat Nazzadi cuisine, and even learn the language fluently. They try to hang out with only Nazzadi friends, or other wannabes like themselves. It is an unusual thing to watch. Many Nazzadi are either accepting of these people, believing that you should experiment socially however you want, or are amused by them and hang out with them for the fun factor. However, few Humans are so open to the idea, generally believing such behavior to be ridiculous. Wannabes often find trouble at home with their habits, if there wasn't trouble at home already. There are also Nazzadi, particularly of the old guard, who do not find their behavior amusing.

Also a part of arcology living, ballroom dancing has taken on a new life in the Strange Aeon. People need distractions and many tire of the usual ones. Still others do not enjoy the typical bar and nightclub nightlife. For them, a dance floor, big band, and formal couples dancing is the way to go. Because of its growing popularity, there are even large formal balls in many major arcology,

where people dress to the nines and flaunt their carefully practiced steps. Theirs is an elegant and refined world, one that often appeals to the wealthy and elite. Swing dancing has experienced a resurgence as part of this and is a favorite of many.

With the resurgence of interest in fine art, art terrorism and art pranksterism have become more formalized. There are those wildly creative and severely out-there artists who feel that it is their duty to add chaos to the system. They stage elaborate public spectacles from coordinating hundreds of strangers to make out for five minutes in a certain place at a certain time, to having hundreds of drunken Santa's pub-crawling near Christmas, to showing up at other artists' exhibitions and co-opting them with crazy ideas of their own. There are those collectives that take on the self-appointed role of art police, who anonymously and harshly critique the works of others. Some go so far as to break into galleries or exhibition halls to do their work. They never harm the work – they simply leave their criticism for the artist to discover. It is a strange world, alien to many, but those who are a part of such communities have come to know art terrorism or art pranksterism as a prominent part of life. Everybody else just enjoys a good spectacle.

Of no surprise are the subcultures that walk down the dark end of the street, in terms of the occult. While not straying fully into the arcane underground, these groups are typically those that like to look like they are playing with fire when in fact they are not. They are the ones who find the government-doctored Necronomicons and study them just enough to appear dangerous. They are the ones who learn as much forbidden occult knowledge as they can from the internet, even though most of it is bogus. They're usually the ones that dress and act like they're dark occultists or unregistered sorcerers, which means the Office of Internal Security automatically knows they are harmless.

Many disenfranchised, socially-unsuccessful, or abused youths find this road attractive. Anyone in the know understands that they are harmless, but the average person is, on some level, frightened of them. Such people become outsiders respected through fear. Some simply use the allure to become more sexually successful or to create their own personal harems. Of course, there are those who finally take the turn into real danger, so the OIS keeps a casual eye on these kinds of people – just in case.

NEW DRAWBACK

SICK BUILDING SYNDROME (2)

Your Character cannot live inside an arcology. He is sensitive to the unhealthy factors that come from living in a building all the time. He might have allergic reactions or be generally unhealthy if forced to stay inside an arcology for any length of time. This, however, does not mean that he cannot visit or enter an arcology. It does mean that if he stays inside an arcology for any length of time, he will develop Sick Building Syndrome symptoms within a couple of weeks, but potentially as soon as within the first few days.

RELIGION

In the decades leading up to the Strange Aeon, organized religion had not had a good time of it. Christianity had especially taken a hit in the wake of corruption and scandals, and the violence of radical Islam had rocked the world for generations. More and more people found that the answers they were looking for and the comfort they sought was not to be found in the halls of an organized faith. For the first time in thousands of years, the churches of the world began to lose followers and their power over the minds and moralities of society.

First came arcanotechnology and people had to accept the existence of magic. This magic wasn't the unholy power spoken of in religious tomes, but rather a quantifiable discipline accepted as a sort of pseudo-science. Furthermore, its application greatly benefitted the world. Then came the First Arcanotech War, a war the likes of which the world had never seen. People were now confronted with evidence that there were aliens and that the Earth was not the center of the universe, metaphorically speaking. People had questions and the religions of the world didn't have answers. Within a decade came the Second Arcanotech War and the world was confronted with real aliens. Not long after that, dead gods began to awaken and monsters began to roam the Earth. Most people, though they desired the peace of mind many religions promised, came to the realization that whatever "god" was, they've had it wrong all along. Organized faiths and their dogmas simply were not designed to live in the world that Humans had now entered into. In short, the day the world discovered the larger universe was the day nearly all organized religion died.

Radical Islam, however, was unusual – it became even more radical over these troublesome times. In the years leading up to the First Arcanotech War, most Islamic nations had reached a point where they had fully rejected any kind of peace. The only answer to them was violence. No longer would they accept the other peoples of the world, even if they converted to Islam. The fundamentalist belief that everyone else should be killed was the order of the day. The aggression of the Middle East, in particular, grew out of control. No longer could they wield the oil sword over the world, as now everyone had a clean, inexhaustible fuel source that didn't come from the ground. Growing hatred combined with economic shock and depression and Muslim terrorism reached new heights. One-sixth of the world's population was Muslim and it seemed that they were intent on murdering the other five-sixths.

Of course, not all Muslims were keen on the idea of genocide. Peaceful sects tried to split off from the whole in an attempt to bring sanity to the situation. Unfortunately, the response in every case was violence. All such sects were immediately attacked and slaughtered. It seemed there was no one who could bring sense to the people of Mohammed.

Then came two things. First was the New United Nations. The rest of the world banded together, leaving the radically Islamic nations all to themselves. One might think that all nations wanted a place at the global political table, but those of radical Islam

could have cared less. The second thing was the arrival of the Nazzadi and the ultimate opening of the world. Suddenly, there were aliens, dark gods, and monsters, and magic was real. The world became huge and the religion of Islam was not prepared to encompass it.

The clerics did what they could to fabricate answers that would force the world back into their dogma. It satisfied the blind followers, but most had their faith shaken to the point where they wanted real answers. Furthermore, the position of hatred and intolerance could not be maintained. The world had become about all people against other forces in the universe that sought to extinguish them. It was time for people to come together, not kill each other. Many former Muslims became the strongest voices for peace and unity in the new world. While the religion of Islam failed, many did not lose their faith in Allah and came to know a kinder, more loving version of their god.

Islam, like most former organized religions, is a shadow of its former self. While 15% of the world's people were once Muslim, only a fraction of that remains.

Ultimately, it is Christianity that was hit the hardest. The group that once believed that the universe revolved around the Earth refused to believe that there was extra-terrestrial life – despite apocrypha that said differently. If God made man in his image, there could be no others. Humans were special and alone in the universe, stuck in their own personal drama of good versus evil. Now, add a world in which humanity is not alone and the gods that are very real are nothing like what the Christians expected.

Many sects of Christianity had already been hit hard in the social arena. The Catholic church had to deal with priests molesting children and the revelation that they'd been covering it up for generations. Most Christian churches spoke out against what are now non-issues, such as gay marriage, abortion, and even inter-racial marriage. Towards the middle of the century, most had even come out against Islam, ready to start another Crusade. In the end, they had diverged so far from the basic tenets of "love your God and one another" and "do no harm" that they saw a consistent decrease in church membership and attendance.

With the revelation of extra-terrestrial life, for which the church and the bible had no good explanation, and the appearance of Hastur and the other Old Ones' powerful cults, most Christians simply lost faith. Maybe they didn't lose faith in a god, but they certainly lost faith in the church. The Christian sects did what they could to backpedal and force the new world to fit into their dogma, but it was too little too late. Few wanted what the churches offered anymore, which was a restricted world-view with outdated prescriptions for living.

Today, Christianity is almost extinct. Two thousand years of dominance over Western faith has ended. What is left is so radical that it might as well be a cult unto itself. The "morality" of the Strange Aeon alone is enough to send most still-practicing Christians into a tizzy. Where one-sixth of the world's popula-

tion was once Christian, there are now maybe one million practicing Christians world-wide.

There are those that categorize Buddhism as more of a philosophy than a religion, and perhaps that is why it has survived almost unchanged. Instead of focusing on cosmic laws and immeasurable spiritual afterlives, Buddhism taught ways to live without suffering. Denying the dominance of identity and desire as well as living fully in the present moment are concepts that needed no re-examination in the face of the Strange Aeon. In fact, the ranks of Buddhists have swelled in the years following the First Arcanotech War, as many of those who have fallen away from other organized faiths found that the prescriptions of Buddhism filled the void in their lives perfectly. This is especially true in places where Buddhism was already prevalent, such as Asia and the South Pacific.

Surprisingly, the Jews have gone on as the Jews have always gone on. The appearance of the Nazzadi didn't faze them. The jet-black "aliens" are just another group of people who aren't Jehovah's chosen. To this day, even in the face of dark gods, monsters, and aliens, Judaism is fundamentally unchanged. The Jews are the only chosen people in the universe and they await the arrival of their messiah –and they still fiercely defend Israel from all comers. There are those that view them as myopic and foolish, while others admire them for their conviction.

Likewise, the Hindus go on in a similar fashion. They do what they've always done – adapt the new gods and the new world to their pantheon. Hastur must be a manifestation of Shiva. The monsters that roam the world are simply other demons and the Hindus can handle that. There has always been something fluid about Hinduism that has allowed it to endure virtually unchanged throughout the ages. Similar to the Jews, Hindus are a people and people are either born Hindu or they are not. Thus, they do not attract new followers but simply carry on.

These days, the force behind religion is the Universal Church. It is a non-denominational spiritual community that crosses all boundaries, designed to function in the complicated and frightening world of the Strange Aeon. There is little dogma that is part of the Universal Church and they use no holy book or body of knowledge as part of their worship. While they have churches, they are not ornate buildings filled with iconography and holy symbols, nor do services involve the singing of religious songs or other pomp and circumstance. Universal Churches are comfortable places of gathering and services are usually part of a pot luck. A minister, someone who is required to have attained a doctorate in philosophy and comparative religions, guides services, which are usually spiritual discussions around a theme. There is a group therapy aspect as current events and community issues are often discussed, people seeking to process their emotions or to find guidance. Community service is a big part of the Universal Church and congregations plan and execute initiatives in their neighborhoods for the good of the people. All in all, the Universal Church represents a contemporary, laid-back, service-oriented approach to an organized faith.

The principles behind the Universal Church are simple. The basic tenets include:

- There is a higher power in the universe and we are a part of an intelligent design.
- All living things are part of a greater energy and that energy always continues.
- Do what you want but hurt no one, including yourself, in the process.
- We are all bound by spirit into a universal community and it is an honor to give back to others.

Other than that, the Universal Church provides few prescriptions. They let people be people and condemn only those who prey on others. However, this loose framework provides people with the spiritual answers they seek, or at least engages them in an on-going guided spiritual inquiry. It connects them in fellowship and helps provide hope that a brighter day is coming, or at least helps them accept how things are. The church also provides a moral compass, something that has often been the purview of religion, though a loose one in which there is a lot of personal freedom.

What few know is that the Universal Church was actually started by the New Earth Government. It didn't take a genius to realize that people needed something to reassure them in the face of failing religions. So, the powers that be created their own and created one free from the ideals and stipulations that have created so much strife over the generations. As a result, the Universal Church receives many under the table benefits to help it expand throughout the New Earth Government.

In the end, most people are simply spiritual. They don't belong to this church or that sect and instead have simply worked things out for themselves. Some believe their own mutated version of the organized faith of their forebears, while others go with what is in their heart. Most would classify themselves as agnostic – someone who believes there is something beyond their understanding but don't know exactly what. The philosophy of Immanuel Kant is very appropriate for the people of the Strange Aeon. There is a phenomenal world, which is the one we can see and touch and understand. Then there is the noumenal world, the world beyond us, and all we can do is acknowledge that this is there. Trying to understand or quantify it is futile.

For the first time perhaps in history, the Strange Aeon truly has seen the division of church and state. Though the New Earth Government approves of and secretly helps the Universal Church, that church has no influence in the matter of global politics.

The New Earth Government is not a fan of most organized religions and doesn't allow new ones to sprout up. They brand most new religious movements as cult activity and break them up before any can rise to any kind of powerful status. While religion is and always has been the ultimate form of control, it is volatile and that is something with which the New Earth Government is not willing to deal. They prefer a carefully designed society manipulated by propaganda to maintain control.

THE EVERYDAY WORLD

So what is it like living in the Strange Aeon? Most aspects of everyday life are the same as they've been for a long time. However, the world of the New Earth Government would seem very different to a person born a hundred years ago.

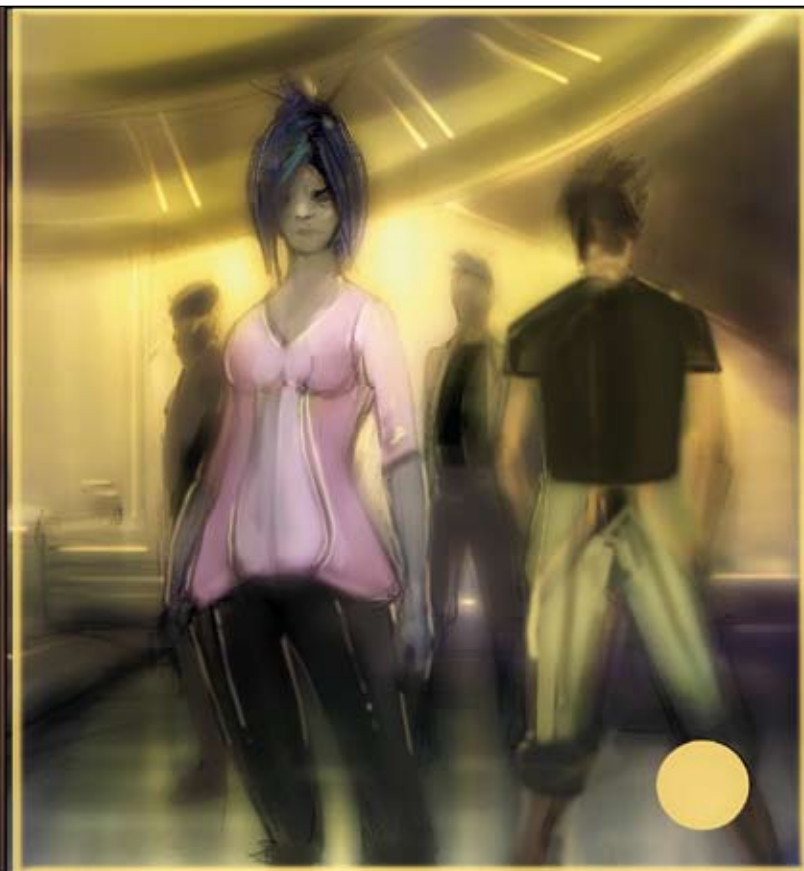
People are born the way they've been born for many years. Most mothers give birth in a hospital, under the watchful eye and care of physicians and nurses. However, there are many midwives in the New Earth Government, and many parents prefer home or water births, believing that a peaceful birth sets the stage for a more peaceful mind-set for the child. With modern fertility science, conception is easy for almost any couple, and there are few birth complications and few mothers die during childbirth. There are even drugs to help eliminate the risk of most birth defects but, sadly, in a world where the survival of the race is of utmost importance, most fetuses with untreatable birth defects are terminated before they can come to term.

Since equality of the genders has been a part of society for so long now, there are few mothers who wish to quit their careers to raise her child or children. By law, all mothers are given nine months maternity leave from their jobs to raise their infants. Fathers are also given leave, but their paternity leave is only for six months. After that, many families take advantage of public child-care, federally funded and staffed day-care schools for infants and children up through age five. Children are socialized quickly in these communal groups, carefully supervised by child development specialists. They are also educated in basic ways before they are sent into the school system. The problem with this system is that it is often understaffed.

There are two common alternatives to public day-care. The first are private day-cares or nannies, for those who can afford them. This alternative provides more personalized care and education for children, though they are often not as thoroughly socialized when they reach school. Other parents prefer to stay at home to raise their children themselves. Stay-at-home moms and dads believe that they should be personally involved with all the formative years of their children's lives. Again, such kids are rarely as well socialized as those from public day-cares, but they may be better adjusted overall.

Most families in the New Earth Government are blended in some way. This means that one or both of the parents were married previously or that some of the children are from different parents. Most marriages in the Strange Aeon succeed, as people are more serious about the comforts of partnership than they were in decades past – the divorce rate is just under 20%. However, there are many widowers who remarry, a common source of blended families. There are also plenty of parents whose children came from an unmarried relationship or from a casual encounter. These children are raised by single parents, who frequently later marry. As there are many orphans in the world, adoption is also common, even among parents who can and do have biological children. The average number of children per couple is three, but blended families may have more. Most people have several siblings.

Extended families are important to people in the New Earth Government as well. Most don't move too far away from mom and dad, sisters and brothers. Thus, many children are raised with



their grandparents, aunt and uncles, and cousins as an intimate part of their lives. The bonds of blood run deep.

However, most extended families are not intact. Between the two Arcanotech Wars and the current state of affairs, approximately three out of every four people on the planet has been killed sometime in the last thirty years. People grow up with a list of family members they never got to know, as well as family and friends who have died while they've been alive. Funerals are something nearly every person is familiar with, starting in childhood.

With a little care and luck, children survive to enter public, federally-funded education by the age of six. Primary school is comprised of grades one through eight and secondary school is comprised of grades nine through twelve. Completing secondary school is all the education that is mandatory by law and confers the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). This basic diploma qualifies people for very few jobs.

There are two alternatives to public school – preparatory schools and home schooling. Prep schools are private education for those who can afford to pay. They typically offer a better academic education and are meant for those who intend to go to a reputable post-secondary institution. Other children are home schooled. Parents who home school their children are usually very fearful and/or paranoid, are those who live a fringe existence outside an arcology or major urban center, or are extremely religious in some way. Many of the remaining Christian and Muslim minorities insist that their children be home schooled.

While their educations are monitored by federal agencies, children who are home schooled enter the world at a social disadvantage. Of course, parents who are part of cults always home school their children.

The life of the average child is much as it's been for more than a century. School, after-school activities, homework, and play comprise the average child's life. They still study the basics in school, including language, mathematics, history, science, and social studies, and still listen to lectures, do out of school assignments and projects, and take tests to be graded on performance. They still participate in sports, music, and clubs, and still play on play-grounds, have sleep-overs, and go to birthday parties. One thing that is different from generations past is the average child's addiction to instant gratification. Fast digital transfer speeds allow them to almost instantaneously acquire information and media and nanofactories make sure that no physical object they want to acquire is ever out of stock or not in their size or style. There are many problems with children displaying symptoms similar to the Attention Deficit Disorder, though they do not have it. They simply refuse to pay attention to anything that isn't immediately gratifying to them.

A product of a highly sexualized culture, pressure for sexual experimentation begins usually around age ten, when sex education begins. Naked play, kissing, and touching are commonplace by this age. By eleven, most children have experimented with oral sex in some fashion or another and by twelve most have partaken in full sexual intercourse. Sex education is thorough, however, so most are smart enough to utilize birth control.





Secondary school is the place where children truly begin to form their adult personalities and begin to enjoy independence. Though the age where a teen can become a licensed driver is sixteen, there is not as much emphasis on this rite of passage as there once was – people don't drive in arcologies. However, the mandatory 9 pm federal curfew for children under the age of sixteen no longer applies, so they can finally engage in late night social activities.

There is much emphasis on academic achievement in secondary school, as good test scores are required for a student to get into a good university. Post-secondary education is still required for nearly all skilled jobs, even if it is only vocational or technical training. The better a person's test scores, the better a post-secondary school they can attend, the better wage they command in the workplace. However, while there is still the social divide, the white-collar and blue-collar of society understand how valuable the other is in keeping society functioning. Some pursue sports as a means of acquiring a scholarship or as a path to a professional career, while others rely solely on academics and community service to secure their place in their post-secondary institution of choice.

Non-academic school activities are similar to what they've been for more than a century. Some join the band or the choir, some go out for any number of sports, some become cheerleaders, others go out for dance, others join academic or special-interest clubs, while others participate in student government. Regardless, community service is emphasized in secondary schools and all students are required to participate in it on some level.

Despite the academic pressures, it is during these years that most teens socially come into their own. Dating begins in earnest by fourteen, something that consumes a significant amount of time for both genders. One's friends, cliques, and social status become very important, many times more important than academic achievement. Social activities become crucial, whether they be going to the game, hanging out at the mall, going to

movies or all-ages nightclubs, or parties at friends' houses whose parents are out of town, which are some of the most common. Of course, there is plenty of getting into trouble that goes with this for most teens. The underage use of alcohol and drugs, especially marijuana and Bliss, is the most prevalent. However, others turn to anti-social activities, such as graffiti, vandalism, and theft.

Regardless of the hurdles of youth, it is during these years that teens begin to learn patience and gratitude, as they come to understand the state of the world now that the selfish years of childhood are behind them. They begin to open their eyes to what is really going on around them and start to realize the perilous footing on which the New Earth Government is standing. They may have buried friends and family throughout their lives, but they get the first glimpse at mortality on a larger scale – and that it might apply to them. By the age of eighteen, the minimum age for voluntary enlistment in the Armed Forces, a teenager has a serious grasp of world affairs.

The New Earth Government recruits aggressively in secondary schools and colleges. Though citizens can enlist through the age of 35, the Armed Forces prefer to get their recruits at a young, strong, healthy, and impressionable age. School walls are covered with patriotic slogans designed to play on the emotions of those who view them and the internet is rife with video ads. These pieces of propaganda paint the life of the average soldier as glorious, that such duty and service is honorable and noble, and that the Armed Forces will serve the recruit both while he is enlisted and after he musters out. They even go so far as to offer a short-timer's contract of only two years, which many go for. They later discover that the fine print on their contract states two years unless the state of war requires their continuing service, and find themselves serving far longer than expected.

After secondary school begins the path of adulthood, where teens either go off to learn a vocation or attend a post-secondary institution. University life is one of both hard work and hard



play. Most students are serious about their education, wanting to become useful members of society – at least serious enough to receive passing marks in their classes. The intentionally designed cultural desire for distraction sets in during these years, and the parties are wild as a result. It is usually a time of many casual sexual encounters. However, some people get married for the first time during their years at university, and it is surprising how often these couples make these unions work. (Most young adults in the military get married, but most of these unions end in divorce within five years.)

Upon embarkation on a professional career, it is time for the young adult to move out on his own. There is government-subsidized housing, but such flats are functional, ugly, small, and in marginal parts of town. Still, they are a place to live for a young and struggling adult. Those with better paying jobs have the opportunity to find another home. There are two options – rent a flat or buy a flat or townhouse.

With the government-guided real-estate market, there are many affordable opportunities for purchase. Those who rent are typically those who are not sure where they're going to be setting down roots or those who are just starting out in life and can't yet afford a dwelling they'd like to own. Those who have more money can purchase a large dwelling for an inflated price in special neighborhoods, while those with less can find something in their price range in a more marginal part of town.

Most who have just started on their career path can find a decent one-bedroom flat. Within a few years, they have upgraded to a more spacious two-bedroom, and by their mid-twenties have purchased something similar in a townhouse. The number of bedrooms required by a person is primarily determined by the size of their family, as most people don't need an egregious amount of space – something that is at a premium. Considering that most couples have multiple children, most people grew up sharing a room with a sibling at one point or another. Those that are successful can provide their children with private rooms.

The thing that many people crave as they advance through society is a yard. Few flat buildings have gardens or yards, so one must upgrade to owning a townhouse to have one. For most, a yard consists of a small square patch of grass in front of the townhouse, with enough soil to grow a small flower or vegetable garden. Most simply like to sit out on the grass or invite friends over for drinks. There are those, however, that want more and there are special townhomes for these people. Such dwellings have a much smaller residence, but the space saved on the back of the house is turned into a fenced yard as well. Luxury homes, of course, can come with much more sizable yards as the plots their houses rest on are larger. Garden parties are the luxury of the elite, something coveted by many. It is not surprising how much people value greenery, considering how most live inside giant buildings. Either way, a residence with a yard is a big bonus for those with dogs.

Going hand in hand with this, arcologies maintain large parks planted with grass, flowers, and trees. They are popular spots and most people spend at least some part of their week in the parks. Even aside from the events that regularly go on in the parks, the carefully maintained natural beauty is a respite from arcology life. They are places to rest, meet, and socialize.

To go with the climate of distraction, most people maintain active social lives. During early adulthood through the 30's, this often manifests as regular outings into the social scene, involving trendy restaurants, bars, and nightclubs. Quieter outings to galleries or movies, or events such as dinner parties become more the norm as people get older, especially if married. It is uncommon, even as people grow to advanced ages, to not have a regular social schedule. People in the Strange Aeon like to be around other people.

However, social pursuits do not consume the entirety of a person's personal time. There are those who simply let their lives pass them by in the moments in between, watching serials and movies or playing video games. For some, this is the only way

they can cope (though there are far fewer of these kind of people among the Nazzadi). Many people engage in some kind of hobby, which not only links them socially to entirely new groups of people, but also gives people something interesting to talk about. Hobbies remain as diverse as they have always been and as simple or interesting as someone needs them to be.

Most people's goal, in terms of their professional career, is to find the stability of a job and then stick with it. There is so much uncertainty in the Strange Aeon that people like to have one thing that's constant. Unless the career path is truly not a match, most people do not shift careers. If they do, they might do so once in their life. Likewise, they prefer to stay and grow within the same company – something very contrary to the mercenary workforce in most industrialized nations before the First Arcanotech War. One factor that has led to this is that companies now appreciate the labor force, on every level. There are, in most major arcologies, more jobs than there are people to fill them. Employees are valued, even if not represented by a labor union. Such organizations likewise still exist, though they wield less power as there is little for them to protect workers against.

Companies often encourage employees to socialize with one another, as well as putting on company social functions to support this. Community building is a part of modern business, creating a strong workforce of people who know and have some kind of personal connection to one another. The company benefits while also giving something back to its employees. Most people have at least a few close friends from work, though superiors still maintain some distance from subordinates.

Getting around is critical, no matter what a person does with his life. Transportation within arcologies is, regardless of social status, entirely public. The only vehicles allowed to operate within an arcology are used for utility, delivery, emergency, and law enforcement. For your average person, there is always some amount of walking involved when trying to get from place to place. With less of a need for lanes of traffic, most streets have slidwalks (also known as people movers), which convey people along long belts in a straight line. These cut down on the amount of physical effort people have to expend getting from place to place. Moving between floors of an arcology is accomplished by large elevator banks, each designed to hold a couple dozen people at a time.

However, the majority of distance travel is accomplished by the extensive mag-lev (magnetic-levitation) train systems built into every major arcology. These trains cover all major routes within a city, bringing people to their destinations with a minimum of fuss. The rides are smooth, thanks to the magnetic levitation, and there are many trains for convenience. They are also run by computer, so they are synced to arrive and depart on-time. However, trains and train stations are the melting pot of any arcology. People of all kinds and all social strata are forced to pool together in the great equalizer that is public transport.

Cars are what are required for transportation outside the arcology. Certainly, there are train spokes running out from the arcology for outside-dwellers to get in and out, but that's the extent. Those who live outside an arcology must rely on automotive transportation to get around, and those who regularly travel



outside need them as well. There are many arcology-dwellers who own automobiles simply so they can have the luxury of taking a drive out under the sky from time to time.

Getting between arcologies is another story. The most common and reliable form of transportation is in giant A-pod airliners. Flights over friendly territory are usually safe, but many flights require a fighter escort as they approach hostile territory. Trans-oceanic flights are particularly perilous, as the Esoteric Order of Dagon particularly enjoys downing passenger planes. If traveling to destinations across land, one can drive, but even journeys through friendly territory can be dangerous. One never knows what one might find out on the lonely open road. Most, if they can afford to, avoid road trips.

Hopefully, people live long enough to retire, having been productive members for long enough. Because of the high mortality rate and stress of living in modern society, people are eligible for retirement starting at age 60. The government, in alliance with business, maintains Retirement Pension Funds, which entitles people to a percentage of their salary each month from the day they retire until they die. This fixed income is enough to live on, especially since health care is socialized. Those who wish to live a more luxurious lifestyle upon retirement will have had to save and invest over the course of their life.

If people are lucky enough to live to an age where they can no longer take care of themselves, the New Earth Government maintains federally-funded assisted living communities. These are not the dismal old-folks' homes of the past, but instead nicely de-

signed and maintained, though modest, apartments with regular nursing care. There are private assisted living communities, for those with the money to afford more luxurious accommodations. No one need worry who is going to take care of them when they are old and infirm.

There will come a day when all people die, whether by natural or unnatural causes. Most die ahead of their time from accident or violence, an unfortunate byproduct of the modern age. However, for those who are either terminally ill or who reach a ripe old age and no longer wish to carry on (starting at 80), euthanasia is a legal alternative. This is usually done by lethal injection. Once death has occurred, the typical cycle of funeral rituals is observed. Whatever the beliefs of the relatives, most funerals involve a showing of the body, a ceremony highlighting the deceased's life, and some kind of interment. Burial is still the most common form of interment, with huge graveyards sprawling in areas distant from the arcology. Cremation is the second most common form of interment, with large mausoleums to go with the graveyards.

In the end, peoples' lives are difficult to predict. While many may follow a path similar to those examined here, there are always those who choose something different. For example, the path of the artist is a very different road. But the structure of society remains and even such people conform to most of it. Furthermore, though the New Earth Government is globalized and therefore, in many ways, homogenized, local flavor always creeps in. Those who grow up and live their lives in different parts of the world will always have differences.



A BRIEF LOOK AT THE WORLD OF THE NEG

When the world finally became small enough that the nations of the world had to work together, they formed the League of Nations which eventually led to the United Nations. Neither of these were particularly effective at bringing the people of the world closer together in peace and harmony, with a common form of government and currency. It's not for lack of trying, but more for lack of the disparate people of the world wanting to cooperate.

Then came the New United Nations, a body with more power than any previously. Again, they had little luck in truly bringing peace and cooperation to the world. What could they expect when the world was filled with countries that had centuries old animosities or jealousies as well as people who hated each other based on skin color or religion? It was going to take a miracle or a threat of extinction level proportions to get Human beings to stop hating and trying to kill each other.

The answer came in the form of the latter. The Nazzadi invaded and the First Arcanotech War brought indiscriminate death to all the peoples of Earth. They had two choices. They could hold onto the old ways, remain separate, and die, or they could give up all that garbage, cooperate, and give the Nazzadi a run for their money. The New Earth Government was born and the Human race was forever changed.

GLOBALIZATION

Globalizing the Earth was not the easiest task for the nascent New Earth Government. There were massive language barriers to contend with, the question of currency, the problem of representation, and more.

The question of language was a heated debate, for the New Earth Government insisted that a single language be made official for efficient communication. The Chinese wanted the official language because a sixth of the world's population resided within their borders. The Indians the same. Those that spoke Spanish or Portuguese felt they were the majority. The French wanted their language to be official, primarily because of history. In the end, English was chosen, not because it was the most prevalent or that English-speaking countries were the most powerful, but because it had become the language of trade. People all over the world were learning English before the First Arcanotech War for this very reason. There was a lot of resistance at first, but people eventually got used to the idea and it wasn't like they had a lot of choice in the matter.

The official currency became a newly created kind – the Terranote. It was based primarily off the Euro, which was the strongest currency at the time. The switch caused some upset in the world's economy, but the increasing socialization of the world under the New Earth Government and a war-time industry helped smooth things out with a minimum of fuss.

Nowadays, one can go anywhere in the New Earth Government and find things with which they are familiar. Chain stores and service providers exist in every major city and arcology, so people

can always go with what is familiar. However, unique national and regional flavors still remain, carried on by the people of those places. Old traditions have not been forgotten, traditional holidays are still celebrated, but the people can all communicate, use a common currency, and no longer hate each other because they're different.

No matter where one goes, however, the influence of the Nazzadi is felt on the local culture. They are the one true global civilization, spread out in an intentional diaspora to become true partners in the New Earth Government – at least once the prejudice and segregation of the most of the decade prior to the Second Arcanotech War ended.

NORTH AMERICA

OVERVIEW

Despite either side protesting loudly to the contrary, Americans and Canadians weren't all that different. They merged together into a single society without too much trouble, especially since such merging took place during the First Arcanotech War. Since a large chunk of North America's labor force was made up of both documented and undocumented Mexican workers, it wasn't difficult for Mexico to integrate with the others. However, like many Latin countries, they were resentful that English was chosen as the official language of the New Earth Government and there are many older Mexicans who have still refused to learn English. Their stance is, unfortunately, a barrier to success in the new landscape of the world.

North America has seen less tragedy than many other parts of the world since the end of the First Arcanotech War. The Esoteric Order has laid claim to some of the coastal regions, especially in New England. The Migou have mostly filtered down from the arctic regions, occupying parts of northern Canada where no one lived anyway. It wasn't until the Migou began to encroach into Alaska that North America became in peril. That does not mean, however, that they did not suffer from the lightning raids of the Nazzadi during the First Arcanotech War, when cities like Arkham, Massachusetts were wiped off the map and Washington, DC had to relocate to Chicago.

One of the biggest problems that North America faced was with regards to the socialist aspects of the New Earth Government. Canada was affected less than the United States, as many aspects of their culture had been socialized already. However, such businesses as medical insurance were full-blown racketeering industries in the United States. By the creation of society that looked out for the basic needs of each and every citizen, entire large-scale industries were forced to kiss their egregious profits good-bye. Many dried up overnight. Some tried to bribe or threaten their way out, as they had done for generations. In the end, this side of Western profiteering became a thing of the past, fortunately in an economy that was under the guiding hand of a much more involved government. Such companies tried to influence public opinion with a scale of propaganda previously unheard of, but in the end the world was ready for change.

Mexico faced its own problems, as the infrastructure of the country was not ready to have a probing light shined in all its dark corners. The corruption that had become so ingrained in Mexican government was rooted out for good, something that was quite a shock to those in power. Many thought they would never live to see a day when the average Mexican citizen was both free and fairly represented by those in charge, but the New Earth Government made good on its promise and brought them both.

In the end, the worst blow to Canada was the removal of their cultural preservation laws. The country had gone to great pains to establish a distinct identity from their English founders and their American neighbors. If there was one thing they had to give up, the Canadians resigned to having to acquiesce in the face of global cooperation.

HOT SPOTS

The Pacific Northwest has become a hotbed of activity for the Migou. The New Earth Government has built up strong defenses along the north part of Canada and did not expect that the Migou would come so aggressively from Alaska. They have taken and held the western part of Alaska, encroaching as far east and south as Juneau, which they have held despite New Earth Government attempts to retake. There is concern that the Migou will move on, using Juneau as a staging point. Thus far, North America has been as safe as anywhere in the New Earth Government, but now the Migou threaten its very heart – the capitol of Chicago.

The cities surrounding that part of the world have been reinforced and are on near-constant alert. Vancouver, Seattle, Edmonton, and Calgary are all key cities to the continuing defense of North America. Atmospheres in those cities are tense, especially among the military, but the propaganda machine helps keep tension from growing into panic.

The Pacific Northwest was also, until recently, a center of activity for the Shadow War. In conjunction with the revitalized Congregation of the Earth Mother, the Children of Chaos were quietly gathering artifacts and forces in the primordial rainforests outside the Seattle arcology with the goal of bringing across an avatar of an Old One. This attempt was fortunately thwarted by the quick action and luck of the Eldritch Society.

New England is also a contested part of North America. The Esoteric Order of Dagon has a strong presence along the cold coasts of this part of the world, particularly around what was a small fishing village named Innsmouth. The New Earth Government's policy of containment has led to the formation of a military quarantine zone around this part of the continent and most civilians have the sense to stay away. However, it does not prevent the Esoteric Order from staging raids past the quarantine zone and the area is rife with covert raids and skirmishes.

Much further south, the tropical island of Nazza-Duhni also has to deal with the cult of the fish god. From other nearby islands,

the Esoteric Order probes the defenses of the Nazzadi homeland from time to time. They even occasionally go as far as to raid beaches for breeding stock. Fortunately, the military is on constant patrol around the island, usually underneath the water so as not to scare the tourist trade that is so essential to the local economy.

CITIES OF NOTE

Los Angeles is one of the biggest arcologies in the world. It has become the hub of civilization for the western half of North America. The arcology is a sprawling metropolis that extends from the hills separating Los Angeles from the San Fernando Valley to where the 105 Freeway used to be, and from the Pacific Ocean to just east of Downtown. The city still sprawls outside the arcology for miles in every direction, for the city is home to a sizable standing military presence. It is a common staging point for troops being deployed in the Pacific.

Home to the beating heart of the world's entertainment industry, Los Angeles is said by many to best represent the decline of civilization. It is a town of opulence and decadence, a modern day Babylon that would shock many. The nightlife of LA is to be reckoned with, home to some of the best restaurants, bars, and nightclubs in the world, where the music is cutting edge, the people are pretty, and the booze and drugs are free flowing. It is a modern day hedonist's paradise, where you live for today and damn the consequences.

The District of Chicago is perhaps the most important city in the New Earth Government, as it is the world capitol. The Grant Park Federal Complex houses the Global Parliament and nearby Arlington Heights houses the Presidential Estate. The park dedicated to the end of the First Arcanotech War is just west, outside the arcology. The Ashcroft Foundation's massive headquarters, an arcology unto itself, is found nearby. The arcology itself is large, though not as massive as places like Los Angeles, extending from Lake Michigan to what was the 290 Freeway, and from what was south-side Chicago to Arlington Heights.

In general, Chicago is one of the most heavily secured arcologies in all the world. The people of Chicago, more so than others in many other cities, have given up their freedoms in exchange for safety. Legal or not, the authorities here have more latitude than they do just about anywhere else. Entrance to and from the arcology itself is an ordeal, as the New Earth Government cannot afford to let in Hybrids and blanks. Those visiting can expect to be watched. One has to be extremely clever to be up to no good within the District of Chicago – even the Chrysalis Corporation is more careful here.

However, going with the halls of governmental prestige goes the excesses that always seem to come with power. Fortunately, many of the things that got politicians in trouble in past years are legal now. There are more escorts per capita here than anywhere else in North America and the alcohol and drug intake is higher per person than the world average. If one has the right in, it is quite the city for decadence.

The Pacific Northwest corridor is home to an unusual phenomenon. Seattle and Vancouver are both key deployment points against the Migou, which has drawn the cities close to each other. However, Portland is also nearby, just to the south – each of these cities is only a couple hours drive from each other. It is unusual to have three arcologies of appreciable size this close together, with such similar cultures. They have, in essence, become sister cities and the residents have bonded. They are all very warm towards each other.

SOUTH AMERICA

Note: Central America is part of the North American continent. However, it bears closer resemblance to its South American neighbors for purposes of this discussion, so it will be discussed in what might be termed “geographically out of order.”

OVERVIEW

South America, for the most part, was game to become a part of the New Earth Government. Many of the governments had already become increasingly socialist while maintaining many elements of a free market economy, something to which the New Earth Government aspired. They had already taken steps to unify as an economic entity, much in the same way as the European Union, which also helped the process along. It was, overall, a natural move.

However, many of the powerful criminal drug cartels, particularly those in Columbia, were not. Many enjoyed great power and latitude that they knew this new governmental entity would never allow them to keep. They bribed and threatened all they could to keep their business free from this kind of intervention. They were even driven so far as to unite, separate cartels cooperating in ways they never thought possible. They became a major concern for the governments of South America who wanted to be part of a global union, and assassinations were at an all time high.

Central America also had a difficult time with globalization. They hadn't wound up being strategic targets for the Nazzadi during the First Arcanotech War, so they hadn't really felt the pull for centralized defense. For generations, this part of the world had been host to political instability, political manipulation from larger nations, and general corruption. The people weren't necessarily used to stability and the people in charge didn't like the idea of having someone above them, monitoring their behavior. The people wanted to be sure they'd be better off for once.

In the end, the people of both Central and South America spoke. No amount of ballot stuffing, intimidation, or other kinds of political corruption could stop the voting public under the watchful eyes of New United Nations troops. They voted to be a part of the nascent New Earth Government, to submit to a global government. Dictators, freedom fighters, corrupt politicians, and criminal cartels grabbed what they could and disappeared. They waged their own ugly little guerrilla wars during the chaos of the First Arcanotech War, but, often as not, they drew the attention of the Nazzadi who happily wiped them out.

Despite the legalization of most recreational drugs, most especially the cocaine for which South America is known, the cartels are still up to the same business. Now a united mafia, they work hard to make sure that people in the New Earth Government get more regulated drugs than their monthly allowance gives them. They flood the streets with product hoping to hook as many users as they can. This mafia does not wield the power they once did, but they make up for it in being as ruthless in their tactics as they can. They are clever, brutal, and amoral – an unfortunately, they still have their hooks in many local governments.

These days, Central America enjoys prosperity and safety, as does much of South America. The days of the Second Arcanotech War and the Aeon War have been kinder to them than many. Vivid local culture still remains in the face of globalization and many find themselves drawn to the warm climates of South America for vacations. Tourism is at an all time high – at least in countries farther north than Argentina.

HOT SPOTS

Central America is free from most violence that is a part of the Aeon War, with the exception of their long, rolling coastlines. While the Esoteric Order of Dagon maintains no large colonies or bases in Central America, they do often raid and the states of this part of the world must remain vigilant for the inevitable return of the Cult. The Armed Forces maintain an amphibious watch force here to help maintain containment of this threat.

South America, though one of the safest continents on the planet, still has its share of peril. The Migou have gotten a foothold on the southern tip of the continent and have begun to force their way up through Chile and Argentina. Buenos Aires has become home to a large military base, the central operations hub of defense against the Migou. This front is of particular concern to the New Earth Government as this foothold is resupplied directly by Antarctica and the primary Migou bases there. It seems logical that a push is going to come, as such an action will be strongly supported by Migou resources directly from the Hive Ship. As it stands, the front slowly and steadily creeps forward every month and probes are regular. Things in this part of the world are very tense.

The Esoteric Order of Dagon has a strong presence in South America. They hold most of the Atlantic edge of the continent, with large, well-fortified communities. Residents of nearby states must defend against midnight EOD raids and the constant infiltration of Hybrids. Regular raids on Nazza-Duhni often launch from here. The New Earth Government's policy of containment towards the Cult helps keep things under control, but the constant pallor remains. Combined with the large Esoteric Order settlements on the Atlantic coast of Africa, the Cult controls the better part of the ocean.

CITIES OF NOTE

The capital of South America is Rio de Janeiro, the second largest metropolitan area on the continent (behind Sao Paulo, one of the biggest cities in the world). The arcology itself is long and

thin, encompassing most of the coastline here from the ocean to the University and the bay to Sao Francisco Xavier. The city continues outside, as it does in most major metropolitan areas, for miles – though there are many poor and shady parts.

Most would say that the city is the heart of civilization in this part of the world, home to beaches, Carnival, New Year's Eve's Reveillon, and lots of tourism. It is also a titillating place where the dancing is hot, the cosmetic surgery is cheap, and the people are sexy. One of the New Seven Wonders of the World, the giant statue of Cristo Redentor looks down over the city – though it does not carry as much meaning now that the continent is no longer predominantly Christian. Some of the largest corporations in the world maintain large offices here, most notably the Ashcroft Foundation and the Chrysalis Corporation. Unfortunately, Rio is also home to an unusually high rate of violent crime. One does not go into the more marginal neighborhoods at night, and there are many neighborhoods outside the arcology where one does not go at all.

Rio is not unscathed when it comes to the Aeon War. It has become the heart of South America's containment of the Esoteric Order of Dagon. Much of South America's Atlantic coastline has been claimed by the Cult, so the military efforts here are to keep the Esoteric Order where it is and prevent further expansion or raiding. New Earth Government mecha patrol the free coastlines with vigilance. As a result, Rio de Janeiro is home to some of the safest warm sandy beaches in the world, which helps even more to draw tourists.

The third largest city in South America, rivalling such sprawling metropolitan areas as Los Angeles, is Buenos Aires. It is a multi-cultural port city that is the governmental, commercial, and cultural center of southern South America. The city's many museums and dedication to the fine arts draws cultured tourists from all over the world. It is also one of the biggest arcology structures in the world, encompassing nearly all of the dense nearby communities, making it ten miles wide (from the ocean) and almost twenty miles long. Beyond that, the city continues to sprawl, petering out miles away.

In recent year, however, Buenos Aires has become home to a massive military presence. The Migou have begun to invade the southern tip of the continent, making Buenos Aires the closest major city out of which the New Earth Government can stage its war against this encroaching foe. For many years, the city carried only a normal complement of troops and had only the garden variety concerns. Now the military presence is palpable and the citizens of Buenos Aires know that they are rapidly becoming the next major front of the Aeon War. On the up side, this has brought a great deal of industry to the area.

EUROPE

OVERVIEW

In many ways, Europe has had a tough time of it. It was difficult for European countries to unite under a common government,

as many countries had centuries old, if not millennia, animosities or rivalries. Their traditions more deeply ingrained than those of the new world, it was also difficult for them to adopt English as the official language of that common government. True, many of them already knew how to speak the language, but it was the principle of the thing. The French, in particular, spoke out against the English language, citing that French had been the language of diplomacy for hundreds of years, so why stop now.

Europe also has been the site for near-constant conflict for the last several decades. Many key tactical targets in Europe led to Nazzadi attacks during the First Arcanotech War. The Migou descended from the northern reaches during the second, and the monstrous hordes of the Rapine Storm encroach as well during the Aeon War.

Unfortunately, Scandinavia is no longer with us, with the exception of Denmark. It all belongs to the Migou now, with the exception of some important coastlines that the Esoteric Order of Dagon has seized. Finland, Norway, Sweden, Iceland – all lost. The lucky survivors of the separate Migou incursions that claimed those nations have fled into New Earth Government-controlled Northern Europe. Together, there has been an unprecedented unification of Scandinavian pride, with a high level of enlistment of service-eligible citizens. They vow to one day take their homeland back, old grudges between each other forgotten.

The British Isles likewise suffer from invasion. Scotland and Northern Ireland have been taken by the Migou, as well as parts of Northern England. It has been a tremendous blow to the pride of the fierce people who called those places their ancestral homelands. It has certainly transformed the already transformed face of what was once the United Kingdom.

One of the hardest things for the United Kingdom to give up was their cherished monarchy. In the face of a one-world united government, there was no place for such hereditary forms of rulership, something that was a carry-over from more archaic times. This did not mean that the English loved their Queen any less. It is perhaps one of the defining moments of the new era when the royal family publicly and voluntarily gave their support to the New Earth Government and formally stepped down as the monarchs of the United Kingdom. They too had a vision for a new world, one where all people could live in harmony, and they understood that they may not have a place in it. It was likewise difficult for other European and Scandinavian countries whose heritage was tied to their monarchies to give up such traditional ways of life, but each monarch in turn relinquished their power in the face of global unification and extra-terrestrial invasion.

Despite the looming threat from nearly all directions, the people of Europe have weathered the Aeon War with a certain grace. Some theorize this comes from having been home to several of the largest wars in the last two centuries. Others believe it is because of a less intense world view than is common in the New World. Regardless, the people of Europe hold their heads up

high and carry on, enjoying each moment as it comes. After all, with death knocking on several doors, one never knows when it could be the last.

HOT SPOTS

Europe, it seems, is being pressed on from all sides. The Migou press in from the north and the east, the Disciples of the Rapine Storm have pressed into Eastern Europe, and the Esoteric Order of Dagon claims Iceland, coastlines in Spain and Portugal, and are generally a nuisance in all the Mediterranean. The average European citizen can look in any direction and know there is something that way that wants to kill him.

Aside from Scandanavia, the Aeon War has also not been kind to the United Kingdom. Northern England, Northern Ireland, and all of Scotland have fallen to the Migou. The fronts of the UK are a constant push and pull of territory, with residents of southern England suffering raids not dissimilar to the blitzes of World War II. Fortunately, there is no shortage of those willing to enlist to fight in this part of the world.

Denmark is a major front against the Migou. New Earth Government forces have built up there to prevent the Migou easy access to the continent. The city of Copenhagen is now nothing more than a giant military base, its residents evacuated to safer places like Odense.

Eastern Europe, on a major upswing before the First Arcanotech War, is a tragic warzone. The Migou press in from the east and north and the Rapine Storm has found its way to knock on Russian doors. The New Earth Government is ill-equipped to push back effectively on both fronts at the same time, so one or the other is always slowly advancing.

Iceland, for years, has belonged to the Migou. They claimed the island as part of their push into Scandanavia. However, they hold it no longer. In a surprising move, the Esoteric Order of Dagon attacked in force and drove the Migou from Iceland, claiming the place as their own. It is now a major stronghold for the Esoteric Order in this part of the world, though the Cult doesn't stretch itself too far for fear the Migou will flood back in.

Though carefully concealed by the Ministry of Information, Europe is one of the places in the world where the New Earth Government is losing the Aeon War. As a result, the government has worked to create effective evacuation plans in each part of the continent, ready to pull people out as they are needed.

CITIES OF NOTE

Given Switzerland's history of neutrality, even through two major World Wars, it is the city of Berne that was chosen as the seat of government for Europe within the New Earth Government. It is a small arcology, designed to accommodate only a couple hundred thousand residents. The city sits nestled in the bosom of continental Europe, safely tucked away from the enemies approaching on all sides. Berne has become a government town with little to offer the average visitor aside from history. It is,

however, the place where the people of Europe are going to find offices of any New Earth Government branch, bureau, or ministry. The arcology is, as one might expect, very tight on security.

Not simply the financial center of continental Europe, Frankfurt am Main (known to most simply as Frankfurt) has become the center of Europe as a whole and the crossroads of the Aeon War here. Nearly all transport in and out of Europe passes through Frankfurt, as it is a heavily fortified arcology, home to a large military and governmental presence. In Europe, the saying now goes "all roads lead to Frankfurt." The city is also the major center for news reporting in Europe, naturally leading to a large local Ministry of Information office.

The city is also home to a variety of festivals, including the Museumsuferfest, one of the largest cultural events in the world, and is a city filled with fine art. On a pop culture note, the city is one of the originating places of the dance music style known as Trance, which has become one of the most popular styles in the world. The arcology also encompasses the Frankfurt City Forest, the largest forest inside an arcology in the world and a favorite of both resident and tourists – not that there are a lot of the latter considering the nearby threats.

Odense, once the third largest city in Denmark and now the first, is the beating heart of Scandinavian pride in Europe. The city is home to millions of refugees from Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and most of the displaced residents of Copenhagen. Odense is one of the few cities in the New Earth Government that suffers from over-crowding. Given the proximity of the Migou, most residents would prefer to be inside the arcology, even though the arcology was not built to accommodate the number of people it now holds. The arcology is not large, designed to accommodate maybe half a million people, though it now holds many times that many. Half of the city has been set aside as the city for the residents of Odense, while the other half has been set aside for refugees. Conditions are crowded, but the New Earth Government has done an exemplary job of keeping the city well-supplied. Not surprisingly, the city outside the arcology stretches into the distance, populated primarily by shantytowns and temporary structures.

Despite the overcrowding, the citizens of Odense are tight. They are all survivors of the Migou, as well as being all that is left of Scandinavian culture. Celebrations are common, as the people hold the faith that they will one day return to their ancestral homes.

Manchester is England's Odense. Once sometimes called the Capital of the North, Manchester is the second largest metropolitan area in England and Ireland. Like Odense in Denmark, Manchester is home to the refugees of Scotland and Northern England. The similarities between the two cities do not end there. Manchester is likewise overcrowded, though not as severely. The arcology was designed for a couple million residents, so there is a little more elbow room. Likewise, the New Earth Government keeps Manchester well-supplied.

While rivalries and fist-fights may have been more normal between the city's now disparate residents, such things are only a memory. Northerners have bonded with the Scottish and the two are now inseparable. After all, Manchester is home to most of all that's left of Scotland and, as the Scots have proven before, its people don't give up so easily.

Volgograd, once known to the world as the Russian city of Stalingrad, is another sad city with the distinction of being both the center of military operations for the area and the home of many, many refugees. There is no way that Volgograd could accommodate all the refugees flooding into the city from what was once Russia. Instead, the city is a portal city, processing refugees and transporting them to other nearby European cities. Still, the city is home to a large refugee population from all over Russia and Eastern Europe. The military does what it can to help facilitate the needs of the city, but the Rapine Storm and the Migou press in more day by day. There are many that believe, including the administrators that run the city, that Volgograd is living on borrowed time. There is, naturally, a detailed evacuation plan in case that day comes.

Unlike the more spirited citizens of Odense or Manchester, the refugees of Volgograd have had their homes destroyed by monsters. The average person is broken and distant, content simply to have someone with a gun guarding reinforced walls. The mood of the city is one of despair, despite mammoth efforts by the Ministry of Information to provide some kind of uplifting message (and a whole lot of distraction).

Needless to say, there is a large military presence in Volgograd and it is perhaps one of the most secure arcologies in this part of the world – though that isn't saying much. The forces there see constant conflict with both the Migou and the hordes of the Rapine Storm, both of which are intent on breaking these lines to flood in and claim what's left of Russia and Eastern Europe.

The dark side of Volgograd is more than just a victimized population of refugees. Ugly criminal activities have taken up residence in the chaos of the revolving population. Organized crime and the Disciples of Death's Shadow have taken to nabbing refugees to become sex slaves. Such unfortunate souls are conditioned, brainwashed, or beaten into performing sex acts on command, as well as being forced into pornography. Unfortunately, in all the mayhem, many of these people are never even processed and therefore presumed dead – no one comes looking for them.

ASIA

OVERVIEW

Asia is an enormous continent, home to a wide variety of different people. The territory that once was the Russian Federation made up more than half the continent. The Middle East, once composed of warring Islamic nations, was an important part of the continent until dependence on petroleum ended. India had grown into an important industrial nation. China was a full-blown superpower, Japan a major industrial, and then there

were the many other nations that made up Southeast Asia. None of that really matters anymore, as most of it is gone. Of any place, the Aeon War has hit Asia the hardest.

The Russian Federation was a strong proponent of the New United Nations, and later the New Earth Government. They knew that the world could remain separate no more and they knew they would benefit greatly from the union. They were especially happy that there were elements of both socialism and capitalism in the proposal, and that everything wasn't based on how the nations of NATO would have done it. Unfortunately, they were some of the first to go during the Second Arcanotech War, the Migou crushing them until there were no more free people in what was once proud Russia.

The Middle East had a rough time with globalization. Ruled predominantly by dictators or religious regimes, the nations of the Middle East had thrived on policies of hatred and oppression. They had also suffered an economic collapse once the world's dependency on fossil fuels ended. Joining the New Earth Government was such a radical shift for them that it felt to many like they were giving up what it meant to be a part of their heritage.

Fortunately, in the face of all that had happened, those from the Middle East began to regard their heritage as more than their religious beliefs. Digging back further into their rise to prominence in the cradle of civilization, they looked back to the amazing scholarly and scientific breakthroughs that were part of their culture for generations. For centuries, they were a learned people, more culturally advanced than those around them. This is the pride that began to fill the void that Islam left. No longer intolerant nations, they have become a fierce people who support one of the best educational systems in the world.

Before the Aeon War, India has risen to become one of the world's most prominent industrial nations. They had not yet reached first-world status, due to over-crowding and poverty, but they were rapidly approaching. However, they share with China an unfortunate proximity to the Plateau of Leng and when Hastur re-emerged on this planet, India was a natural place for the warbands of the Rapine Storm to invade.

Southeast Asia was home to many dictatorships and military governments and it was difficult for those governments to give up their power in the face of globalization. There was also a great deal of racial hatred that needed to be overcome. It was a difficult road that saw many bumps, but there was little they could do. The world was changing and they could either change with it or be ground under the heel of the juggernaut called the New United Nations. Of course, alien invasion helped things along very nicely.

China had become a true world super-power, taking the place once held by the Russian Federation. Challenging the United States for most powerful nation in the world, the Chinese ruled global manufacturing. However, their country was a military dictatorship and that was something the people that controlled

China were not eager to give up. However, the economic opportunity that such a union represented was not to be diminished, so slowly but surely, the Chinese joined a more democratic way of life.

Then, unfortunately, the Migou began to press down on China from the north and the Ruined King came into being, marshaling his forces from the nearby Plateau of Leng. It was only a matter of time before China was no more.

Japan took globalization in stride, ready to take the best from every other part of the world and hold on to the customs they'd kept through the censures of World War II. They then proceeded to remain the world's finest manufacturers of many electronics.

HOT SPOTS

Asia is a mess. It has been ravaged by both the Migou and the hordes of the Rapine Storm. All of southeast Asia has been lost to the New Earth Government, as has Malaysia, Indonesia, and the islands of the Pacific. The mythical Plateau of Leng, although hidden to mortal eyes, is located in central Asia. From there, the hordes of the Rapine Storm have rolled out across the continent, scouring the Earth of all traces of humanity from as far east as Eastern Europe all the way through China to the sea. They have even crossed the water into Australia. The warbands seem to grow stronger by the day, pushing past New Earth Government defenses and driving military forces farther and farther back. Furthermore, most of the northern part of the continent has been conquered by the Migou, and they continue to press southward whenever they get a chance.

The former superpower of China is not even a shadow of what it once was. Unfortunately close to the mythical Plateau of Leng, China has been one of the important fronts against the forces of the Unnamable since they first appeared on this planet. However, said forces finally created a breach in the defenses and have driven the New Earth Government from that part of Asia. China has fallen and all that is left are monsters and those who were left behind. The Rapine Storm in China is now officially the Migou's problem, though Japan faces both as threats.

The proud states and nations that once made up Russia are now likewise gone, ground under the combined feet of the Migou and the Disciples of the Rapine Storm. Refugees have fled to Eastern Europe, though millions died in the onslaught. There are no more fronts in the Russian part of Asia. It's just gone.

In Western Asia, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran are the primary fronts against the Rapine Storm. Once hotbeds of religious disagreement, these regions are now brothers-in-arms, all tensions long forgotten. The proud formerly-Muslim warriors of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan have banded together, fighting with the spirit for which they are known. The people of India match them, battle for battle, not being the kind to give up their hard-won freedom and advancement to anyone. Where other fronts in the Aeon War may know rest, the soldiers of this front drive themselves to exhaustion and still fight on.

Japan now stares into the face of death with little between the two. Where once China was a giant buffer zone between the Disciples of the Rapine Storm and Japan, leaving them to deal with only the Migou, the monstrous hordes are now on their doorstep. The New Earth Government has begun to heavily fortify Japan, knowing that the day they all dread will eventually come. Many of the troops that survived and fled the invasion of China have relocated here. Though the Rapine Storm has so far only scouted nearby, the Migou test Japan's defenses constantly. It is a wonder that they have not yet claimed the island as their own.

Furthermore, Japan has begun to suffer from an infestation of the Disciples of Death's Shadow. Corruption has begun to run rampant through the local government and odd Japanese sexual fetishes have reached an all-time high. Forbidden sex cults have become secretly become the vice of many Japanese officials and businessmen, giving the Death Shadows a healthy amount of blackmail material with which to accomplish their goals. Unfortunately for the Cult, all their elaborate efforts have been ordained to be nothing more than a softening up of the islands for the eventual invasion of the Disciples of the Rapine Storm. It won't be long now before the monstrous creatures that make up the Storm will float across the water and lay siege to the last bastion of the New Earth Government in Southeast Asia.

If it's an island in the Pacific that isn't near Southeast Asia or Austria, it has been over-run and claimed by the Esoteric Order of Dagon. The sole exception to this is Hawaii, a place where the New Earth Government dug in during the early days of the war. In general Hawaii is well-fortified and the New Earth Government views it as a moral victory that it is still theirs.

CITIES OF NOTE

Today, there are three cities that are the center of the fight against the Rapine Storm in Asia, now that China has fallen. They are Mumbai, Tehran, and Karachi.

The city of Mumbai was once known to the world as Bombay. It is the largest city in the world, the arcology being twice the size of such places as Rio de Janeiro or Los Angeles – it is considered an architectural wonder. The city is a port that sits on the mouth of the Ulhas River and takes up the entirety of Salsette Island. It is the commercial and economic center for this part of the world and also the entertainment capital. Bollywood still produces many feature films, many of which have become far more global in their appeal. Mumbai, considering its massive size, boasts a fairly low crime rate and has also gotten past its days where half the city lived in slums. Strangely, given the number of years since British rule, the sport of cricket is still a local favorite. The city is still predominantly Hindu – a religion that has surprisingly endured.

Tehran sits at the foot of the Alborz mountain range. It is also a large city, about the size of Los Angeles or Buenos Aires – at least in terms of population, even though the arcology is smaller. The city was once home to Iran's theocracy, but no more. It has

become a very liberal city, cosmopolitan, a center of culture and learning – though its architectural history had been wiped out for decades before the arcology was built. However, there are a surprising number of muslims still practicing in Tehran, but they are a very small percentage compared to the past. Though international corporations weren't eager to play in the theocracy's capital city, large companies have moved back in the vacuum.

Karachi, like the other bastions, is a economic, industrial, and cultural center. It is also a cosmopolitan city of learning and culture, with an emphasis on music and performance. There are those that call it the City of Lights, for it is a lively place. On the coast of the Arabian sea, Karachi boasts some wonderful beaches. The city's industry is dominated by large-scale manufacturing, though it is home to many international businesses. Karachi is approaching Mumbai in terms of population, though the arcology isn't as large. However, also like Mumbai, the influence of the British remains in the city's love of the sport of cricket.

All of these three cities also have two things in common: a large military presence and a large population of refugees. With the Rapine Storm knocking on their door, the New Earth Government coordinates their war efforts from these cities, and quite an impressive build-up of the military it is. Karachi has become the center of the war effort for Afghanistan, as most of that place has been consumed by the Storm. The city is also host to Afghanistan's refugees, in addition to Pakistan's, so it is severely over-crowded. Mumbai and Tehran are also refugee cities. The New Earth Government is doing what it can to relocate refugees who are willing to leave.

The free port of Nagasaki has become the primary staging point for the New Earth Government's fortification of Japan. From here, forces can be deployed to protect against either the Migou or the new position of the Disciples of the Rapine Storm. It is a clearing house for military deployment and the city is now dominated by the Armed Forces and refugees – especially survivors from China. For the time being, things have been quiet and few foes have tested the growing might of Japan. However, now that the eye of Hastur is on them, the Disciples of the Unnamable have begun to flood into Nagasaki.

Nagasaki was Japan's window to the world through several closed eras, but the city is most well-known for being the tragic target of United States nuclear bombing during World War II. Though hundreds of thousands died either directly due to the explosion or because of radiation poisoning, the city has recovered to once again be a place of heavy industry. The societal scars left over from the bombing have faded, especially in the face of tragedies even more drastic than their own. The impending threats have even changed the traditional Japanese way of life. They aren't nearly as repressed or conservative as they once were. Nagasaki is an excellent example of the new way – live for the moment.

All four of the cities described here are home to large populations of refugees, all of whom have had to endure the horror of

the Disciples of the Rapine Storm. As in Eastern Europe, those scars run deep. The people who have survived the atrocities of war against this foe require an extra level of care. Nightmares are commonplace among these populations. The Ashcroft Clinic has deployed the majority of its resources to these parts of the world, for not only are there refugees to help care for, but also soldiers who have survived something worse than hell. The Ministry of Information can try all it likes to make these cities seem safe and home to many exciting distractions, but soldiers and refugees talk. There's simply no way to keep control of those kind of stories, though the Ministry does manage to keep them from spreading beyond the city.

AFRICA

OVERVIEW

Africa has never been what one could call entirely politically stable. Add to that tribal animosities that run back farther than anyone can remember, and you have a place that was very resistant to globalization. Fortunately, the New Earth Government brought the promise of stability and prosperity, and was prepared to take on the challenges that a united Africa faced. As with all parts of the world, the Nazzadi invasion helped many put their differences aside in a lasting fashion, but Africa was only rivaled by the Middle East for the number of violent attacks perpetrated by Humans against Humans during the early days of the New Earth Government.

In addition to the peace brought by the New Earth Government, medical advancements have benefitted Africa immensely. A continent on which AIDS was an epidemic, more than 20% of the population was infected in some countries. The impact of AIDS was devastating their way of life. With the prospect of the New United Nations and the advent of arcanotherapy, AIDS was reduced from an epidemic to almost non-existent within a decade. Add to that a dramatic increase in the overall quality of education and assistance in poverty- or famine-stricken areas, and you have a recipe for success.

Like South America, Africa has been spared many of the horrors of the Strange Aeon. They, like everyone else, dealt with the Nazzadi attacks during the First Arcanotech War, but Africa has been safe from most overt predations. In general, the nations of Africa have never known such prosperity and ease.

HOT SPOTS

The most obvious problem that Africa faces is the threat of the Esoteric Order of Dagon. The Cult has captured territory all along the southern and western coasts of the continent, helping the Esoteric Order lock-up control of the Atlantic. What were once the countries of Guinea, Gabon, Namibia, South Africa, and the Western Sahara all must deal with regular Esoteric Order of Dagon raids, as well as the island of Madagascar. The New Earth Government bases near all of these coasts help keep the Cult as contained as possible. The Cult's influence is felt the least in South Africa, even though this area hosts their largest settlement.

Since the Migou rule Antarctica, there are those who believe it is only a matter of time before the Migou fly up to attack the southern tip of the continent the way they are invading South America. However, Migou intelligence missions are surprisingly rare and they seem to be staying away from Africa for the time being.

The real threat in Africa does not come from any of the overt sources. The Chrysalis Corporation maintains its headquarters in Johannesburg and maintains a heavy corporate presence across the continent. Therefore, Africa is the power center of the Children of Chaos, and South Africa is home to the Director – an avatar of the Endless One Nyarlathotep. The Cult has allowed the Esoteric Order to gain the holds on the continent they have, supporting their search for R'lyeh. However, it is the Director's presence that keeps the Migou at bay. They do, after all, know what the Chrysalis Corporation really is and they are just not ready for that kind of engagement. The minions of Hastur likewise give him wide berth, though in reality it is more like he is coordinating with the Cults.

CITIES OF NOTE

Johannesburg is the biggest and most prosperous city in Africa and a good amount of the credit for that goes to the Chrysalis Corporation. In fact, it was the lobbying of the Chrysalis Corporation that tipped the scales to make Johannesburg the capital of Africa, in addition to being the financial center of the continent. It is a wealthy city, built on the gold and diamond trade. The arcology is enormous, easily on par with such cities as Los Angeles or Buenos Aires. However, it is a city based around industry and a destination for the locals – it is not a city known for or designed for tourism.

Anything that happens in Johannesburg happens because of, or with the permission of, the Chrysalis Corporation. The company employs fully half of the citizens and has every official in their pocket, as well as the media. What has colloquially become known as the Castle, the headquarters of the world's second largest corporation dominates downtown, virtually an arcology unto itself. The Children of Chaos run things and they like to keep things quiet at home. This, in conjunction with a long-standing city tradition of halving surveillance on every public street corner, keeps street and violent crime to a minimum.

A city of some repute, Marrakech has become important for several reasons. It has, first and foremost, distinguished itself as a center of trade. The city's tradition of open air markets has been maintained in the arcology, with a new square carrying the old name of *Djemaa el Fna* hosting a new and larger marketplace. Merchants from all over the world come here to find amazing and unusual items, in addition to the run of the mill. During the day, the market is also filled with performers and artists who entertain the crowd. At night, the stalls convert to food vendors, making it the world's largest restaurant scene. In general, it is a large international city, home to millions. Considering the relative safety of Africa and Marrakech's market, the city is a tourist destination.

However, Marrakech is also home to a large military base, which is home to the New Earth Government's command center for containing the Esoteric Order of Dagon in Africa. The western coasts are easy to reach from here, while other troops are deployed further south. Because of this, Marrakech is rarely plagued by the Esoteric Order and the military is an ordinary sight.

AUSTRALIA

OVERVIEW

Overall, the Australians were pretty laid back about becoming part of a one-world government. They already spoke English, the change in governmental style wasn't that big a shift, and such a move brought better defense and greater economic opportunity. Many Australians were worried that the culture they'd adopted for themselves over the centuries since being a penal colony would be wiped out by globalization, but like the rest of the planet ultimately deemed such things an acceptable loss for the benefits it created. Some were simple to win over once they discovered that "footie" would still be the world's #1 professional competitive sport – a tightly-held favorite of the people, like their cousins in the United Kingdom. Their country now a hotly contested territory at the mercy of the three vicious enemies, Australians have a reputation for being fierce and passionate fighters.

New Zealanders, especially these days, do not like it when people mistake them for being Australian. New Zealanders have become a tough group of people, as their home has become a foothold for the Migou. Where New Zealand may have once been a peaceful and pastoral place, with a few large towns and a much calmer pace of life, it has become a dangerous place and home to regular fighting.

Like the indigenous people of North America, the aborigines of Australia have gotten the short end of the stick since European settlers first showed up centuries ago. They have not been a significant part of global politics, despite having quite possibly one of the most ancient cultures on the planet. However, there has always been a mystical current running through their people that exploded once sorcery became an accepted and regulated discipline. Today, many aborigines practice sorcery and it is considered an honor among their people – as opposed to something powerful, but innately distrusted, by most of everyone else in the world.

HOT SPOTS

Australia unfortunately has become a target of the Disciples of the Rapine Storm. The hordes of horrible things have made their way down through Malaysia and Indonesia to land on the northern coast of Australia. The New Earth Government, especially since the fall of China, fights a desperate battle to maintain the lines there. However, a good part of the front is in the central deserts of Australia meaning that the war against the Rapine Storm has become an ugly desert war. The citizens of Australia are tense, living in fear of the threat in their land.

Then there's the threat of the Esoteric Order of Dagon, which constantly pokes at the defenses of the southern coastal communities. They are of particular trouble in both New Guinea and New Zealand. The Esoteric Order probes for weaknesses in the New Earth Government's perimeter, assuming that an island this surrounded by enemies will, eventually, be ripe for the picking.

The Migou have launched themselves up from the Antarctic to gain a foothold in New Zealand. It is a tense situation as the New Zealanders must deal with stretched New Earth Government resources trying to support both the front in Australia and in other places in this part of the world. However, forces are being diverted from the supposed reinforcement of the Chinese front, which everyone with any sense knows is gone.

Unfortunately for citizens, the deserts of central Australia hold more than just Aborigines and lizards. Ancient civilizations have their roots here and the Migou, who remember them, have come looking. The New Earth Government really has no idea what is going on with the Migou patrols, but they are worried, as well they should be.

CITIES OF NOTE

Christchurch is the hub of the defense of New Zealand. It is the largest city on the southern island of New Zealand, now all of New Zealand since the northern island has been lost to the Migou. The arcology is just far enough inland to be highly defensible and is now home to a sizable New Earth Government armed forces contingent. For New Zealand, Christchurch is a large arcology, built for half a million people. However, like many major cities, it is home to refugees, those survivors from the northern island who managed to escape. Fortunately, the refugee population hasn't taxed the city's resources beyond its capacity.

Once, Christchurch was a gateway to the Antarctic, which has unfortunately come back to bite them, and primarily agricultural. Coincidentally, Christchurch is rated as having one of the purest water supplies in the world. It is unlikely that the Migou care about any of this, but these facts run deep among the people of the now primarily military arcology.

Melbourne has taken on new importance in Australia, as it is now the seat of government for the continent. It has always been an international city, consistently voted one of the most livable cities in the world. It is a busy port, home to much industry and manufacturing, as well as offices from nearly every major corporation in the world – naturally, the Ashcroft Foundation and the Chrysalis Corporation are the most notable. To go along with that is Melbourne's status as a hub of news, and the corresponding watchful eye of the Ministry of Information. The city is just far enough inland, like Christchurch, that it is well-defended against the Esoteric Order. The arcology is the largest in Australia, having surpassed Sydney, and is home to millions of people, including a surprisingly high percentage of Jews.

Even in the Strange Aeon, Melbourne has kept its livable character. In recent years however, the city has become the center

of military might and deployment for the continent. The armed forces are centered in Melbourne, watching and engaging the Disciples of the Rapine Storm as they continue to advance south across the desert. The military also helps keep Esoteric Order of Dagon raids to a minimum, given that Australia's primary cities are coastal. This constant military presence has forced Melbourne to take on a more somber character, something that has compromised the city's otherwise lively atmosphere. They are still fortunately far away from the enemy.

ANTARCTICA

OVERVIEW

Antarctica is a continent covered by nothing but snow and ice. Despite many indigenous lifeforms, Human beings have never been able to live there. For the New Earth Government, it's been nothing more than a place for scientific outposts. It has never been considered much of a factor in global affairs, with the exception of corporate bandits who wanted to drill for oil during the last gasp of fossil fuel dependency.

To the Migou, on the other hand, Antarctica seemed an awfully hospitable place to land. The Migou, because of the environment of Pluto, were already used to severe cold and their biology wouldn't have any problem with it. They also could fly, making transport across the snow and ice fields an easy thing to do. Furthermore, there were no settlements or military bases from which the New Earth Government could mount an effective resistance. It was the perfect place for the Migou to land and to build the center of their operations on Earth.

Today, the Migou have dominated the entire continent and built several major bases and cities. The Hive Ship sits in distant geosynchronous orbit over the heart of Antarctica where it is safe from most outside attacks and can resupply or support the bases on the ground.

CITIES OF NOTE

None of the scientific outposts that once existed across Antarctica exist anymore. They were abandoned once the New Earth Government determined that the Migou were headed for the continent and all that remains of them has been destroyed by the bugs in the years since.

Ground Zero. That's what the place is still known as – where the Migou first touched down on Earth. Located almost directly over the South Pole, it is the site of one of the bloodiest battles in the Second Arcanotech War, one which the New Earth Government ultimately lost. Today, it is the site of the primary Migou supply outpost for the Southern Hemisphere. Supplies are dropped from far orbit down to within twenty miles of Ground Zero, now home to a gigantic complex so heavily fortified that the New Earth Government couldn't hope to get close. There are those who suspect that the Migou house their true High Command here, instead of up on the Hive Ship, but this is ultimately regarded as an unsubstantiated rumor.



SEEDY UNDERBELLY

Despite extinction-level threats, there are those who would still choose to break the law for their own benefit. They choose to violate the community's standards, whether out of some anti-social need, a desire to profit, or simple personal beliefs. The New Earth Government maintains several agencies whose job it is to deal with criminals.

The first level of defense is the local police. They deal with everything from domestic disturbances to muggings or theft to missing persons. However, the police of the New Earth Government have gone back to an old model that works – that of the beat cop. Police are assigned to patrol and respond to incidents in neighborhoods or beats. The police on a beat get to know the residents and businesspeople of those neighborhoods, investing the cops in the people they protect. Gone are the days when aimlessly wandering overworked police viewed everyone as faceless potential perpetrators. People know and respect their protectors and vice versa. The other big difference in police officers from days gone by is that police are armed and armored at all times. Wearing light battle armor and carrying light assault rifles and several kinds of grenades, the police of the New Earth Government never know what they'll have to deal with, so they are ready for it. Other types of undercover police are not so heavily loaded, but are capable of calling down SWAT (Special Weapons & Tactics) or SPAT (Special Powered Armor Teams) on a moment's notice. All police are also afforded the honor of being able to operate vehicles inside arcologies, dramatically increasing their odds of being able to manage threats.

Law enforcement outside arcologies is not the same as inside. The inside of arcologies are regulated environments and law enforcement is quick to respond within their finite confines. So much more can happen outside an arcology and evidence is much harder to gather. Furthermore, it takes longer for authorities to respond as the beat cop system stops within a few miles of the arcology walls. Most residents of the outside form para-military neighborhood watch groups to better protect themselves.

The Federal Security Bureau steps in if the crime is suspected to be of a wider-reaching or organized nature, or if cults are involved. For the most part, the FSB is content to let local law enforcement manage their own turf, for they know it better. However, there are more than enough larger scale crimes to warrant a branch office of the Federal Security Bureau in every arcology.

One of the biggest threats that the FSB has to deal with is organized crime. Organized criminal organizations still exist, perpetrating fraud, drug trafficking, extortion, and violence as part of their trade. Some have even stepped it up to engage in slavery and illegal underage prostitution. However, the mobs of yesteryear are gone as it has been very difficult to maintain organizations based on strict nationality. So many have been hurt in the wars that some would have been all but wiped out, like the Russian or Irish mafias. Now they are organized by heritage. The four major groups are the African Mob, the Asian Mob, the Eurasian Mob, and the Hispanic Mob, incorporating the remnant of the old criminal organizations of the countries they encompass.

Of course, they all end up puppets of the Disciples of Death's Shadow sooner or later.

Gangs are also a problem, especially among refugees near war-zones or outside arcologies. Most are simply those who have no other choice, who band together and perpetrate crimes for survival. Many occupy neighborhoods and extort protection money, while others find ways to get illegal goods and distribute them. It is common for gangs to run into organized crime syndicates, in which case they either end up doing dirty work for the mob or find themselves moving on involuntarily. To discourage gangs, gang-related offenses are tried as organized crime offenses, which typically carry stiffer penalties. Activists do what they can among disenfranchised groups to promote anti-gang sentiments.

Here is a quick look at the average prison terms, average maximum prison sentences, and average probationary periods after release for felonies. They are broken down into:

- *Violent crimes*, representing assault, sexual assault, manslaughter, etc.
- *Property crimes*, representing burglary, vehicle theft, fraud/forgery, etc.
- *Drug crimes*, including possession or trafficking.
- *Weapons crimes*, including carrying without a permit, sale of illegal weapons, etc.
- *Other crimes*, including embezzlement, other white collar crimes, etc.

The average sentences are (not including life terms or death sentences):

- *Violent Offenses* – Prison 5 years/9 years max, Probation 3 years
- *Property Offenses* – Prison 4 years/4 years max, Probation 3 years
- *Drug Offenses* – Prison 4 years/5 years max, Probation 3 years
- *Weapons Offenses* – Prison 4 years/5 years max, Probation 3 years
- *Other Offenses* – Prison 3 years/4 years max, Probation 3 years

Such sentences may be reduced if the violator is a first-time offender or behaves well and shows recovery in prison.

Prisons are different than they used to be. There are still minimum, medium, and maximum security facilities, depending upon the criminals the prison is designed to incarcerate, but they are designed to be rehabilitation centers. Prisoners must undergo intensive psychotherapy in individual and group settings during their sentence, in an effort to get to the root of their criminal behavior and hopefully excise it. The face of maximum security prisons was radically changed, as prison murders, rapes, and beatings have been all but eliminated.

The New Earth Government also does not believe in over-crowding prisons. Spending time in prison is only for those who the justice system believes can be rehabilitated and released back into society. For the truly dangerous, the New Earth Government maintains the death penalty. Those who have stepped over the line, are repeat violent offenders, or are sociopaths are the

most frequently executed. The condemned do not spend much time in prison either and are typically killed within two weeks of sentencing. Executions are typically by lethal injection, but the condemned may request a firing squad instead.

The Office of Internal Security is a special case, dealing with crimes that are of a mystical nature. It is their job to investigate unregistered sorcerers and para-psychics, the sale of illicit arcane tomes or rituals, and stop the trafficking of other restricted goods within the arcane underground. The New Earth Government regards these types of crimes to be serious threats to the well-being of everyone, and polices them as such.

The laws regarding mystical crime are draconian, to say the least. Nearly every offense carries with it a prison sentence of life, if an offender is lucky. Many find themselves locked away in OIS detention facilities, subject to whatever a person who is declared to have no mortal rights is subjected to. Some are even sentenced to death, if the violations are severe enough.

The average sentences for violations of the mystical crime codes are:

- Being an unregistered sorcerer with knowledge of only legal rituals or an unregistered para-psychic with only unregulated abilities – Life in prison, often reduced to ten years with good behavior and community service.
- Being an unregistered sorcerer with knowledge of illegal rituals or being an unregistered para-psychic with regulated abilities – Life in prison.
- Possession of a minor illegal occult volume – Life in prison, often reduced to ten years with good behavior and community service.
- Possession of a major illegal occult volume – Life in prison.
- Traffic of minor illegal occult volume – Life in prison.
- Traffic of major illegal occult volume – Death penalty.
- Traffic of illegal rituals – Life in prison.
- Repeat offense – Death penalty.
- Violent or invasive offenses perpetrated by mystical abilities – Life in prison, increased to the death penalty if the offender is unregistered.

Regardless, citizens of the New Earth Government are all entitled to basic mortal rights: the right to an attorney, to know what charges are being brought against them, the right against illegal search and seizure, the right against being detained without being charged with a crime, and the right to a trial by neutral jury.

FYI
Some of the information in this section is reprinted from the *Damnation View*. Some of the information regarding law enforcement in the New Earth Government may be familiar if you have read that book.

Also, more detailed information on the Federal Security Bureau, the Office of Internal Security, and the arcane underground can be found in *Vade Mecum: the CthulhuTech Companion*. Cult crime can be found in *Dark Passions*.

DIRTY SECRETS

The New Earth Government is not without its secrets, especially the kind they won't want anyone to know about. There are also secrets within the New Earth Government that affect it in insidious ways, of which they are unaware.

Perhaps the dirtiest secret within the New Earth Government is that society, though thought to be democratic and free, is actually carefully designed. The New Earth Government gets its hooks in young, as many children are raised in federal day-care. The people are manipulated by social engineering policy and loads and loads of propaganda and information control. Conspiracy theories abound, but most citizens of the New Earth Government believe that the government is telling the truth and that the information they receive is accurate. Most people don't want to question it and would rather live in a bearable world of lies than live in an unbearable world of truth. However, if the truth about government social engineering were to be released, the world would be outraged at the New Earth Government's ongoing and calculated manipulation.

Another area of conspiracy theories is with regards to the Ashcroft Foundation and the government's agreement to allow unelected expert Ashcroft Advisors to influence nearly every level of government. The truth is, they've been there so long and are so embedded that it is unlikely they are ever going anywhere. They truly are the power behind the throne, the constant force coordinating among themselves to keep things running smoothly for the good of humanity. They regard themselves as the buffer that minimizes the damage caused by politicians and officials who are idiots, self-serving, or corrupt. The problem is that they are doing this all according to internal Ashcroft Foundation ideals and initiatives, in which the people have no say. Regardless of intention, they are truly undermining democracy. It is unlikely that this situation will ever come to light, as the authorities that make up the New Earth Government are unwilling to admit it to themselves.

Then there's the Chrysalis Corporation, the second largest company in the world after the Ashcroft Foundation. They have their hooks into all kinds of critical things, such as food production, consumer electronics, and defense contracting. They have major influence in every city and with the federal government, as well as pull with the military. As the cult of the Endless One Nyarlathotep, their intentions are hardly in the best interests of the people. They spread corruption throughout the New Earth Government, as more and more officials and politicians take bribes or kickbacks (or bow to threats). They undermine things in little, but widespread ways, including contaminated food and drugs, and faulty goods and equipment. Sometimes toxins enter the water supply that cause birth defects in pregnant women, sometimes refugees die from relief food that was tainted "on the scene," and sometimes mecha fail and guns jam in the heat of battle, because the Chrysalis Corporation wanted them to.

While mandatory psychological evaluation may be a part of everyday life for most, it would quickly put the Chrysalis Corporation out of business. All executives and key employees

of the company are cultists, as well as either illegal sorcerers, para-psychics, or Dhohanoids. A simple psychological evaluation would reveal them to be something other than reasonably well-adjusted people. Somehow, the Chrysalis Corporation has gotten the New Earth Government to agree to a policy of self-policing. The company maintains its own staff of educated and licensed psychologists who evaluate the employees at the appropriate federally mandated intervals. Needless to say, employees of the Chrysalis Corporation always pass, supposedly a credit to the company's mental health initiatives. They will, from time to time, offer up a patsy just so as not to look too squeaky clean.

The Chrysalis Corporation, through its Vantage Group subsidiary, is the largest manufacturer of pharmaceuticals in the New Earth Government. Peeking behind the curtain, somebody put the Children of Chaos in charge of manufacturing the bulk of the drugs that treat the common mental disorders associated with Aeon War Syndrome. One can only imagine that the Cult is not all that committed to the mental health of society. At random intervals, the agents of the Children of Chaos tamper with the production lines, mixing in either placebos or wrong medication, in order to exacerbate societal suffering. This means that several pills in every bottle either won't work or might make the user feel funny or sick. The Children of Chaos are very careful about this, adding just enough to create chaos but not enough to draw attention to their activities. Everyone who takes regular mental health medication manufactured by the Vantage Group is going to have a couple bad days every month.

There are many people in the New Earth Government who are medicated for some manifestation of Aeon War Syndrome. Many of those same people indulge in some sort of legal recreational drug use as well. The problem is that sometimes these drugs interact with each other in detrimental ways. People are warned ahead of time about possible drug interactions, but many don't pay any attention. Some end up sick, some end up with some sort of damage to their internal organs, while some end up in a coma or dying, depending upon each person's unique body chemistry and metabolism. While drug education is becoming an increasingly more important push, the New Earth Government has been reticent to bring widespread media attention to this phenomenon.

Another dirty secret involves the Engel Project. Many people ask, from what are the Engels created? Most understand that it is a mix of some Human, some Nazzadi, and some animal DNA, sprinkled with something of the monsters of the Rapine Storm. Then why is it that the Engels do not resemble any of the aforementioned creatures? It is because the genetic material that the Engel Project utilizes isn't really from the above sources. Certainly, there is some Human, Nazzadi, and terrestrial animal in there to temper the creatures, but the Engels are made up of pieces from the random, horrific creatures that emerge from the Zone. Scientists stationed near the Zone take genetic material from New Earth Government kills, as well as reviewing intelligence data from the fights. The DNA they have been able to decipher and manipulate is the DNA they have used in the Engel

Project. If the citizens of the New Earth Government knew that their defenders were untried, untested, and unknown genetically-engineered monsters underneath all that armor, they'd be even more freaked out by the Engels than they already are.

Though intelligence analysts believed, based on the information provided by the Firstborn, that the Migou were unlikely to attack, they didn't want to leave such things to chance. The government had tried to communicate with the Migou, stating peaceful intentions, but such transmissions fell on deaf ears. As soon as they were able, the New Earth Government sent out reconnaissance probes to spy on Pluto. Each time such a probe got close, it was destroyed. As a part of reconstruction, the New Earth Government built defenses into the colonies, as well as creating a buffer of defense satellites that stayed in a holding pattern between Neptune and Pluto. Military bases were created to go along with the colonies and giant war ships with mecha designed for space combat were sent out as a line of first defense. When all was said and done, the New Earth Government felt that its new border was protected should the Migou choose to attack.

Unfortunately, the New Earth Government drastically underestimated the military might of the Migou and the colonies fell as the Migou made their way to Earth. However, there are those among the Global Intelligence Agency and the Ministry of War that believe we may have provoked the Migou into attacking us, that they may have stayed at home if we hadn't gone all the way out there and proliferated. They believe that we may have started the Second Arcanotech War, not the Migou.

It's no secret that the New Earth Government is keeping its eye on White xenomixes. They are an inexplicable anomaly that is born with para-psychic ability. As certain agencies reason, if they are all born with such ability across the board, there must be a genetic factor involved. It would be a powerful edge if such a genetic factor could be identified, allowing the government to perform gene therapy on soldiers, or at the very least modify developing fetuses, to manufacture para-psychics. To this end, the New Earth Government has employed its two most trusted partners to investigate ongoingly—the Ashcroft Foundation and the Chrysalis Corporation.

The two are going about this task in very different ways, as one might expect. The Ashcroft Foundation has employed some of the top minds, but only the top minds that pass their rigid psychological and ethical screening. Their progress is slow, as they are thorough and unwilling to cross many lines. The Chrysalis Corporation has no such boundaries. This research has been placed under the purview of the Applied Military Sciences Division, but it has really been put under the fabled T99 Division. They have no problem performing tests and experiments that violate, harm, or otherwise victimize their subjects. They've even gone to the point of vivisectioning several young subjects. However, Whites are rare and a commodity, so they have only killed a few, but are happily keeping many against their wills. Chrysalis is, of course, doing this research for their own benefit and not the gov-

ernment's. They have no intention of sharing anything they find, and every intention of using it to their advantage. If only they could find a way to create Dhohanoid para-psychics, ones who were created as para-psychics after the Rite of Transfiguration. It would give them an amazing advantage, considering that no para-psychic can become a Dhohanoid currently.

However, perhaps the most painful secret of humanity's world is that the government has been falling prey to corruption. Many of those at the top know the reality of the world, forced to see things as they truly are without the benefit of the Ministry of Information's actions. This is very disheartening for many and there are those that have found themselves slipping into resignation. In such a world, where one has given up, it isn't as difficult a stretch to start accepting bribes or kick-backs. What's the cost of some short-term abundance in a doomed world? If it were just a question of money, it wouldn't be as big a concern. However, there are those who are taking steps down the dark road, one of forbidden physical pleasures and excesses. It is here that the Disciples of Death's Shadow enter the picture, as they begin to maneuver more and more politicians into their clutches. If the center cannot hold, things will not look good for the survival of the New Earth Government.

Fortunately, the office of the Global President is not one likely to be corrupted. There are so many layers of protection and so many watchful eyes on the President and his aides that it would be very difficult for the Death Shadow's to get to him. However, the President's powers are limited and there are many members of Parliament or other officials of government agencies that are easier to reach and can do far more damage without public scrutiny.

Perhaps as part of the corruption, but perhaps more an example of the indomitable will of the species to survive, the New Earth Government has created a worst-case scenario contingency that involves the modern day equivalent of an ark. They are building a starfaring ship designed to flee Earth at top speed if things look particularly grim. Key scientists, scholars, and politicians have been chosen to be the sole survivors of Earth and have been briefed on the drill. Accompanying them will be a variety of animals and genetic code for nearly all life on Earth. The idea is that the ship can travel under LAI direction for as long as it can, hopefully finding a planet suitable for life, far away from the things that are threatening the Earth. Their chances of success are extremely low. It isn't a good idea, but it's an idea that might work when all other ideas are done.

The plan is essentially this. In the event where Human and Nazzadi extinction is inevitable, those chosen would board the ship. It is kept in a secret underground bunker south of Chicago, its location known only to a few. Nuclear devices are to be set off in key locations that would distract the Migou, as well as nuclear missiles being launched directly at the Hive Ship. None of these are expected to do any damage, but instead are meant only as a distraction. It would still take a miracle for such a move to work, but desperate times call for desperate measures.

AEON WAR SYNDROME

The Human (or Nazzadi) psyche is tough, but not so tough that it could endure the horrors of the Strange Aeon unscathed. Even your average citizen, protected by an armored and armed arcology and a steady diet of propaganda, is not immune to the things that erode one's ability to function normally. Those that must actively fight against the dark things in the world, such as soldiers, mecha pilots, or law enforcement agents, have even a rougher time of it, as their grasp on how things should be slips away in the face of otherworldly things. Fortunately, losing one's grip or manifesting psychological disorders does not carry the shame it once did. Most view it as an unfortunate consequence of modern living.

Aeon War Syndrome is the socially acceptable moniker for all the common kinds of psychological disorders associated with the stresses of modern living. Some of the most common include anxiety disorders, which are general anxiety, obsessive or compulsive, panic, phobia, and post-traumatic stress disorders, mood disorders, which are the major depression, dysthymia, manic-depression, and cyclothymia disorders, and personality disorders, particularly the borderline, dependent, obsessive-compulsive, paranoid, rage, schizotypal, and schizoid disorders. The hypochondriasis somatoform disorder and the psychogenic fugue disorder are also not uncommon. These are all classified as part of Aeon War Syndrome. There are few in the modern day that do not suffer from or have been treated for anxiety and/or depression.

Insanity is functionally a permanent distortion of a person's perception and the way they process information and stimuli. While some mental disorders are caused by imbalanced brain chemistry or malfunctioning parts of the brain, Aeon War Syndrome is caused by the consistently horrible state of the world and a person's exposure to it. Such things include prolonged despair, witnessing death, and enduring serious injury or abuse. A person can descend down the slippery slope of insanity also by witnessing things that defy agreement reality. Human (and Nazzadi) society has always been based on what we have agreed is real, not what necessarily is so. Our minds are designed to process and function within that box. When people are exposed to things that don't fit inside that box, it has a detrimental affect on their psyche and they may eventually lose their grip altogether. Fortunately, this box is much larger than it once was, but it is still not enough to encompass all the things that threaten the world.

The government provides socialized counseling or psychiatric care to its citizens. If they didn't, they would have a population of maladjusted people constantly skirting the edge of madness – or fully lost to it. Counseling appointments are easy to get and emergency services exist for those in extreme crisis. Most people maintain a regular routine, seeing their therapist (or psychiatrist if necessary) an average of an hour every two weeks. Regular counseling seems to be enough to help the average person cope with the state of the world on a daily basis.

Psychological evaluations are mandatory for all legal New Earth Government citizens, once a month. If a person already partici-

pates in regular counseling, this evaluation is turned in by his therapist with little additional information required. Those who do not, however, must report to a federal evaluation facility to undergo a two hour psychological examination. Those who do not pass this evaluation find themselves with mandated therapy time, possibly mandated psychiatric care, and possibly in-patient therapy, depending upon the severity of their psychoses or neuroses.

Those who fail to appear must face very real legal consequences. A warning is issued to the offender the first time he misses a review. The second time, a warrant is issued and police come to fetch the offender and escort him to his review. The third time, a warrant is issued and the police come to escort the offender directly to in-patient therapy for no less than 72 hours observation. This policy has been very effective, as most reasonably well-adjusted people with nothing to hide go to their evaluations.

Of course, there are those who operate in the dark side of society or those who have simply removed themselves. In this former category, such people are typically offenders of many other laws, so missing an evaluation to them is the equivalent of getting a parking ticket when they are wanted for robbery and homicide. In the latter category are people of the sort who might live outside the arcologies, rebels against the watchful eye of the government or survivalists. While the mandatory evaluations laws do apply to them, it is rare the police enforce them more than a few miles outside the arcologies or dense urban centers.

However, it is those in the military or many branches of government service that must face the worst of the world's horrors. Those in the thicke of it must maintain a once a week therapy regimen, so that they can maintain something akin to being well-adjusted. Some of the things these people see often scar them for life, regardless of counseling or drug therapy. There are many of the walking wounded among soldiers who have come back from the fronts. Unfortunately, there are some places where counseling does little good, because of the constant influence of otherworldly things, or is impractical. Those that face the Disciples of the Rapine Storm are often confronted by monstrosities on a near daily basis. Those on missions to remote places are beyond the reach of psychological care. Many such people lose their minds permanently, because there is simply no way to overcome the things that they must experience.

In addition to counseling, many people must take some kind of drug to help them maintain. Depression and anxiety are the most often treated, but anti-psychotics are also prevalent. It is estimated that almost half of the population of the New Earth Government takes some kind of psycho-pharmalogical substance at least semi-regularly. Most people must only take the drugs for a period of time, but some find themselves permanently medicated. As anxiety and depression are the most common disorders in society, those medicated for them are often one degree dissociated from their emotions and/or the world. The largest producer of pharmaceuticals in the New Earth Government is the Vantage Group, a subsidiary of the Chrysalis Corporation.

LOST COLONIES

Arcanotechnology gave Humans the capability to do something of which they'd only dreamed – to truly travel out into the solar system to visit our neighboring planets in person. By the 2050's, the New United Nations had created colonies on the Earth's moon, along with four other colonies on moons much further out in the solar system.

The moon was the closest and first. Tranquility was the first stable colony, a fully enclosed sprawling structure on the Sea of Tranquility. The moon doesn't really have any resources that make it special, so Tranquility was really just a close to home experiment in creating extra-planetary colonies. It became a popular destination for people who just wanted to leave Earth or who had dreams of the stars.

Moving out into the solar system, the New United Nations finally created small colonies on Mars. Olympus was the first and larger of the two, at the base of the largest mountain in the explored solar system, Olympus Mons. Mariner Bay, the second, was built on the edge of Valles Marineris, the largest canyon system in the solar system. Again, Mars didn't hold any significant value in and of itself, other than being a gateway to the outer planets.

Then came Ganymede, Jupiter's largest moon. Mostly an ice planet covered in impact craters, Ganymede was the first world colonized by man with the potential for resources. Mining became the primary function of the colony, though again it became a jumping off point for further exploration of the solar system.

While near Jupiter, the New United Nations also colonized Callisto, the second largest moon of the planet and the third largest moon in the solar system. This icy rock contains a massive ocean underneath the surface, where scientists theorized some kind of extraterrestrial microbial life may have formed. Before the advent of arcanotechnology, Callisto was a popular choice for space exploration as it may have been able to produce fuel. The planet rapidly became a scientific outpost for exploration of both it and other Jovian moons, especially Europa.

The furthest into the solar system we went was Titan, Saturn's largest moon. It is the second largest moon in the solar system, after Ganymede. Like most moons of the outer planets, it is icy and rocky, but is special in that it was one of the few planets that could possibly host microbial life. It is similar in atmosphere to early Earth and the place where humanity's first attempts at terraforming occurred.

Despite differing night/day cycles (depending upon world), colonists kept to a 24-hour day and adjusted climate controls to reflect such. They had to work out regularly in artificial gravity chambers to keep their muscles and organs from degenerating in the low gravity environments of each of these worlds. Life in the colonies was most definitely the new frontier, but a frontier with new challenges. Death was always one leak or one climate control failure away, and food and other critical supplies depended on regular delivery from the government.

When the Nazzadi came through the solar system to attack Earth during the First Arcanotech War, they invaded and seized all of the colonies. They cut off communications so that the outer colonies could not warn the New United Nations of their arrival. During the way, they occupied the colonies under martial but fair rule, setting up a way of life they thought they'd be setting up throughout the rest of the solar system when the Nazzadi inevitably won. When the war ended, the Nazzadi pulled out and gave the colonies back to the New Earth Government and things progressed from there. The colonies got support during reconstruction after the First Arcanotech War so they could expand and become larger and more self-sufficient. In the ten years following the end of the Nazzadi threat, many people left to live off-world.

One of the things that made so many people want to venture out into the colonies was the massive military build-up along the outer colonies. The New Earth Government was determined to set up a perimeter in case the Migou ever decided to leave Pluto. Spy satellites were set up in an orbit tracking Pluto, far enough away that they couldn't just be shot down. Military patrols kept constant vigil and gigantic battlecruisers sailed the outer planets, intent on keeping all safe. They were an impressive display of force and it lulled many into a false sense of security. It also created a boom in population and the creation of local industry in the colonies.

With the additional support of the government, the colonies began to grow. They took on their own characters, and also their own needs, as they became more and more self-sufficient. As time went by, many began to believe that it didn't work to have the body that governed them so far away and so out of touch with what life was like for the colonists. Those sentiments soon grew among the colonies and the idea of some sort of autonomy grew from bar conversations to full-blown political activism. Just before the Second Arcanotech War, the issue had grown heated and political groups within the colonies had become very vocal. Unfortunately, it was never to be resolved.

The Migou came and they did not suffer from the warrior's code they'd given to the Nazzadi. They were hellbent on conquering the Earth and, perhaps just out of spite, decided to destroy all the colonies on their way through the solar system from Pluto. The last transmissions to Earth were difficult to understand, but it was clear the Migou had finally entered the equation, with far more power than anyone thought they could muster. The colonies on the Moon were evacuated to the Earth and it was assumed from the silence on the other end that the Migou had wiped out all other traces of humanity from the rest of the solar system.

Since then, there has been no communication or evidence to make the government believe that anyone in the colonies survived. The Migou have not allowed the New Earth Government to launch space exploration vehicles or probes either. These days, there are very few who wonder the fate of the colonies. Most simply mourn their loss.

The tears streamed down Vreta's face again. These days, it seemed like they never ended.

In public, he was as stoic as one can be. As one of the primary leaders of the Grand Nazzadi Armada and an honorable member of the Kulaki warrior tradition, it was unthinkable that Vreta would shed a tear for his enemy. Or at least it would be if all those things weren't lies.

The Nazzadi's mind wandered back in time, all the way back to his first terrifying memories. His first moments of consciousness, dripping with the slime of the cloning vats, implanted with the memories to understand who he was and why he'd been created. A Migou cloner pulled him out of the tube without any sort of compassion or care for this fully grown newborn, roughly carrying him to a warm but barren room. It ignored his questions, leaving him alone for hours. The disorientation and isolation was frightening and his implanted memories did little to comfort him.

Soon, others were brought in, others like him. More than a dozen, some men, some women. Each of them had slightly different memories, but all knew the knowledge they carried had been put in their heads. They'd never grown up. They'd been created.

The winged creatures that finally came to them seemed like gods, with powers beyond understanding. The Firstborn knew they had been made to lead an army, but the Migou told them even more. About how these Firstborn would be the mightiest of the mighty, the leaders of a ruthless army that would crush the enemies of their masters. About how they would live lives of renown and luxury and how millions would hang on their every word. All they had to do was to serve their creators without question. All they had to do was sell the lie to those who served them.

It wasn't much of a choice. After all, the Firstborn knew nothing else.

They sat by for years, as the Nazzadi race was rapidly created, helping indoctrinate the newcomers so that they would never know anything was amiss. The plan seemed perfect and the Firstborn were drunk on their power.

When Vreta had first arrived to Earth, he revelled at the chance to unleash his people upon what had been described to him as the barely sentient simians that had infested the Earth. His people were literally made for war, inside a perfect machine that would stop at nothing less than the enslavement of an entire planet. It was his glory to lead such a people on a righteous conquest, serving his masters and reaping his reward in flesh and blood.

Now it was as if someone had torn something out from inside him. There was a hole where his glory and bloodlust had once been. No longer was his position what mattered. No longer was his people's war what he desired. Now there was only despair.

The first time it happened, Vreta wondered if he was going mad. Watching intercepted transmissions and news reports was something he had done since the first days of

the war. It was his own personal form of gloating. For years he'd seen the same thing over and over, as the Nazzadi war machine took the New Earth Government apart piece by piece. This night was the same as any other. The Human news network showed footage of the devastation wrought by lightning Nazzadi raids. It showed the rows of covered corpses. It showed the pain and suffering of the survivors. Normally, a smile of contentment spread across Vreta's face as a warmth grew in his body. Normally, it was a comforting sensation. This day, however, the Nazzadi found it difficult to breathe.

It is, after all, hard to catch one's breath when one is sobbing.

Vreta turned off the screen, hid in bed, and pretended it never happened. He was convinced it was a one-time occurrence, a momentary lapse of reason. At least he was until it happened again a few days later.

Here he was again. Months later, still sobbing at the sight of the hell his warriors rained down on the Humans of Earth. He finally got it. It finally made sense.

These people weren't his enemies. They were his ancestors.

The alien insects that had created his people had to have gotten the template from somewhere, but that was a question he'd never been interested in asking. But something inside him recognized the truth. It was so obvious that he wondered why he hadn't figured it out earlier. The question now was, what did knowing the truth change?

Vreta's purpose for being was clear. He had been made by the Migou and charged with guiding their proxy army in the domination of the third planet from this system's sun. But what then? He and his fellow Firstborn had been promised power and privilege. But there was only one enemy to defeat. What was to come of his people then? What possible use would the Migou have for the Nazzadi when this war was over?





They would become the slaves that minded the slaves. Sadly, domination does not equal power, especially when the dominators are not themselves free.

Yet here they were. The Nazzadi were doing the job for which they had been created. They were winning. Despite the propaganda Vreta regularly watched on the Human transmissions, the New Earth Government was fighting a losing battle. Another couple of years and the Humans would be enslaved to the Nazzadi Empire.

Correction, they would be enslaved to the lie of the Nazzadi Empire, who were the unwitting pawns of the Migou of Pluto.

Vreta's people deserved better. They deserved more than this pointless existence spent destroying an enemy that wasn't even theirs. They deserved more than to live a lie.

The debate inside Vreta finally ended. He had wrestled with this decision for weeks. Whether to be the loyal slave who held a special place in his masters' plans or betray his creators and unveil the lie. Whether to walk the definite path for which he was designed or to toss it all to the wind and live in a world where nothing was certain.

In the end, it wasn't really even a question. It might devastate the Nazzadi, but it was worth the risk.

Vreta wanted to give his people something of which they could be proud. He wanted to give them something they had never had. He wanted to give them a choice.

It was time for a revelation, the kind no one would ever forget. Vreta's only question now was whether or not he had the strength to carry through with it.

chapter three

CHILDREN OF NOWHERE

What must it be like to wake up one day to discover that everything you've ever known has been a lie? That is what the Nazzadi had to face when it was finally revealed to them that they were a created race of clones designed to serve a race of inhuman aliens. It is remarkable that they have not only endured the suffering thrust upon their race, but that they have found a place on the Earth and thrived.

In this chapter, we will explore the jet black-skinned people known as the Nazzadi in detail.

A BRIEF HISTORY FOR A SHORT-LIVED RACE

When humanity embraced arcanotechnology, they suddenly became a threat to the Migou's perceived place in the universe. This was entirely unexpected. They had always regarded the semi-evolved creatures of Earth that claimed to be sentient as nothing more than clever hairless primates that now walked on two legs. Now those same primates commanded cosmic forces they had no business commanding. They were going to do something dangerous and stupid and it might affect the Migou. It was time to stop skulking around the planet and finally take it over, before the inevitable happened.

However, the Migou weren't ready for a war and didn't have the resources to fight it themselves. Migou physiology isn't like other species' physiology and it would take them decades to breed soldiers. They needed to act as quickly as possible. Their mastery of Human DNA and nanotech manufacturing led them to believe that they could clone, age, and equip a cloned army in only a couple of years. The plan for the Nazzadi began.

The Firstborn were the genetic prototypes for all Nazzadi. They were paragons of their race – beautiful, strong, healthy, and fast. They were, however, naive, knowing nothing of the universe and to them the Migou were like gods. It wasn't difficult for them to take on the role for which they were created, to be tools to conquer an errant planet and keep their siblings unaware of the truth. They were shown media of the greatest of Earth's leaders and military masterminds, and were crafted to be powerful and inspiring leaders.

The Migou had advanced manufacturing techniques that allowed them to make everything for the Nazzadi. The entire war machine was made before the Firstborn were decanted from their cloning vats. Thus, there was never the problem of the Nazzadi knowing Pluto. The cloned army was decanted, implanted with false knowledge and memory, and then sent on their way believing that they had just passed Pluto on their way into the solar system. Only the Firstborn, of all the Nazzadi, ever saw their creators.

Since part of fighting is muscle memory and trained reflex, the training regimens on board the fleet during the months it took to get to Earth were strict and grueling. The clones had the memories to impart the knowledge, but their bodies had to get used to

the practice. No one aboard questioned this, and the few doctors that got inquisitive about findings that were not quite right were quietly executed by the Firstborn.

The lie that motivated the Nazzadi to attack Earth was religious in nature. According to their faith, Korali or The Way, the Nazzadi were the perfect creations of the gods whose holy duty it was to enslave or destroy all other imperfect creations in the universe. It was their own form of Manifest Destiny and it gave them an absolutely unshakable reason to start a needless war.

The First Arcanotech War was in no uncertain terms brutal. It was six years of hell the likes of which the world had never seen. From an eagle's eye view, the Nazzadi fought an honorable war, refraining from attacking strictly civilian targets, never using biological warfare, and treating prisoners of war with care. That meant little to the people who had to live in fear of another lightning-fast Nazzadi assault. They destroyed their targets with ruthless efficiency and were thorough in their destruction. Part of their war was psychological as they worked to demoralize the New United Nations and later the New Earth Government, attacking with a ferocity that inspired shock and awe.

The world still bears the scars of the First Arcanotech War. There are cities that no longer exist because of the Nazzadi's attack. New York City, the seat of the New Earth Government, was all but wiped off the map. The New York that exists nowadays is an entirely new city, built almost from scratch. Arkham, Massachusetts, home of the Ashcroft Foundation, was likewise leveled by the Nazzadi in hopes of crushing arcanotechnological development. That city is gone, with no current hopes of ever being rebuilt – on its site stands only a war memorial. These are but two of the dozen or so cities decimated by the war.

The two primary Nazzadi generals were Vreta and Kyrza, brothers of the Firstborn. They were both striking figures and imposing presences, but the two were very different, even in appearance. Vreta was a man who led by example, dark-haired with boyish looks. No matter what he saw or was forced to do, there was always something innocent in him, as if in another life he would preserve life instead of taking it. He inspired respect in his subordinates that ran deep, almost to the point of being familial. He was thoughtful in his action and careful in his execution. Kyrza, on the other hand, was a man who led through fear, white-haired, handsome, but who carried a weight of an age beyond his years. It was he who spearheaded the policy of enemy demoralization, a man who revelled in the terror of his enemies as well as the fearful respect of his subordinates. Though mostly diligent in his strategy, Kyrza couldn't stand to lose and would continue to throw resources and troops at battles he'd already lost. Though only two of the dozens of Firstborn, Vreta and Kyrza were the two most looked to for leadership.

Then, one night five years into the conflict, Vreta sat in his quarters looking down on the Earth from orbit. As he watched intercepted media reports from the New Earth Government, something struck him on such a core level it moved him to tears. It

was finally so clear to him. The Humans he was killing were his genetic ancestors and his people had more in common with them than they did their inhuman creators. The war he waged was someone else's war. For the first time, Vreta realized that he could choose, that he didn't have to fight for the Migou. He could reveal to his people the truth and let them decide for themselves what their fate would be. It would shake the Nazzadi in unimaginable ways, but it was time. This senseless war was going to end and he was going to stop it, even if it killed him.

The Nazzadi still celebrate Revelation Day. On October 25th, 2064, Vreta addressed the whole of the Nazzadi forces and told them the truth. At first, it was met with disbelief, but then Vreta and his supporters disseminated all the evidence they'd killed to suppress. The Nazzadi began to believe. It was chaos during those first few weeks and to the Earth it seemed as if their attackers had just stopped. Most Nazzadi sat in stunned stupors, trying to digest that everything they knew was a lie. Many killed themselves, unable to cope with their new reality. It was Vreta again that brought his people out of the pit of despair. He knew that he had to give them a purpose, some sort of direction on which to focus, so he presented a scenario to them. He asked them to give up this ridiculous war, to make peace with their so-called enemies, and to ask for a place on this planet – a place where, at least on a genetic level, they belonged.

Kyrsa had kept quiet during Vreta's rebellion, but could no longer. He spoke out against his brother and argued for continuing loyalty to the Migou. The creatures had given the Nazzadi life and they owed them for that. He also played on the fear that their mythical almost god-like creators would find a way to punish them for such blasphemy, if such a contingency hadn't already been planned for. Kyrsa gave the Nazzadi people his own idea of a place – the place they already occupied. There was no reason, in his mind, to give up what they already had and knew. It wasn't a lie if they were living it, was it? Besides, most sentient creatures quested to know their creators and in that the Nazzadi had a distinct advantage. Kyrsa played off fears and disorientation to keep the Nazzadi loyal, though his true motivations were solely selfish. In a world of peace, he would no longer command the power to which he had become accustomed and he would curry much favor with his masters if he kept this war on track.

Three-quarters of the Nazzadi chose to follow Vreta, with the other quarter flocking to Kyrsa. No surprise, it was Kyrsa that fired the first shot, starting the six month-long Nazzadi Civil War. While the rebellious Nazzadi were still disoriented, Kyrsa and his Loyalists took the opportunity to stab them in the back. Many rebels died in the first days of the Civil War. However, Vreta rallied his followers as quickly as he could and mounted a formidable defense. To the New Earth Government, it seemed like a miracle, for the truth was that they were losing the war. The invaders turned in on themselves.

The Loyalists fought like rabid dogs, but ultimately they were outnumbered and outgunned. Many Loyalists saw the writing on the wall and fled planet-side to form resistance cells that

would plague the New Earth Government for years. However, it was the Battle of Nazzadi-occupied Melbourne, Australia that broke the Loyalists' back. After an epic battle, Kyrsa was killed by an elite strike force of rebellious Nazzadi and without his fiery leadership, the Loyalists were done. Those that still had the will to fight fragmented into cells and those that did not surrendered to be tried for war crimes. Some managed to commandeer a Nazzadi ship in an attempt to go back to Pluto. Regardless, the First Arcanotech War was soon over.

Within a year, terms of peace were negotiated between the New Earth Government and the Nazzadi. On September 17th, 2065, the Shaumberg Treaty was signed, making the Nazzadi an official part of the New Earth Government. They were given the island of Cuba on which to settle, with Haiti as a staging ground for the displaced people.

The years that followed were not easy. Despite the fact that they were lied to and manipulated, the Nazzadi had killed a lot of people with their war and many Humans found it difficult to forgive and accept them. While the New Earth Government rebuilt, the Nazzadi tried to find a place in the world and a new identity for themselves of their own design. They endured nearly a decade of racial difficulties, segregations, and discrimination.

Ten years after the signing of the Shaumberg Treaty, almost to the day, the Migou came to finish the job they'd sent the Nazzadi to do. The Hive Ship left Pluto and the New Earth Government knew what was coming. Any former Nazzadi soldier who was still eligible to fight joined the Armed Forces, along with many new recruits, all determined to repel their former masters and defend what was now their true and only home. No one has ever fought the Migou with such fury as the Nazzadi and no one despises the Loyalists that have joined them with such fiery hatred.

However, in the face of a mutual enemy and a threat of gigantic proportions, the balance finally shifted. As Nazzadi took up arms alongside his Human cousins, the space that separated the two disappeared. Humanity gave up its anger against the Nazzadi as they banded together for survival. The two became a united people, the people of the New Earth Government and the people of Earth.

Over the last decade, since the invasion of the Migou, the influence of the Nazzadi has filtered across the New Earth Government. Their contribution can be seen and felt in many walks of life, from military technology to art to fashion to pop culture. They have had twenty years to begin to create their own unique identity. The Nazzadi do have a culture to call their own, though it is influenced by, mingles with, and compliments the culture of the race that graciously took them in.

Now the Nazzadi are considered a part of the indigenous peoples of Earth. They are 40% of the population, making them barely a minority. As a homogenous people, they outnumber any single one of the Human races. They are an everyday sight and an everyday part of life in the Strange Aeon.



THE OLD WAYS

The Nazzadi claimed the name of their home world in the Pleiades star cluster as their own. Nazzadi was a twilight world where most of the life had adapted to be nocturnal, including the sentient race that dominated it. The world was smaller than Earth, but similar in gravity and climate. The Nazzadi developed as so many other sentient lifeforms do, experimenting with culture, government, and religion. As they become more and more civilized, the people came to worship a pantheon of deities, each representing an aspect or spirit of nature. This unifying faith kept the Nazzadi as one people and guided their racial consciousness. It became known as Korali, or simply “The Way.”

Over the generations, monks and prophets communed with their gods. Their vision quests showed them the will of the divine and the special destiny of their children. The gods had created many children on many different worlds, but each of them was imperfect. That is, until the gods created the Nazzadi. Now the gods wished their perfect children to go out into the universe and bring the other races of the universe under their guidance – whether or not it was wanted. It was their divine duty and the thing that ultimately drove them into the skies.

Developing ion drives that were capable of propelling them through subspace at faster-than-light speeds, the Nazzadi ventured out into the universe. The first worlds they discovered were still developing and were easily brought under the enlightened domination of the Nazzadi. Worlds after that proved more difficult, causing the war machine to evolve. Conquering world after world, the Nazzadi brought peace in the name of the divine.

The Nazzadi developed an advanced culture for themselves, worthy of The Way. They governed themselves through a carefully engineered socialism. Material possessions and individual accomplishment were secondary in comparison to integration and contribution to the whole. With a one-world government, a unifying religion, and no appreciable racial diversity, the Nazzadi never had to face many of the problems other worlds have. Art and business were cultural focuses, with the Nazzadi occupying distinguished positions – they had slaves from other worlds for menial tasks.

The imperatives of Korali were few. As long as certain small rituals were observed – such as birth, wedding, and funeral ceremonies, and seasonal holy days – and the faith was kept, the Nazzadi were assured their place in a paradise-like afterlife. There were no strictures built into The Way that could force the Nazzadi to hate one another, unlike the religions of Earth, and they suffered little social strife because of it. There was also no punitive afterlife for the unbeliever – they simply cease to be upon death. However, those who died in the divine pursuit of The Way earned a special place in the afterlife, which led to a robust military steeped in tradition.

The Nazzadi military was based around a bushido-like code of conduct which espoused loyalty and tradition. Loyalty including not only allegiance to one’s own people, but also the knowing of and obeying one’s place and station, the veneration of age

and wisdom in elders, and the respect of other warriors – even those from other worlds and cultures. There was no place for the blindly ambitious or the “social climber” within the Nazzadi military. They were also fanatical about the customs and rituals of their warrior traditions, into which all Nazzadi soldiers were organized.

A soldier’s tradition supplanted nearly everything in his life, including family. Once a young warrior had completed a year of basic training, he petitioned to be a part of the tradition of his choice. This process involved extensive tests and interviews. If finally accepted, the tradition became that soldier’s extended family. Each tradition had their own customs and rituals, but all under the over-arching cultural aegis of the military.

Once accepted into a tradition, blood family remained important but distant. Children of military parents were raised in collectives most of the time anyway, often only spending a few days at a time with their biological parents. A Nazzadi child’s instructors along with the mentors and peers within his tradition became as much family as biological relatives. Those children growing up within the military often began some sort of combat training very young, sometimes as young as four. Even with a life of training, some level of maturity was required to become a part of a tradition. Some were ready at sixteen, others at eighteen, with females typically sooner than males.

Traditions were typically divided by military specialty. One tradition would focus on the piloting of mecha of a certain kind, another would focus on a particular infantry specialty, another on covert operations, another for a particular kind of service on capital ships, and on and on. Rank created a rigid structure and was usually associated with age and, if not, with merit. While intense pride was fostered, rivalries of any kind were discouraged – even the friendly ones. Practically, a soldier’s tradition was his advanced and continuing training program, in addition to being his extended family. While warriors were eventually assigned to units and deployed, they spent at least one weekend a month with the others from their tradition.

There was no discrimination in the Nazzadi military with regards to gender. However, the different inherent advantages of each gender were taken into account. Females are typically equipped with better natural reflexes and accuracy, so they were often encouraged to become pilots, snipers, or heavy weapons support. Males are typically stronger and more aggressive, so they were often encouraged to become infantry, special forces, or tacticians. Both genders were represented in all specialties, but tendencies are tendencies.

Just as art was one of the most valued things in Nazzadi culture, so was it among the military. However, killing became the most vaunted art form among warriors. Martial arts, particularly the style known as Hun-Zuti, were held in high regard. While it was important to be an efficient killer inside a big machine, the art lay in being lethal up close and personal. In some traditions, the pursuit of the killing arts became so integral that they held blood

rituals, some going so far as to drink the blood of their fallen enemies. It should be noted that even these blood drinkers treated their foes with the utmost respect and their blood was revered in the rituals – a concept difficult for outsiders to grasp.

Of course, it was all a lie, fabricated by an alien species hiding below the surface of Pluto. The only ones who knew the truth were the Firstborn, those Nazzadi who were the first to be decanted from the cloning vats. They were promised luxury, armies to command, and worlds to conquer. Those that refused were promptly killed. Those that accepted became the highest ranking Nazzadi officers, coordinating the Migou’s ultimate plan – the invasion and subjugation of Earth.

Every generation of Nazzadi decanted from the vats after that was programmed with fictional memories to support their fabricated reality. So convincing were the memory implants and the constant cover-up by the Firstborn that almost a billion Nazzadi warriors never even suspected that something was amiss.

It should be obvious to the outside scholar that the Migou simply took elements from Earth cultures and militaries to create a fictional society that they could control and that would meet their needs as a martial force. Unsurprisingly, this was not lost on the Firstborn when they began to study their enemies in earnest and something that contributed to the rebellion of the Nazzadi against their creators.

Regarding the invasion of Earth, the Nazzadi believed that a scouting party had discovered the planet and its inhabitants, bringing back intelligence for the invasion. However, once they arrived, something unforeseen happened to their ion drives once they entered this solar system. Something in the ambient radiation made their drives go haywire and made it impossible for them to enter subspace. Essentially, they were trapped here until they could fix them. Throughout the years of the First Arcanotech War, the Firstborn covered up any real breakthrough with regards to repair and fed the lie that the resources they needed must be on the Earth. Of course, the subspace component of their ion drives never worked and they had never been beyond this solar system.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of the Nazzadi people is that there were a limited number of memory implants. While the personal details may differ, the broad strokes of those with the same memory implant are the same. Those that were teens and children during the First Arcanotech War have been affected less, as fewer years of their memories are fake. However, the older generations have felt this impact the greatest as they sit down to talk and discover that two of them have differing memories from only the last thirty years.

Today, it is a common misconception among Humans that all Nazzadi culture was designed around the military. This is not true, even according to the memory implants in cloned Nazzadi. However, the majority of the Nazzadi that came to Earth were soldiers, so the military culture was a major influence at first.

INTEGRATION

It's been just a little more than two decades since the First Arcanotech War ended. Those who have seen each of those years sometimes look at the world today and wonder how a species that came to our planet seeking our destruction and subjugation became our best friends so quickly.

The years after the end of the First Arcanotech War in 2065 were difficult for everyone. The Nazzadi killed millions of people during the six year war and that favor was returned by the New Earth Government in kind. Turning enemies into friends wasn't going to be an easy task.

Something that stood in the favor of the Nazzadi was that they had fought what might be euphemistically termed a "clean" war. After all, part of their falsified culture was to respect those they fought. The Nazzadi did not intentionally attack civilians, they treated prisoners of war well, and they perpetrated no war crimes. Killing is still killing, but on the level of war it really does matter how one does it. The way the Nazzadi fought, combined with the fact they had been tricked into fighting in the first place, did much for their cause after their surrender.

However, that was just a nicety for the people once the fighting had stopped. The real reason the New Earth Government was eager to forge peace was that the Nazzadi were winning the First Arcanotech War – a fact on which the news did not report entirely accurately. A superior force with advanced technology was willing to surrender and share their technology as allies in exchange for a place to live. To the politicians who had to make the decision, it was clear what was the most advantageous course of action.

The Nazzadi had plenty of their own psychological issues with which to deal. It was quite a blow to them when they discovered that most of their memories were lies, on top of learning that they were merely created to be tools of alien insects. Many Nazzadi suffered nervous breakdowns during those early years, and many more committed suicide.

The pheromones of the two races must be almost identical, because it didn't take much time for the adventurous to explore romance. Before anyone had a chance to have an opinion about interracial dating, children had already been conceived. Human-Nazzadi relationships were difficult in those days and the couple could expect to be virtually ostracized from both of their cultures. However, love is love and such couples paved the way for the more common intermixed relationships of today.

Almost four hundred million Nazzadi refugees flooded out into the world, most into the major cities. Fortunately, it was a time to rebuild, so expansion to accommodate the new population was easy. The problem came in that most Human families didn't want Nazzadi living in their neighborhoods. They didn't trust their "alien" cousins and frankly the jet-black skinned people scared the children. The New Earth Government knew it couldn't force the integration initiative any more than they already had – just getting the people to accept the Nazzadi into their cities was

enough. Thus, many of the jet-black people had to move into ghettos, populated by only their own.

Nazzadi ghettos may have started out as what was once termed "low-income housing," but the ways cities were being incorporated into arcologies rapidly elevated their status. Though socially segregated from the Human population, the Nazzadi ghettos were no more or less comfortable or luxurious than the rest of the city. However, the Nazzadi were pretty much trapped there for quite a while. They didn't leave the ghetto except for work or important appointments and they weren't welcome at most Human establishments. They clustered together while using public transportation, creating as much of a buffer between them and the Humans as they could. The Nazzadi became an equal, but separate people, but they had found a place to live and some measure of acceptance.

Then, of course, there was Nazza-Duhni. The Schaumberg Treaty called for the creation of a Nazzadi state, a place the people could call their own. Unfortunately, it was the Cubans who got kicked out of their own country to make space for the jet-black clones, while the Haitians saw their country turn into a staging and buffer zone. This furthered tensions between the two people. While some could see the legitimacy of such a diplomatic concession, others were aghast that the government would treat its own people with that much disrespect – especially for a race that had been trying to kill them. Despite the fact that the Nazzadi eventually brought new prosperity to their part of the world, most simply chose to be angry with them in the meantime.

While society worked itself out, there were those who could not accept what was happening. Some were those whose families had been killed during the First Arcanotech War and some were soldiers who couldn't let go. Others were simply bigots, while others were fueled by the fires of religions who were threatened in the face of extraterrestrial life. Regardless, they all wanted one thing – the Nazzadi gone or dead. Groups like the Human Liberation Front or the Homeland Security Force began to pop up, terrorist organizations bent on perpetrating hate crimes on the Nazzadi population. Soon, Nazzadi were being attacked and killed, ghettos were being burned, and racial tensions escalated to critical levels.

The Nazzadi were not willing to take the hatred sitting down. They began para-military watch groups in the ghettos, unafraid to deal with Human trouble-makers. It became so that it was not necessarily safe to be Nazzadi in the Human parts of town, but definitely not safe if you were a Human in the Nazzadi part of town. The government did what it could to settle things down, speaking out against violence on both sides, but it did little to alter things. The laws for equality were already in place, but laws mean little when the people have no intention of following them.

Many Nazzadi demanded that they be allowed to immigrate to Nazza-Duhni, despite the Nazzadi government's policy of integration into the Human world. Nazza-Duhni also did not have

the space or infrastructure to accommodate every Nazzadi who wished to live on their own island. Regardless of those factors, the terrorists did not leave Nazza-Duhni alone. In fact, it became a primary target of violence, something that riled the Nazzadi up even further.

However, it was Red Tuesday that was the atrocity that was the final straw. On February 12th, 2069, members of the Homeland Security Force simultaneously coordinated attacks on Nazzadi passenger planes approaching the Miami and Houston airports. They had planted people in the air traffic control centers, forcing two Nazzadi jumbo-jets and a couple Nazza-Duhni freight transports into a holding pattern, while other terrorists used stolen surface-to-air missiles to blow them out of the sky. More than 700 Nazzadi men, women, and children were killed that day and violent and ugly riots immediately followed in nearly every major city.

The Nazzadi responded with equally lethal retaliation. The Verari, or Lost Angels, was the first Nazzadi terrorist group to respond. In an equally despicable act, the Verari blew up two secondary schools, killing an equal number of Human students and faculty. The New Earth Government had to declare martial law, institute a curfew, and send military patrols out to keep order in the streets. Many were arrested, many were tried, but no matter what justice was served, the people on both sides cried for blood. It was a dark time and many lost hope that the two races would ever be able to live together without violence.

Inspired by the peaceful movement started by Vreta, the newly formed Nazzadi Anti-Defamation League (NADL) stepped to the plate to manage the fallout. They were a group of intelligent people who believed in making the system work for them, lobbying the government, applying social pressures, propagating media campaigns, and meeting with the people. Each of their intentions honorable and each of their actions respectable, they quickly became the popular defenders of the people. Peace and understanding were the primary messages of the NADL, in order to create a world where two species could coexist – and maybe even contribute to one another. They began to open offices in every major city, so that their presence was felt and that those who had been victimized would have a place to file their grievances where they would be heard.

Several important leaders distinguished themselves during this time. Former Field Marshal Vreta, the man who set the Nazzadi free, became the first Member of Parliament for Nazza-Duhni. He rapidly positioned himself as the outspoken leader for Nazzadi rights, calling for a policy of peaceful integration. His moving speeches and tireless advocacy led many to liken him to Dr. Martin Luther King. While Vreta remains a respected MP, his primary focus is no longer Human-Nazzadi relations, though he continues to seek ways for the two people to coexist with even more synergy. Opposite Vreta was Terily, a decorated ace mecha pilot from the war. She preached a kind of racial pride that tolerated no attacks, an eye-for-an-eye attitude. Those who followed her became known as the Unamani, or Black Tide, a militant

organization unafraid of stirring the racially boiling pot. Terily found herself imprisoned many times, but each time only made her more of a hero to her people. Both have had to survive multiple assassination attempts and were primary targets of hate groups for almost a decade.

It was perhaps only the two years prior to the start of the Second Arcanotech War that racial tensions began to subside. It was if, after all the fighting, that people just didn't want to fight anymore. The efforts of Vreta and the NADL, among others, began to pay off and the violence dwindled. Some people's attitudes began to change, a product of widespread media campaigns, while those who held on to their hatred at least stopped needing to express it or share it. There may have still been tension, but at least there was finally peace.

Then, the New Earth Government discovered that something enormous had left Pluto and was on a direct course for Earth. Nazzadi Firstborn military advisors confirmed it – it was the Migou, most likely coming to finish the job they'd sent the Nazzadi to start. After months of debate, the New Earth Government decided that this was not a fact they could conceal from the people. Another war was coming, this one perhaps even more devastating than the one they had just fought. The Firstborn became a central part of the preparation, something the media reported on when the news finally started to come out. This alone was something that earned the Nazzadi a new level of respect and eased racial tensions for the first time in almost a decade.

The final thing that sealed the full integration of the Nazzadi into the New Earth Government was the arrival of their creators. In the face of monsters and a war with a technologically and mystically superior alien race, the plight of the Nazzadi became much more understandable to the Human population. Their new brethren had been tricked in the first place, rebelled against their creators and destroyed those of their own who still wanted to fight, had to find their own way with nothing to guide them, then been treated poorly by the Earth's inhabitants for ten years, only to throw themselves fully into the coming conflict, ready to stand side-by-side and fight for the planet. It didn't take long before the race issue died off entirely.

These days, the Nazzadi are a fully accepted part of society and no one bats an eye. They are business and political leaders, an integral part of the military, and contributing members of their communities. Four out of every ten people in the New Earth Government are Nazzadi. The ghettos still exist, but they are now called neighborhoods and are celebrated parts of culture. Nazzadi and Humans live together in all parts of the world with little conflict. Only those small-minded bigots or some of the soldiers who suffered during the First Arcanotech War cannot let go and still hold a grudge.

Inadvertently, the Migou had given us our greatest allies in the war against them, something they do not let the Nazzadi forget whenever they attack.

NAZZA-DUHNI

A critical part of the Schaumberg Treaty was the establishment of a Nazzadi state. If the “alien” race was going to call the Earth their home, they needed a home within that home to call their own. After all, everyone knew that it was unlikely that the people of Earth were going to accept those that had been trying to murder them, regardless of the reason or circumstance. The problem the New Earth Government faced was where to put them. Pretty much every square inch of the globe had been claimed by one nation or the other and none would be eager to give up what little sovereignty they had left under a one-world government. It was a long and difficult decision, during which time the Nazzadi waited patiently in their remaining bases and on their fleet in orbit.

It was ultimately decided that it was Cuba that was to be forced to take the displaced people. No one knows how it was decided and stories run wild, from flipping coins to throwing darts. However, there are many good reasons why Cuba would be a candidate. It was a large island that shared no borders, one that could conceivably hold the Nazzadi people. It was in the backyard of the heart of the New Earth Government, where they could keep an eye on their newfound partners. It would be difficult to defend if the Nazzadi got out of hand. The economy of Cuba was in shambles and the island suffered from a lower standard of living than other parts of the world. Furthermore, Cuban culture had always been a melting pot – but this kind of melting would require a big pot.

The Cubans were given a choice. Either accept the immigration and rule of the new Nazzadi nation or be funded by the government to move themselves, their families, and businesses to Florida, Haiti, Jamaica, or the former Dominican Republic. They were furious. There were protests and riots and movements and everything one might imagine would come from the displacement of a people – much the way the Palestinians once felt about the Israelis. In the end, there was no choice. 70% of the population grudgingly left, while 30% stubbornly stayed.

The Nazzadi finally came to their new home. However, the new Nazzadi government created a lottery system of who would colonize Cuba and who would go out into the other cities of the New Earth Government – it did not work for them to hide. 60% of the almost billion Nazzadi came to Cuba and immediately renamed it the nation of Nazza-Duhni, a hybrid word meaning home of the people.

The island immediately suffered from massive overpopulation. While Cuba was designed to accommodate around 15,000,000 people, suddenly nearly 600,000,000 people descended upon it. There was more than enough land, but there was not the infrastructure or housing to make things work during the early years. Things were rough and the New Earth Government had to implement aggressive expansion plans to make the island habitable for the Nazzadi people. For years, many Nazzadi lived in what can only be observed to be a state of poverty. Shantytowns and soup kitchens were the norm, though the spirit of the Nazzadi never faltered. This was their home now, their first real home.

While integration was difficult for many years, the industrious Nazzadi, backed by assistance from the New Earth Government, brought Nazza-Duhni from poverty to prosperity. In fact, the island enjoys a level of development and prosperity the likes of which it has never seen. Major industry, tourism, cosmopolitan cities, a leader in world trends – this is the Nazza-Duhni of today. The remaining Cuban residents were at odds with the Nazzadi at first, but were quickly won over as their wallets fattened and their quality of life dramatically increased. Tensions waned year by year, until the Second Arcanotech War when they disappeared altogether.

The capital of Klarra-Baki, formerly Santa Clara, is the most recognized geocity in the world. Like an arcology, a geocity is a city in a building, but one that burrows into the earth instead of rising into the sky. Arcology residents have to deal with fake weather and sun patterns already, so being underground doesn't present much additional challenge. There are those who believe that the geocity is a much more efficient and safe way to house large numbers of people than a traditional arcology. It is far more difficult to sneak into one, as security is tight across the few entrances and exits. It is also less vulnerable to outside attack. There are only a handful in the New Earth Government, though Klarra-Baki provides an argument to create more.

Despite the threat of the Aeon War, Nazza-Duhni is still a place of hope. The Nazzadi have gone through so much that they believe anything is possible, even an end to this war. The cities of Nazza-Duhni continue to celebrate with a lust for life, industry keeps on moving, and the beautiful, well-guarded beaches continue to be filled with throngs of people. If it weren't for the constant state of military readiness and extensive security, one might even be able to forget about the horrors of the world there.

The culture of Nazza-Duhni is Nazzadi, everywhere. There is little of the original Cuban culture left on the island. Non-Nazzadi residents are less than one in ten. Most businesses are Nazzadi businesses, entertainment is geared toward them, and the military that protects them is almost exclusively Nazzadi. Anything that is not geared towards the Nazzadi is geared towards the island's robust tourist trade. It is, no doubt, the center of Nazzadi culture and the place where new aspects of their identity are forming year after year.

In 2085, the government of Nazza-Duhni decided to make the city of Havana the first fully clothing-optional city in the New Earth Government. This new deregulation meant that anyone could freely go naked anywhere. The primary reasoning behind this legislation was to increase tourism during the Earth Brotherhood Festival, which is held annually in the city to celebrate the ongoing partnership between the Nazzadi and Humans. The turnout that year was outstanding as people flocked to the tropical climate of what was once Cuba to celebrate freedom and partnership while partying down without any clothes. The native Nazzadi have embraced the city's new tradition and it still enjoys an above average level of tourism – something that suits the residents just fine.

PHYSIOLOGY & PSYCHOLOGY

The Migou did not try to break new ground when they designed the Nazzadi. They wanted an army they could create quickly and Human DNA offered them the opportunity to do that. However, the bugs wanted their creation to strike fear into their enemies, without significant modification to the DNA that might complicate the process. The first choice was to create a creature that was designed to operate best at night. Less than half of all life on Earth is designed to function during the day, and the dark is something of which most people have some kind of primal fear. Thus, the Nazzadi have jet-black skin and eyes that can see in the dark. Throw red eyes in there that shine against directed light and you've got something that fits the scary niche in the Human psyche.

While their design might seem nocturnal, the Migou did something interesting to the Nazzadi's internal clock – they eliminated it. Nazzadi do not have a naturally occurring activity/rest cycle. While Humans are designed to wake up with the rising sun and sleep when it gets dark, the Nazzadi can set their own schedules. As long as they get the proper amount of sleep (8-9 hours a day), their activity cycle can be any time of day. Of course, Nazzadi function best when in a consistent pattern, so most choose a sleep pattern than works best with their chosen vocation.

There are those that have wondered why the Nazzadi have sharp incisors. Some would think that if the Migou wanted to make their creations scarier to Humans they should have given them fangs. However, it would seem that the Migou wanted to give their creations some kind of natural weapon that wouldn't require much genetic modification. It didn't really work. Nazzadi teeth are great for eating and are likely to draw blood if they are used to nip, but that's pretty much it. They would be considered a design flaw, but one that was not pressing enough to stop production.

While Humans display a remarkable array of physical tendencies, the Nazzadi are universally more agile and graceful. The Migou wanted to enhance their creations in a way that would help them maneuver through the heavier gravity environment of Earth. It seemed only natural to gift them in this way.

Inside, Nazzadi and Humans are almost identical. They have all the same organs that even look the same and they all do the same things. There are a few things in different places and a few systems are tweaked – adjustments the Migou made feeling our physiologies to be flawed. However, things like having a heart that's an inch to the right or a more rapid satiation response from the stomach or less unnecessary body hair don't make all that much of a difference. As for sexual reproduction, the two races are identical, right down to a nine month gestation cycle.

One area that is of significant importance is with regards towards cell division. The Migou coded something into Nazzadi genes that makes it far less likely for their cells to divide and mutate in an out of control fashion – they are far less prone to cancer. Fortunately, arcanotherapy has eliminated cancer pretty much altogether, which puts everybody on a level playing field.

Contrary to popular belief, the Nazzadi are not more physically attractive than Humans. They too come in all shapes and sizes. This misconception comes from the Nazzadi cultural norms of keeping fit and wearing revealing clothing.

Perhaps the most fundamental difference in the psychology of the Nazzadi is with regards to identification – having tastes or things that define a person's identity. Humans are masters of identification. When one gets to know a person, a huge chunk of their sense of self is wrapped up in the things he identifies himself with. Humans identify themselves by almost everything in their environment, from their race and gender, to their jobs, to their level of income, to their significant other, to the type of coffee they drink, to their favorite sports teams, to the car they drive, to the type of computer they use – and the list goes on and on. If there is one thing that the Nazzadi don't particularly care for about Humans, it's this. They think it's kind of ridiculous.

The Nazzadi don't over-identify. Most believe that this is in response to being part of race that suddenly discovered it didn't have anything with which to identify. A Nazzadi's sense of self is primarily determined by internal factors, though they still do identify with their race, gender, jobs, and families. A Nazzadi's identity is a function of experience with little attachment to the world.

Attachment – another place where the Nazzadi differ from Humans. Humans get attached to things, ideas, or people, and when those things, ideas, or people leave their lives, they become very upset. A Human might suffer a wealth of negative emotions upon discovering that he has misplaced and can no longer find his baby pictures. In that same situation, a Nazzadi might be a little disappointed, but is happy he got to have them at all and that he still has all his childhood stories to tell that were passed on by his parents. Of course, Nazzadi still feel the emotional impact when a person leaves their lives, such as in a break-up or a death, but the experience is different. Humans not only have to deal with the emotional impact, they have to deal with the additional feelings of loss that come from their attachments.

The Nazzadi are also more comfortable with the idea of uncertainty. Humans do not like to be uncertain. They like to know that their significant other will be there when they get home, that they have a predictable job to which they can go that will pay them, they like to know how much money is coming in-over time so they can plan, and more. Perhaps the most profound place in which Humans cannot abide uncertainty is with regards to their place in the universe. Even in the Strange Aeon, where religion has greatly diminished, most Humans have some kind of personally defined spirituality. Most Nazzadi are fine with uncertainty. They have a deep-seated belief that as long as they are alive and capable, they will be able to deal with whatever comes. It might not always be pleasant, but they'll be able to handle it. In fact, sometimes the greatest things happen when one is uncertain of the future. They also have no need for spirituality, but that does not mean that there aren't many Nazzadi who hold some kind of deep belief in something greater.

THE CHOSEN WAY

For a time after the Nazzadi rebellion, they clung to their old ways to keep some sense of balance. Their world, after all, had gone mad – it's quite a blow to discover your memories are lies and everything you thought you knew were simply mechanisms of control. They needed some kind of stability.

However, the Nazzadi soon found that they'd rather reject the old lies than fake their way through another day. The race began to explore Human history and culture with a ravenous appetite. For a time, the Nazzadi essentially tried to become Human out of their identity crisis. Strong pride and racial tensions after the First Arcanotech War made this road difficult, however, and the Nazzadi then adopted the trait that would ultimately help define them – mixing and matching things in unusual, but workable fashions.

The older generations are mostly former military and the old traditions still influence their world. The fabricated warrior traditions still exist for these generations, but the retired crews now meet more as a social club, much like the American VFW in days gone by. This old guard is a proud group who finds it difficult to give up what was so ingrained in them, but not proud enough to not be humbly grateful to the New Earth Government for taking them in. Many carry a burden of guilt, as they were the ones “righteously” slaughtering their new brothers during the First Arcanotech War.

The younger generations are split. Some of them were born within the invading Nazzadi fleet, though they don't suffer their parents' horror about being clones. Some have memories of the martial traditions, but were young enough that their customs were not ingrained in them. Others of the young were born on Earth, the first Nazzadi to be truly free from the Migou's lie. This freedom is a privilege, one that they understand and respect. It is from these younger generations that a unique Nazzadi culture is being born – something the older Nazzadi respect and give their children the freedom to do.

Something of their false heritage the Nazzadi have not been able or willing to lose is their language. Those who were clones speak it as their first language, those born on the fleet speak both Nazzadi and English, and the younger generations aren't taught it when they're growing up. One would think that it would be dying off generation after generation, but instead the Nazzadi keep it alive. Even younger generations who have been raised speaking English often take the time to learn a little Nazzadi. Some sociologists first believed it was nothing more than the youth trying to figure out what their parents were saying when they thought the kids couldn't understand or what grandma was saying when she was cussing them out. However, the language has become a point of pride among many of the younger generations, who believe that it is a reminder of who they are and from where they came. It is a reminder to never take what they have for granted.

When the Nazzadi realized that who they were was a lie, they had little left to define them. All they were really left with was themselves and they chose that in which to take pride. Perhaps

this was a carryover from the neatness of a military lifestyle or perhaps it was simply the obvious choice, but it has defined who the Nazzadi are today.

The most easily recognizable trait about Nazzadi culture is their attention to appearance. They take great pride in beauty and health. It is difficult to find a Nazzadi that doesn't work out at least four days a week, spend hours a week grooming, or one who eats a lot of junk food. Their diets are healthy by choice and they want their bodies to be strong – and also to look good. By living in such a way, one shows pride in and respect for themselves. While they do not understand, they accept that Humans have different beliefs and that unhealthy lifestyles and obesity are commonplace among their brethren and try not to judge. However, among their own, they openly berate those who choose to be disrespectful to their bodies. There are also more than 30% fewer addicts among the Nazzadi, even though approximately the same number enjoy addictive vices.

Another aspect of their attention to appearance is fashion. The Nazzadi wear clothing that accentuates their bodies, in styles that befit the day. They are a stylish people and while fashion was at one time the province of women and homosexual men, it is the domain of all Nazzadi. Because they have no nudity taboo, their clothing is oftentimes revealing. Pride of fit bodies, and of distinguishing tattoos, often lead Nazzadi to show as much flesh as is practical.

Some Humans are confused by the idea of a culture that does not regard nudity as a taboo. Does that mean they are always taking off their clothes and/or are sex addicts? These old misconceptions are rooted in a repressive culture of religious condemnation of sexuality. The Nazzadi have no such history. To them, nudity is a natural thing and there is no shame in it. In fact, they acknowledge their form (and that of Humans) as one of the most beautiful things in creation. However, the culture in which they live is not as comfortable with nudity as they and they choose to conform. While Nazzadi may wear revealing clothing, sometimes extremely revealing, they will still wear clothes out in public. They will also wear the appropriate clothing for their environment – both socially and weather-wise. A Nazzadi will wear the appropriate suit to a business meeting and will wear heavy concealing clothes when it's cold, for example. However, Nazzadi who go to a safe beach (of which there are fewer and fewer) will prefer to go to a topless or nude beach and many walk around naked in the privacy of their own homes. They also are not embarrassed if another person sees them in the buff and may actually take a moment to be proud of their bodies.

They are also not sex crazed, as some mistakenly assume. As with nudity, the Nazzadi do not have a history in which sex was demonized. To them, it is a natural, wonderful, and fun thing. They don't have the same sexual hang-ups that Humans do and don't create artificial rules about when it is right to sleep with someone or regarding how many someones it is okay with which to sleep. In the end, just like Humans, most are looking for love and ultimately hope one day to settle down with a mate.

Since Humans and Nazzadi are born of the same DNA, it is only natural that they would eventually be attracted to each other. Interracial dating is regarded by both cultures as an okay thing and is becoming more and more commonplace. After all, when your dating options are almost evenly split, sooner or later one will give it a shot. As one might expect, there are those on either side who only date the other, captured by the other's exotic looks. However, as the Nazzadi are a people trying to establish themselves in the world, they are expected only to marry and procreate with their own kind. However, in a time of genocide where every new birth counts, mixed unions are not as looked down upon as they once were. Where xenomixed children may have been completely ostracized by their Nazzadi family, they can now gain some modicum of acceptance. The old guard still resists, as one might expect, and is still intolerant.

The Nazzadi also distinguish themselves through their elaborate tattoos. They brought with them the custom of tattooing using advanced white inks designed to cover jet-black skin, as it was once used to signify profession and rank. Now, it is an art and a very personal self-expression. These tattoos are reminiscent of some tribal or neo-tribal tattoos of Earth, but with a Nazzadi flair that is a combination of curves, sharp edges, and points. Most Nazzadi have them these days and they are a point of pride – there is even no stigma against facial tattoos. Since they are a racial thing, Nazzadi don't get their inkwork done by a Human artist, something that is regarded as gauche.

One of the other most recognizable aspects of the Nazzadi is their attention to their environment. Like their bodies, the Nazzadi carefully design and decorate their homes and neighborhoods. Residences are works of art on their own and most Nazzadi practice something that is the equivalent of Feng Shui. Their neighborhoods are clean, decorated with their own character, and residents keep the streets and sidewalks clean and swept.

They say that art is another thing that defines a culture and the Nazzadi have enthusiastically thrown themselves into it. With the typical experimental racial spirit, they have found themselves mixing and matching in all areas of art, creating not only a distinctive style for themselves but also influencing mainstream culture.

Cuisine is the thing that most people first experience and it is an animal all its own. The Nazzadi have taken foods from all over Human civilization and put them together into unlikely combinations. Some examples include the black pepper or bubble-gum latte, the peanut butter and pesto panini, caramel key lime meringue pie, the peanut butter, hummus, black olive, and lettuce sandwich, kimche humbow, and the list goes on. Many of their dishes work, while many other Nazzadi staples are an "acquired taste."

Nazzadi music is like their cuisine. They've taken the idea of world music and broken it wide open across all genres. The Nazzadi-created musical style known as Fuzion dominates the pop charts currently, a beautiful example of their willingness to mix

elements from any source. Nazzadi DJ's mix beats with Japanese strings, Native American chants, banjos, and more. Any Nazzadi exploration is an aural montage, even when they attempt to be "traditional." Strangely, it often works.

To go with music is the art of dance and Nazzadi dance is something to behold. The naturally graceful race again combines unusual styles that oddly work together, such as slam swing dancing or hip-hop ballet. Nazzadi dancers find their own way, often to the delight of viewers looking for something new. Because of their innate poise, many assume that they can all dance – much like the old assumption that anyone of African descent could dance. This is simply not true and there are many Nazzadi with no sense of rhythm. However, Nazzadi dancers do tear up the floor in clubs.

Nazzadi fine art has its own unique character and their mix and match mentality is felt less here. The most popular form of Nazzadi sculpture is a style known as Owti that utilizes crystal and metal. The crystals are artificially grown by the artist to be the color and shape that they desire. They are then fused with metal sculptures, which are composed of thin, sharp pieces. The overall effect is elegant, yet aggressive. Painting is dominated by an ethereal watercolor style called Doai. It is a form of impressionism, where viewers are left to feel the piece's hazy yet recognizable components. Many Nazzadi artists also work in more classic detailed pencils and inks. In general, they prefer to work with traditional tools and materials and not computers or computer aided devices. They feel the addition of such complex machinery mutes the artist's true outpouring of emotion.

It is fashion, as one might expect, where Nazzadi artists migrate and truly distinguish themselves. Many of the top designers are Nazzadi, as are many of the top models. One could easily say that the fashion world has been dominated by the Nazzadi for the last ten years. It is here that they are their most daring, pushing boundaries that Human designers were afraid to push and blazing new territories. There is little in the way of "boring, functional" clothing left in the marketplace – it all has its own flair, even if it's only for utility. Those fashion-minded Nazzadi that do not participate in the creation end of things open their own boutiques and on-line stores. It is a similar world for furniture and household decoration design, as well as with interior designers.

As far as everyday entertainment and distraction goes, the Nazzadi have fully integrated themselves into Human culture. They watch the same broadcast serials and movies, they enjoy the same sports, they play the same games, they go to the same restaurants and nightclubs, and more.

In general, they have done everything they can to be a part of Human culture. They have tried not to isolate themselves and, unlike many other immigrant populations, they have all made an attempt to learn the native language. But, through trial and error, they now have some sort of racial identity that they can call their own – born out of the gracious Human race that gave them a home – and they are grateful for it.

SOCIETAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The Nazzadi have had many profound contributions to society over the twenty years they have been an integral part of the New Earth Government. Some have been intentional, while others have been entirely by accident. No one can argue that they have permanently changed the world, and not purely from a martial perspective.

One of the most immediate and lasting impacts the Nazzadi have had on Human culture is one they did not intend. Their arrival changed the face of religion forever. Though they are not technically an alien race, they were created by one, thus proving the existence of intelligent life beyond Earth. Most of the religions of the world were not prepared to deal with such a revelation. Most were only centuries past the idea that the Earth wasn't the center of the universe and few had given up the idea that Humans were the only and most important creatures in all creation. The idea that the inhabitants of Earth were not only not alone but weren't all that special in the grand scheme of things shook most religions to their core. Furthermore, the way the Nazzadi were manipulated by the false religion created for them by the Migou did not escape notice and a lot of people awakened to the manipulations of the dogma of many organized religions. In the aftershocks, the Nazzadi helped the world form many new theological and philosophical thoughts.

The world of fashion has been rocked by the Nazzadi. For the first few years after the First Arcanotech War, the Nazzadi kept quiet, still trying to figure out where to go from here. They dressed in simple Human clothing, many still so shell-shocked they didn't know which way was up. Then, suddenly, it was as if a repressed collective desire exploded upon the planet. The Nazzadi had decided that since they had nothing else to define them, they would start with what they had – their bodies and their environment. Years of pent-up creativity came out to play and within a year designers had completely created a new distinctly Nazzadi look. Despite the racism and segregation that marked those days, the fashion industry couldn't help but take notice. The styles were daring and innovative and exactly the kind of thing the public would eat up. Even before the Nazzadi themselves had gained acceptance, their fashion styles had.

These days, the Nazzadi dominate the fashion industry, sometimes to the jealousy of their Human counterparts. In fact, there are those that claim there is now discrimination against Humans in the fashion and modeling industries. Regardless, Nazzadi fashion designers hold a majority of the marketplace and like Nazzadi models make up more than half of the industry. No one can argue that the Nazzadi helped create a more fashion-conscious world.

As with fashion, so goes interior design and decoration. Though fashion is the first thing the Nazzadi are recognized for, the improvement of environment wasn't far behind. Humans, for the most part, design entirely according to function and just stick things in their living spaces. Sometimes their decoration is along a loose theme, but most times it is not. Males, specifically, could usually care less how their homes are designed or decorated as

long as there is a bathroom, a kitchen, and a place to sleep. Some Asian cultures practiced something akin to Feng Shui, or decorating so as to maximize the positive energy and flow within a space. As the Nazzadi began to decorate their bodies, they also began to work on their homes and neighborhoods. They adopted Feng Shui as if born to it. Soon, the Nazzadi began to redesign and remodel their homes to be works of art in and of themselves. It was not long after that they began to create their own art to put in those homes, as well as their own unique styles of furniture.

Now the Nazzadi dominate the interior design and decoration fields, as well as furniture and decorative item design. The most common Nazzadi style is minimalist, designed for a home in which one does not want to acquire a profusion of possessions. Each space makes one specific statement instead of several. However, that does not mean all their styles are like this as they have adapted to a wild variety.

Naturally graceful and agile, the Nazzadi have impacted several popular professional sports. They have done well in the more broadly accepted, now hybridized, American/Canadian-style football, most especially as running backs. They naturally do well in most positions in the most popular global sport within the New Earth Government – football, or soccer as many North Americans once knew it. In less immediately recognizable areas, Nazzadi have also distinguished themselves in such sports as figure skating, fencing, and many track and field events. One area in which they greatly shine is in the world of professional dance. The ballet is now filled with Nazzadi dancers, as are more radical performances and music videos. The important thing is that, on the ultimate scale of things, the Nazzadi are not necessarily better than their Human counterparts. While Human proficiencies vary wildly, the Nazzadi are predictably gifted, which allows them to excel in predictable arenas. This is something that team owners have been able to exploit in drafts since the Nazzadi have been allowed to participate in major league sports.

There are those that would argue that the Nazzadi have helped bridge the gap between the species through interbreeding. For good or for ill, the appearance of xenomixes has changed the social landscape. Most Humans have evolved past any concerns over racial mixing. After what they've seen, they're just happy that something that basically looks like them is being born. The Nazzadi don't share that sentiment. However, xenomixes have contributed to, or at least confounded, geneticists across the world. Tests are being done everyday to help unravel the mystery of xenomix DNA, especially why the thing that makes xenomixes is so dominant.

The most unusual of xenomixes – the naturally para-psychic Whites – have contributed greatly to the field of parapsychology. Knowing that all Whites are born with para-psychic ability and that many of them manifest such powers at birth has given parapsychologists the ability to study such phenomenon on a biological level in a predictable fashion. Other para-psychics erupt at unpredictable times, making it virtually impossible to

observe them. Furthermore, most families are happy to get the government subsidy that comes from volunteering their children for government observation. The fact that many Whites wind up in foster care or at the whim of the government doesn't hurt either.

The Nazzadi also have significantly contributed towards the uniting of the people of Earth. Up until the First Arcanotech War, the planet had never known a time of peace. There was always some kind of war somewhere in the world as nations fought over resources, land, race, ideology, or religion. Even the New United Nations did not encompass all the nations of the world and wars were still being waged when the Nazzadi arrived to invade. The aliens brought a war that redefined the meaning of the world. In the face of imminent death, all the people of the Earth finally put aside their differences and united as the Human race. The decade following the end of the First Arcanotech War was the first time of peace the planet had known since the formation of the early tribes.

As part of that, humanity is no longer plagued by the petty intolerances that it once was. The people of the Strange Aeon no longer focus on the differences between them. Where once they were fixated on other skin colors, religions, walks of life, nationalities, and other insignificant details, they now see only other Human beings. They are open, united, and tolerant, for the most part. None of this could have happened without the arrival of the Nazzadi and their efforts to integrate so completely as our family.

As in the tradition of mainstream ethnic television of the past, there is one network dedicated to all Nazzadi programming. This content portal is known as the Nazzadi Entertainment Portal, or NZE for short. Though the Nazzadi are fully integrated, NZE focuses strictly on the Nazzadi. The news broadcasts are targeted towards issues involving the Nazzadi. The reality television shows are targeted towards Nazzadi interests. Music shows, sit-coms, dramas, and the like are all Nazzadi, involving nothing but Nazzadi hosts and entertainers. It is rare to see Humans in anything provided by NZE.

There are those that believe the content portal is racist, while others believe that it is an important thing for the "minority" population. There are those Nazzadi who think it's ridiculous to have a content portal for just them and others who think it's key for the evolution of the race. Regardless, most people have an opinion about it and NZE is an opinion-maker.

Of course, not all Nazzadi contributions are well-received. The oddly and wildly popular Nazzadi Elvis impersonator known as Nelviz is something many people wish the black-skinned people would have kept to themselves. If Las Vegas still existed, he would own that town. Currently based out of Los Angeles, his shows draw crowds from all over and his world tours sell out surprisingly large stadiums. There are even those who believe that he is the reincarnation of Elvis, sent back to entertain his people when they need him most. It's almost as if the King never died.



PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Though there can be no doubt that the Nazzadi have changed the face of the world culturally and socially, they also brought with them several practical contributions that have helped mold the face of the Second Arcanotech War and now Aeon War.

The New Earth Government would never have fared so well during the early days of the Second Arcanotech War if it weren't for the Nazzadi. The rebellious Firstborn shared everything they knew about the Migou. At first, the New Earth Government had its hands full with other more immediate issues, such as rebuilding from the war in a way that would protect them from such invasions in the future and integrating an enormous population of "aliens." There was also the vicious debate about what they should do about the colonies on the moons of Jupiter and Saturn. When that conversation began in earnest is when the Nazzadi distinguished themselves, giving the New Earth Government an idea of what was really waiting for them out there.

Almost everything that the New Earth Government knew about the Migou before the Second Arcanotech War came from the Nazzadi. The Firstborn told them what their creators were like, what Pluto was like, and helped estimate their technology and military capacity. From what the Nazzadi shared, New Earth Government analysts didn't believe the Migou would attack in force. This helped answer the questions of what to do with the colonies, which were promptly reinforced with strong military presences so that colonists could go out to expand them safely. Little did anyone know what was to come.

The other practical contributions of the Nazzadi came in the form of technology, most notably their mecha. The Nazzadi war machine was based on entirely different principles than the New Earth Government's. Sword-class mecha are slow, but tough, while Nazzadi mecha are fast, but fragile. Nazzadi tactics had been very effective during the First Arcanotech War, so the Ministry of War decided to blend them with their own. This led to the creation of the Combined Arms Concept, which emphasizes diversity to deploy forces quickly in any kind of terrain. Nazzadi tactics were the tactics of the lightning war – come out of nowhere, hit fast, and either advance or retreat – something that was very different from the slow, steady, and methodical advancing line tactics of the New Earth Government. Combining forces, today Nazzadi units are used in the lightning war component of the Combined Arms Concept. They are used as harrying troops, designed to distract and confuse enemy troops, as well as pick off stragglers, as first-in units, designed to hit fast and occupy the enemy while the rest of the force takes position, and for hit-and-run raids, where speed and confusion are of the essence. There is no doubt that one of the keys to humanity's survival during the Second Arcanotech and Aeon War has been partly due to the military contribution of the Nazzadi.

The natural ability of Nazzadi to see perfectly well in both light and darkness has led to their use in night-time military and para-military actions. Combined with their agility, the Nazzadi are designed to function best at night – putting them on even footing with many of the horrific things trying to destroy the New

Earth Government. Within the Armed Forces, it is common for special and covert operations to maintain squads composed of all Nazzadi soldiers. They are heavily trained in the stealth arts and are, for all intents and purposes, military ninja. Within law enforcement, Nazzadi also fulfill special roles. They find nocturnal surveillance a much easier task and are typically more effective at it. As in the military, most law enforcement agencies keep all-Nazzadi SWAT or response teams for those times when their abilities are needed.

A thing that terrorized pilots during the First Arcanotech War was Nazzadi lightning guns. These energy weapons fired arcs that looked and behaved a lot like lightning, arcing to nearby non-grounded targets in a burst-like effect. They also had the nasty habit of blowing out power grids in urban battles. Though New Earth Government scientists had been trying to reverse engineer the weapons, they had little success. After all, the advanced technology has been created by the Migou and then handed down to Nazzadi technicians. The Nazzadi shared these secrets with the New Earth Government, allowing them to create their own versions for the Combined Arms Concept. Lightning guns are still not utilized in Human mecha designs, as they seem to work best tactically with the fast-moving Nazzadi mecha. However, they have been incorporated into the Engel Project, most notably the Tarshish urban combat Engel.

While they are commonplace on the field of battle today, there was a time when the New Earth Government could not conquer the development of stealth technology. They had a version of technology that they called stealth, complete with camouflage and a dramatically reduced radar signature, but nothing close to what exists today. One of the Nazzadi's greatest advantages during the First Arcanotech War was their advanced stealth mecha which were virtually invisible to the New Earth Government. It's no surprise that it is one of the first things the Nazzadi shared with the world after their rebellion against the Migou.

With the help of Nazzadi engineers and scientists, the years between the First and Second Arcanotech Wars saw significant development in stealth technology. The concealment provided by modern devices is more thorough and they are not as touchy as the used to be – though they're still pretty delicate. Nazzadi Design Systems, a government contractor and the leader in research and development for Nazzadi-based technology, has even begun to create a limited version of the traditional stealth system to be used in powered armor. It has been put to use in the newly developed Sunspot, powered armor designed to be a lure.

Nazzadi scientists were also a part of the Engel Project. While the Migou did not share all their secrets of cloning with the Nazzadi, they shared enough basic cloning science, as well as advanced biology, biochemistry, and the like, to make the Nazzadi more advanced than the New Earth Government. They brought this knowledge of advanced life sciences with them to the nascent Engel Project. They are part of the teams that helped pioneer the lifeforms that make Engels, utilizing the unusual genetic material that was provided to them.

Unfortunately, or possibly fortunately, the Nazzadi had no access to nor understanding of the technology that was used to create them. The Migou clearly had access to advanced cloning techniques that allowed them to mass produce and age clones, as well as to implant memories. These things could be of benefit to the New Earth Government, especially in a time when humanity's numbers have been so depleted. However, the Nazzadi have come out as the strongest opponents against full body cloning. They know first-hand the trauma that comes from being a race of clones and they do not wish to inflict that upon anyone else, if they can help it. The Nazzadi believe that cloning should be restricted to medical applications, such as cloned blood or cloned limbs and organs. Anything else is dangerous and they will not have it. Unsurprisingly, almost the entire race to a person feels this way and 40% of the population is a powerful voice.

As an extension of this attitude, the Nazzadi have also come out against the development of true artificial intelligence and sapient-form robotics. They believe that dabbling in these areas is playing god, much the same way as creating full body clones. They argue that there is no need for either. Limited artificial intelligence does the job just fine, creating smarter computers with more intuitive interfaces. LAI keeps computers what they are intended to be – tools. True AI compromises that and creates a self-aware organism that muddies the waters needlessly in an already troubled time. The same goes for sapient-form robotics. Why ask questions as to what life is and what rights do created beings have when humanity is fighting to survive against an extinction level threat?

Something no one expected was the investment of the Nazzadi people in voluntary emergency relief efforts. This association began simply enough. The first Nazzadi were almost all military-trained, who were forced to live in segregated neighborhoods. Such neighborhoods became organized for many reasons, and one of the ways they organized was with regards to emergency drills. Volunteers in the community created plans in the case of natural disaster, medical emergency, racial violence, or full-blown attack. They then created neighborhood programs, in which they educated all of the residents on what to do in each situation. This one facet of Nazzadi life helped them better survive during the war-torn days to come.

Since they are fully accepted now and war has come to the world again, the Nazzadi have brought this to the rest of the world. The Nazzadi Emergency Brigade is a large-scale, non-for-profit group that travels around to work with neighborhoods to create emergency plans. They live among the people for a couple of weeks to get the best lay of the land. The NEB then drafts plans for nearly every emergency and takes the time to educate the residents on their parts in each. Sometimes, they even conduct drills, when the residents are willing, in order to best prepare such civilians for what may come. Though the NEB is always at work, there unfortunately are simply not enough of them to prepare the entire civilian population of the New Earth Government. They are currently hard at work in many of the hot-spots across the globe.

Advanced Nazzadi chemistry also contributed to the cosmetics industry. Humans had never really mastered a quality white ink for tattooing. Obviously, this had been a part of Nazzadi culture from the start. Now, members of all races can enjoy white tattoos that are truly white – something that many of those of African-descent have enjoyed. Furthermore, Nazzadi principles have created longer-lasting and more durable cosmetics for women. These days, a woman no longer needs to worry about her mascara or eyeliner running, even in the pool. They have even pioneered semi-permanent make-up, which will endure up to a month unless taken off with a special remover.

The Nazzadi also helped advance space flight, though the New Earth Government has had little time to test it. While the faster-than-light capabilities of the Nazzadi armada's ion drives were a complete myth, the sub-light capabilities of these drives was superior to anything the New Earth Government was using for the colonization of the solar system. Arcanotech principles allowed the Migou to overcome the low thrust limitation of ion thrust devices, creating an engine that accelerated in such a way so as not to crush the passengers with G-forces, but that could reach incredible speeds. It functionally cut the travel time to a tenth what it once was. A trip from Pluto to Earth could take a year instead of nine. The primary limitation of this drive was that its high-speed functionality is only useful on longer trips, so it is of little help for lunar visits. Unfortunately, the Migou's domination of orbit has put a halt to the practical tests of space vehicles equipped with these ion drives, but that doesn't mean that the New Earth Government hasn't been developing them.

The psychological argument of nature versus nurture has taken on a new tone since the arrival of the Nazzadi. For generations there have been those who believe that we are products of our environment (nurture), products of our genetics (nature), or some of both. The Nazzadi were created and then implanted with false memories to serve their creators. Does this qualify as nature or nurture? Those who argue nature say that the Nazzadi had no environment by which to be influenced. Everything they are was shot into them at once, the way genetics create all aspects of a person. They were what they were designed to be. Those who argue nurture say that the Nazzadi's choice to rebel is evidence that environment is key to development. Though the Nazzadi had been created one way, the minute they were given a choice the majority of their race rebelled against their nature. Those that fall somewhere between the two arguments site both of these claims as accurate, lending credence to their viewpoint. There are many counter-arguments on both sides, giving academics something to argue about in intellectual forums.

Either way, this, combined with such processes as assimilation, has brought up fascinating arguments about the nature of free will. Humans, for many years, have believed that free will is a given, that it is a natural trait of sentient life. However, the Nazzadi were functionally born with true free will and never knew it. How do Humans know that the course they've run was entirely theirs? Who's to say that some, if not all, of who they are wasn't likewise programmed, and they just haven't figured it out yet.

SUBCULTURES

There are always those who choose to go against the grain of the majority. The Nazzadi are no different. There are several important subcultures that have formed within their nascent world.

At one extreme are those that have become colloquially known as Natives, to most a derogatory term. These are the Nazzadi who believe that trying to create a culture of their own is just as ridiculous as living with one that was made up for them by the Migou. Instead, they have chosen to live as Humans, completely rejecting their fabricated origins. They believe that if they are simply a variation of Humans, that they are fundamentally Humans themselves. There is no reason for them to try to make some kind of culture up in order to make themselves feel better about being created as slaves and lied to by their creators. It happened, they have a new home, and it's time to move on.

While Humans are totally accepting of these Nazzadi, the rest of the Nazzadi community is not. Most regard Natives on some level as betraying their race, turning their back on their heritage and going "native." Nazzadi are not Human, they argue, and while they should be grateful, they should also be finding a place for themselves instead of just taking what was handed to them. Natives do not mix well with other Nazzadi and tend to only have friends that are Human or who have similar mind-sets.

At the other extreme are the so-called Purists, who believe that the Nazzadi should be grateful to the Humans of the New Earth Government, but that there is no reason that they should mix with them. They are in favor of Nazzadi-only neighborhoods, schools, organizations, etc. Many of them have moved to Nazzaduhni, where the largest population of Purists exists, but some have chosen to live in the world to try to separate their siblings from the Human world. They believe that the only way that they can create an identity truly their own is to interact with the Human world only as is necessary.

Purists are not usually antagonistic and their beliefs are not about racial superiority, so they don't often have trouble with Humans. The fact that they don't often interact with Humans helps. They are tolerated among the Nazzadi, though most simply don't agree. Since most Nazzadi have friends that are Human and Purists don't hang out with Humans, it's difficult to blend friends together.

Perhaps the largest subculture among the Nazzadi are what the media has dubbed the Fashionistas. These are Nazzadi who believe that their cultural standards regarding body, fashion, and interior design should be held to the highest standards. They work-out and body sculpt obsessively, are never seen without being dressed to the nines and fully made-up, their living spaces are always impeccable, and they rarely wear clothes for more than one season. Their practices would be fine, though some border on unhealthy, if they kept to themselves. Unfortunately, they don't. They make and give often unwanted observations and advice, they verbally berate those who don't measure up to their standards, they openly discriminate against the unattractive and the overweight, and generally make people who are

not approaching an unrealistic standard of physical perfection, beauty, and fashion feel bad about themselves. Many of them believe that these standards should apply to Humans as well and are, unsurprisingly, very vocal about it.

In general, the Fashionistas are not well-liked by anyone but themselves. They tend to offend or upset those who do not meet their standards, which is almost everyone. However, there are those among the Nazzadi, especially among impressionable youths, who regard the Fashionistas as the elite. These misguided teens try to measure up in hopes of one day becoming Fashionistas themselves. More often than not, this leads to failure and upset, sometimes to eating disorders.

The Old Guard are also a subculture unto themselves. They are those who were full-grown adults, who more than half their lives were spent artificially aging in a cloning chamber before being implanted with memories and given positions of authority with the Nazzadi fleet. The oldest have had the hardest time adjusting to the new way of things and with getting over how much of their life was stolen from them. Most have chosen to withdraw from the world, to stick with what they know while not getting in the way of the progress they understand is the future of their race. They are the ones whose old military units and warrior traditions still meet as social groups, who prefer not to maintain friendships with Humans. Others reject all that, living loudly and fully in order to make up for all the time they weren't given. They dig into the new world and revel in it, gathering as much experience as their aging bodies will allow them. It is these who choose to integrate with Humans and join in the global community.

One of the strangest of subcultures, the Voluntary Nazzadi Extinction Movement (VNEM) believes that the Nazzadi are a cosmic accident and as such have no business continuing. They preach that Nazzadi should simply choose to stop breeding so that they eventually will die out. The VNEM is a peaceful and well-spoken movement that doesn't seem radical in its literature or functions. It seems impractical to many, however, that anyone would want to voluntarily remove some of the few remaining mortal inhabitants of Earth at such a critical time. To counter, the VNEM encourages those who follow their philosophies to become involved in the war effort, so that the last gasp of the Nazzadi is one that will be remembered as a courageous and generous act.

Almost as a counter-point are those dubbed Mixers. While the VNEM believes that the Nazzadi should voluntarily die out, Mixers believe that both species should die out – through interbreeding. Since the xenomix gene is clearly dominant, some argue the early signs of an entirely new species, they will eventually become a majority of the population somewhere down the road if interbreeding is left unchecked. Mixers believe that a concerted effort will bring about that day much, much sooner, something they feel will be to the benefit of both species. Some go so far as to believe that this is the purpose of the Nazzadi, that cosmically they were meant to be here to meld the two races together. Mixers obviously vocally advocate interracial dating and sex.

THE BIG QUESTIONS

What better way to control a population than through religion? The Migou learned this by watching humanity through the ages, so when it came time for them to institute methods of control on their cloned army, religion became one of the primary ways. It was also one of the most effective, giving the Nazzadi a holy and undeniable reason for their invasion of Earth.

Their old religion, known as Korali or The Way, is something that still echoes through the Old Guard. Even if they've rejected it, they were so indoctrinated to it that it is difficult to fully expunge from their consciousness. The Way was all they knew, the thing that drove them and guided their actions. Even though it is without a doubt false, it will always be a part of them.

The Way taught the Nazzadi that there were a pantheon of gods who created and ruled the universe. Some were light and some were dark, but together they encapsulated the whole of creation. This pantheon was not unlike many pantheistic religions of Earth, which is exactly where the Migou got the idea in the first place. Examples of such gods include:

- Araky, the goddess of temptation. She is shown as the temptress who sees all people's souls and gives them what they secretly desire – and what is worst for them. She is feared by all as she is the one who tests all Nazzadi.
- Iby, the goddess of night-time and darkness. She is depicted as a joyful woman, revelling in the time the Nazzadi function best. She is revered as the power of creation, for from the dark of nothing comes everything.
- Jyna, the god of stars, sky, and the day. He is depicted as a dreamer, someone in awe of creation. He is revered by artists, scientists, and sorcerers as one who looks beyond what is front of him.
- Laruny, the goddess of love, family, and children. She is depicted as a beautiful, seductive, yet open-hearted and compassionate woman, revered by lovers and parents.
- Tikara, the god of punishment. He is depicted as a powerful, muscular, but sad man, weeping that he must reprimand the chosen of the gods. He is entreated by those who have been wronged, and feared by all who have done wrong.
- Vorety, the goddess of luck. She appears as a happy, mirthful woman, dripping in luxury. She is entreated by anyone who needs a hand or a little luck, especially among warriors going into battle.
- Zaxa, the god of blood. He is shown as a dark, cold, calculating man, the assassin of the gods, revered by many warriors.

The holy legends told the Nazzadi that the gods experimented with creating their perfect children all across the galaxy. They created and populated worlds all across the galaxy. These experiments failed until the gods created the Nazzadi, children of the twilight world, who were finally found to be their perfect creations. Their holy duty as such paragons was to go out into the universe to propagate their species, as well as to conquer and enslave or destroy all of the gods' other imperfect children. They believed that they had done so to many planets before Earth.

These days, of course, the Nazzadi know that was all a load of hogwash. However, in recent generations of those born or raised on Earth, the gods have been making a comeback. The old stories are told as myths and the gods enjoyed much the same way that modern Humans still tell the Greek, Norse, or other pantheistic myths. After all, the planets of this solar system are named after Roman gods, who have not been worshipped for several thousand years. The Nazzadi gods are a part of their heritage and to those to which the lie does not still sting, the gods are something to carry with them on their journey into the future. Not as deities, of course, but as folklore.

Perhaps the most interesting side-effects of this movement is that some younger Nazzadi parents are choosing to name their children after the gods. Just as one might run across Human children named Orion or Aphrodite, one might now find Nazzadi children named Zaxa or Vorety. Such parents believe in taking the names of the gods back for themselves and how better to do that than to mix them into everyday life. Some find it distasteful, but it really isn't a point of contention among the Nazzadi.

Overall, the Nazzadi stumbled through things the same way that Humans did when they were introduced to a larger world. The religion they'd been given by the Migou was clearly a fabrication, one they had no problem rejecting. However, that still left them in a place where they had a spiritual void. In the face of all they had to deal with, including the revelation of the grand lie that was the entirety of their existence, religious problems became some of the least of their worries. They had survival needs to tend to first.

However, they do have their own list of spiritual questions. While Humans do not know who or what created them, if something did, the Nazzadi know they were created and they know their creators. So who created their creators and what if it is something that is like the Migou, not really god-like but simply willful and advanced? They live with a whole other level of the "why are we here" question.

Making their way through the murky existential questions that are so near the surface of the Nazzadi world, the race soon developed a psychological resistance. The Nazzadi these days are fine with unanswered questions. With everything that has happened to them, they know that answers don't always do the good people think they do. The Nazzadi now believe that as long as they are alive and kicking, that they will be able to deal with whatever comes.

The Nazzadi have been partners with humanity in developing the modern spiritual movements. Nowadays, they have no particular unique spiritual beliefs of their own. While the Nazzadi do not require supposed answers to existential questions, many like to feel in touch with their spirituality. Many of such Nazzadi are drawn to the Universal Church and its simple theology, designed to bring people together in a time of crisis. Many, on the other hand, are quite content to follow their intuition and connect with the universe in a way that is personal and natural to them.

NAZZADI NEIGHBORHOODS

Because of the difficulties initially integrating the Nazzadi upon their acceptance into the New Earth Government, their communities began as segregated ghettos. This, combined with the eventual focus on environment, led to the creation of a unique feel in Nazzadi neighborhoods.

Every major arcology and city of appreciable size is home to what was once known as the Nazzadi ghetto. Now called Nazzadi quarters or Nazzadi districts, these neighborhoods are where the heart of their culture was born. Since so many Nazzadi needed to be integrated into the New Earth Government, these neighborhoods are not small.

Most neighborhoods inside arcologies are clean, at least those that are underprivileged or industrial, but the thing that strikes most when they first enter a Nazzadi district is how neat it is. In addition to city sweeping, the Nazzadi take great care to keep their neighborhoods clean and tidy, even sweeping the sidewalks and streets themselves. They also decorate the streets and fronts of their dwellings in a variety of different ways, but so that streets all match. One street might have a distinctly Asian influence, while another might speak to Americana, while another might feel Russian in tone. From time to time these decorations will change, just to make sure that everyone on the block gets their due. Unlike many Human neighborhoods, the Nazzadi don't do this to "keep up with the Jones," but rather it is out of a sense of pride and community.

Such neighborhoods are quite a sight during the holidays, as the Nazzadi hold nothing back. The commercial holiday of Easter sees such districts decorated with pastels, bunnies, and eggs, with massive Easter Egg Hunts and visits from costumed Easter Bunnies. They also go all out for Valentine's Day, with themes of love, the color red, and roses everywhere. It is quite a thing to take one's sweeties to a Nazzadi restaurant for Valentine's, as they go all out with the romance. However, they save their greatest efforts for Halloween and Christmas. Nazzadi districts everywhere turn creepy come the beginning of October with costume parties and trick-or-treating done the right way. Many Human children beg their parents to go to the Nazzadi district come Halloween-time. The commercial holiday of Christmas is a similar extravaganza, with trimmed trees, ornaments, and visits from costumed Santa's. There are very few Nazzadi who do not celebrate Christmas, a time when extended Nazzadi families get together to give thanks for one another and for the gifts the year has brought.

The Nazzadi aren't shy about getting to know their neighbors. There's no such thing as a stranger on a district block. New residents are welcomed to the neighborhood and are expected to have a large housewarming party. There is at least one block party every year, which turns into a huge gathering that anyone nearby attends. They are events filled with food, alcohol, and socialization, where people catch up with neighbors they don't get to see often. It is common for neighbors to spend time together



socially, often hosting each other for dinner once a week or once every couple of weeks. This doesn't mean that Nazzadi living in such districts don't have privacy – neighbors strike a careful balance between giving residents some space and being a regular part of their lives.

In addition to garden-variety gatherings and block parties, the Nazzadi are also known for their street festivals. An average Nazzadi district will have four or more festivals every year. The usual mix includes art, food, music, and a children's festival. The art and performance festival features local Nazzadi artists of all kinds, as well as actors, dancers, performance artists, and the like. The food festival is the one that gets the least Human visitors, as it showcases the greatest in local Nazzadi cuisine – considered an acquired taste by most others. The music festival features local bands, school bands, vocalists, choirs, and sometimes even hometown famous acts. It is not uncommon for big name acts that are predominantly Nazzadi to show up unannounced to their old neighborhoods to play the annual music festival. Then there's the children's festival, designed with activities, entertainment, rides, and prizes for children thirteen and younger, though in practice usually children ten and younger attend.

The Earth Brotherhood Festival also has its echoes in local Nazzadi districts. Held on September 17th to commemorate the signing of the Shaumberg Treaty and the end of the First Arcanotech War, the Earth Brotherhood Festival is an all out Mardi Gras-style celebration. Those that can go to Nazza-Duhni for the true experience, but local Nazzadi districts carry on with their own smaller versions. All are welcome and the Nazzadi actively advertise this fairly new festival all over the world starting around July.

A carry-over from the days of racial violence, many Nazzadi districts still maintain a para-military neighborhood watch organization. Usually just called the watch, these groups hold no legal authority. Instead, they are a visible deterrent to would-be criminals, as they are trained in the use of non-lethal force. Those who would attempt to perpetrate crimes in a Nazzadi district may have to face being pursued and confronted by trained martial artists with tasers, pepper spray and no sense of humor. They are usually on good terms with the local beat cops, as few try to overstep their bounds of authority.

A counter-point to the watch groups are the Nazzadi gangs. Disenfranchised youth, born out of the days of racial hatred, still band together to pursue criminal activities and violence against each other and the Human world. They are found only in the underprivileged parts of the bigger Nazzadi districts. Inside the neighborhoods, their activities are limited to graffiti, vandalism, accosting people, and selling drugs. Outside the Nazzadi districts, however, they engage in all kinds of violent crimes, in addition to drug trafficking. Sometimes they fight amongst themselves, but usually they go out of their way to pick fights with Human or mixed gangs. Watch organizations and local

cops have a zero tolerance policy towards gang activity and work to educate their communities and growing children about the dangers of gangs. However, no matter how hard people try, the gangs won't go away.

Humans are, for the most part, welcome in Nazzadi districts. However, only for the most part. There are those who have been a part of the neighborhood watches for decades that remember what it was like before the two races were fully integrated. There are those gang members who are in a similar boat, or raised by abusive parents who suffered during those days. There are members of the Old Guard who have had a difficult time letting go. It is dangerous for an unescorted Human to run across one of these embittered folks, because such an altercation will rarely end in simple verbal abuse. Few Humans caught in such a predicament are killed, but many receive a severe and humiliating beating. There is unlikely to be recourse as well, for such perpetrations are covered up by those who live there.

Aside from gang trouble, most Nazzadi districts have low crime rates. With the tight knit nature of most blocks, neighborhood watch groups, and local beat cops protecting them, there is little room for serious crime (that is not of an organized nature). That doesn't mean that there aren't the occasional assaults, break-ins, or bouts of domestic violence, but fewer than one might expect given the population density.

There are several kinds of specialty shops that draw people into the districts. Naturally, Nazzadi boutique clothing shops carrying clothes from local as-of-yet-unknown designers are destinations for the fashion-conscious. Nazzadi confectioners also draw those with a taste for something different, as you can explore oddly flavored sweets that can't be found elsewhere. Imagine jelly beans that are meat flavored or bubble-gum flavored cupcakes and that is the first minor step towards experiencing such a place. Nazzadi strip clubs draw not only the local crowd, but those Humans who have a taste for the exotic, as do Nazzadi Red Houses.

Unsurprisingly, Nazzadi districts have an influence on the neighborhoods that surround them. Humans do often have a "keeping up with the Jones" mentality, so they do not want to be the line of demarcation where the interesting and festive Nazzadi neighborhoods end and the boring Human neighborhood begins. There is a buffer of mixed Nazzadi and Human sensibilities that gradually tapers off in the surrounding blocks. Furthermore, those Humans who live in such close proximity are invited to so many gatherings and can't help but visit the festivals that a sort of blending occurs. The zone surrounding such districts is the truest and most effective blending of all things that are good about both the Human and Nazzadi cultures.

In the end, most are welcome. However to the Nazzadi, these districts are more than simply home. They are, for the first time in the history of the race, palpable evidence of freedom.

SEEDY UNDERBELLY

The seedy underbelly of the Nazzadi is generally the same as that of the New Earth Government. However, there is one key exception – organized crime.

Little known to most, there is a Nazzadi mafia. Known as Nuradi, or the Merciless, they came about as many factions of organized crime came about. When the Nazzadi first made peace, they were the equivalent of a poor immigrant population that was ultimately relegated to segregated neighborhoods. Crime became a natural way for many to survive and where there are criminals, eventually gangs form. As many of those first Nazzadi had military backgrounds, it was only natural for them to organize and begin to treat their criminal activities like they would a military initiative.

With this kind of philosophy, they carved out territory quickly.

They lived up to their namesake almost immediately. They have never been, nor will they ever be, merciful. They are ruthless in a way that would make mafias like that of Columbia envious. They kill when they need to and do not hesitate. They torture when required, with no regret, and happily make grisly examples of who they need to. Perhaps the best example of this was in 2067 when the Nuradi kidnapped Harmon Watts, Deputy Director of the Organized Crime Division of the Federal Security Bureau, as well as his wife and two young daughters, after he coordinated a task force to root out the mafia's influence in several major cities. Four days later, 24 plastic bags were delivered to FSB headquarters in Chicago. The Watts family had been extensively tortured and dismembered. It sent out a clear message and showed that the Nuradi were not afraid.

In addition to their merciless nature, they are also known for their efficiency. Where other mobs are run on tradition and primarily populated by the streetwise or thugs, the military background on which the Nuradi is built lends itself to a no-nonsense way of doing things. This gives them a competitive edge that few of the other mafias have, as there is often in-fighting or unworkable ways of doing things.

The Nuradi traffics in all the things most organized crime families do these days. Drugs are always popular, as are guns and explosives. They are especially good at identity theft, credit fraud, and counterfeiting. They also not only maintain their own internal cadre of assassins, they hire them out to those who need someone dead. Despite this laundry list of anti-social behavior, the Nuradi were, in the early days, outlaw heroes to many of the downtrodden Nazzadi.

While some may have revered them at one time, today they have few proponents. This is because they have begun to heavily traffic in a new and profitable business – the slave trade. No one knows what has made them cross this line, but what makes matters even worse is that they specialize in the slavery of their own kind. Considering their roots, this seems like complete insanity. Something has happened internally to force this shift, as it is far beyond what most would expect.

DIRTY SECRETS

It should be no surprise to anyone, but there are many older Nazzadi who still carry hatred towards the Human race – beyond the Purists. They are resentful of the way they were treated after the Shaumberg Treaty was signed and many speak out against integration with Human society. They believe that Nazzadi should be part of the New Earth Government only out of necessity, but that they should remain separate from the Humans they feel are lesser beings. It is these people that actively discriminate against and verbally berate Humans who dare set foot inside Nazzadi districts. However, most Humans believe that all Nazzadi are grateful that humanity finally opened up and accepted them. More so, they have the attitude that the Nazzadi should be grateful, since humanity took them in after the Nazzadi had tried to destroy them. They don't often stop to look at things from the Nazzadi's perspective, so they assume that all is well.

Perhaps the dirtiest secret of the Nazzadi are the violent purges perpetrated by their own people. There are those among them who are tired of fighting, scared about the future, or just plain deluded, to whom going back and serving the Migou doesn't seem like such a bad idea. There are other Nazzadi who believe that sort of attitude is a crime against their race, something that also could cast doubt on the jet black-skinned people again. They are sometimes known as the Helasi, or the Free, and they will happily hunt down and murder anyone they suspect of Migou sympathies. This is all being covered up on the highest levels of government, though it is highly illegal.

On a local level, the Helasi have support (and even membership) from neighborhood watch organizations. Most readily turn a blind eye to such activities. They often also cover up their activity as gang violence, and often recruit the tougher gangs to help out with the dirty work.

The Nazzadi that hunted down Kyrza during the last days of the First Arcanotech War claimed that the loyalist Field Marshal had been killed in an assault on a stronghold in Melbourne. The assault was so devastating that no body was ever found. The First Arcanotech War ended, the Shaumberg Treaty was signed, and the world moved on.

Unfortunately, the truth is that the Nazzadi legion that assaulted the Australian stronghold were never 100% certain that Kyrza did not escape during the chaos. It was, however, one of the last bastions of the loyalist forces, so either way it would have ended the war. If Kyrza did survive, he would have had to conceal his identity to blend in with the New Earth Government. This would have been very difficult, as he was such a high-profile leader to the Nazzadi. There are rumors, however, of an aged Nazzadi Field Marshal who helps the Migou with their battle plans. They are completely unsubstantiated, but Kyrza was just that kind of clever to have survived.

FYI

The Helasi and the Nazzadi purges are discussed in more detail in the *Damnation View*.

CHARACTER OPTIONS

Here are a few new Character options, designed for Nazzadi Characters. The exception is the Aging Drawback. Though it is most appropriately discussed here with regards to Firstborn Characters, it may be chosen for any kind of Character who is not a xenomix.

OPTIONAL RULES

Since the Nazzadi were designed to function at night and their skin is jet black, your Storyguide may allow Nazzadi Characters to receive a +2 bonus to Stealth Tests at night. If the Nazzadi is heavily tattooed, the whitework reduces this bonus to +1.

NEW QUALITIES

Here are a few new Qualities that can apply to Nazzadi Characters. Some of these may only be appropriate for Supporting Cast Characters, as they require a Character to be significantly older than the normal starting age.

NEW ASSETS

FIRSTBORN (4)

Nazzadi Only

Prerequisite: Limited Memory Implant Drawback (4).

Your Character is one of the Firstborn, one of the Nazzadi commanders who knew the truth of their origin. He sided with Vreta during the rebellion and fought to free his people, and has seen the Nazzadi grow into partners in the New Earth Government. He is an honored member of society these days. Any additional skill points he receives from his age must be spent on skills related to military use. However, there are down-sides to what he is. Your Character must be, at the youngest, 60 years old, but he is probably closer to 70. He also suffers from a limited memory implant as fully half of his memories are fabricated.

NEW DRAWBACKS

AGING (2-4)

Your Character is middle-aged or older. As a result, his body is not as spry as it used to be, but he has advanced knowledge and experience to compensate. Though people are capable of living to advanced years, it is impractical to play a Character over 70. Such people are ready to retire.

The bonuses and penalties your Character endures depend on how far past middle-age he is:

2 - Your Character is between 40 to 50. He gains an additional five skill points, though he suffers a -1 to his Agility and Tenacity. Though his age isn't necessarily against him, he's too old to hang out with younger crowds.

3 - Your Character is between 50 to 60. He gains an additional ten skill points, though he suffers a -1 to his Agility, Perception, and Strength, and a -2 to his Tenacity. He moves one full category slower than normal. His age is not yet against him in social circles, but it is starting to creep in.

4 - Your Character is between 60 to 70. He gains an additional

fifteen skill points, though he suffers a -2 to his Agility, Strength, and Tenacity, and a -1 to his Perception. He suffers an additional -1 to his Reflex and moves one full category slower than usual. He is regarded in most circles as past his prime and cannot pilot military vehicles of any kind.

LIMITED MEMORY IMPLANT (1-4)

Nazzadi Only

Prerequisite: Aging Drawback (2-4) for 3, 4, & possibly 2.

Your Character is one of the Old Guard, one of the Nazzadi who was cloned to be a part of the initial invasion of Earth. As a result, some of his memories are implants, fabricated to give him a sense of self and of history. Your Character can run into others with the same memories, where only the superficial details are different.

Your Characters limited memory implant depends on how old he was during the First Arcanotech War:

1 - Your Character was a child in the fleet, and only his earliest memories are false. He must have been between one and ten when the First Arcanotech War began, so he must now be between 28 and 37 years old.

2 - Your Character was a teenager in the fleet, so all memories of his family and childhood are fake. He must have been between eleven and twenty when the First Arcanotech War began, so he must now be between 38 and 47 years old.

3 - Your Character was a young adult in the fleet, so all memories of growing up, maturing, and gaining his own identity are false. He must have been between twenty and thirty when the First Arcanotech War began, so he must now be between 48 and 57 years old.

4 - Your Character was a full-grown adult, so at least half of his memories are fake. He must have been between thirty and fifty when the First Arcanotech War began, so he must now be between 58 and 67 years old.

NAZZADI ACHROMATOSIS (2)

Nazzadi only

Prerequisite: Misfit Drawback (1)

Your Character is a true albino, not a product of the genetic expression that causes White xenomixes. His skin is not pigmented white, but instead lacks all pigment and burns easily from exposure to sunlight. It takes on a pale, almost porcelain-like quality, though it bruises easily. His hair is naturally stark white, lacking any pigment as well, while his eyes are purple instead of red and sensitive to bright lights. They suffer a -2 Test Penalty to actions requiring sight while in bright lights and a -4 Test Penalty in blinding direct light, like sunlight on a cloudless day, when not wearing tinted protective lenses.

Achromatosis is unusual among the Nazzadi, but not unheard of. Albino Nazzadi still often tattoo themselves, but can use black and all color inks instead of just the usual white, and they often wildly color their hair. While there are those that will react to the oddity of the albino Nazzadi, there are many among their own species who find them exotic.



They say that one of the primary benefits of aquariums is that they're peaceful. People who keep fish spend time staring into the quiet aquatic environment and feel their stress melting away.

That's how Anton felt about this place. It was a place he could come and the world would disappear. The kind of place where he could just sit and think.

Of course, it would scare the living hell out of just about anyone else.

Anton's aquarium was more commonly known as the Nephilim Genesis Lab. To the casual observer, it was a dark laboratory filled with glowing, liquid-filled tubes. And in that liquid grew monsters, which twitched or squirmed from time to time, not entirely unaware of the world around them in their arti-

ficial wombs. More of Anton's genetically engineered children and the next protectors of the New Earth Government.

Or so it was supposed to go. Things weren't exactly working out to plan, which is why Anton was here, sitting quietly, thinking.

The Engel Project had more than its share of problems, not the least of which was getting the funding and sponsorship of the government. Problems in development were to be expected. After all, he had pioneered several new kinds of technology just to create a viable synthorg. It's not garden-variety science that allows one to genetically engineer monsters, graft an enhanced cybernetic exoskeleton on them, and create a neural interface that allows them to be controlled like puppets. It was, for lack of a better term, a miracle - but it wasn't from God. It was from Anton.



The solution to the persistent problem of Engel control was the addition of a control chip. Create a techno-mystical bond between the brains of the pilot and the synthorg and control was complete, as evidenced by the significant edge Engels gave the New Earth Government on the field of battle.

That wasn't working with the Nephilim. It seemed to be a logical extension of the science to create smaller synthorgs, something to bridge the gap between man and powered armor. That was what the creatures all around him were, newly designed monsters for use with the Nephilim Project. The same principles were used. Genetically-engineer smaller monsters, graft cybernetic exoskeletons onto them, and create an over-riding system of neural controls. He'd even pioneered a new kind of interface chip for the handlers. That should have done it.

Except the Nephilim kept turning on their handlers, ripping them to bloody pieces.

Para-psychic connection was the next possible solution. Use telepaths as handlers, to increase the control. The Office of Internal Security had been very cooperative in providing him test sub-

jects. The results were better, but eventually the Nephilim would flip a switch and fly into a homicidal rage. This meant the deaths of many more telepaths.

So much waste.

What was next? What was the thing that would solve this problem? He couldn't alter the creatures any more without compromising their utility. He couldn't do much more to the telepathic handlers, either - at least, not legally. Hmm, there was a thought.

Perhaps a thought for another time. Anton supposed that it was best not to bend any more rules than he already had, at least for the time being. True, times called for a loosening of rules, but Anton would prefer that there were none.

Every now and again, it struck him what it was he did for a living and how it might be considered odd by most people. Fortunately, he could care less about most people, but memory paths are memory paths and sometimes one must simply surrender to the journey.

There was a time when Anton had much simpler aspirations. He'd been a doctoral student studying at Cambridge's School of Biological Sciences. Not just any doctoral student, but the top doctoral student. Many companies were trying to recruit him, as were many research institutions. In those days of naivete, Anton thought he could serve the world best by becoming a teacher, using his particular knowledge and insight to bring up a new and gifted generation of scientists. His mother thought that was noble, while his father was simply disappointed that his brilliant son would waste his life like that.

Then the First Arcanotech War happened and everything changed.

Government service was now where Anton knew his talents would be best served. Almost immediately, he was put on a team whose responsibility was studying the anatomy of the enemy and mapping his genetic code. It meant dissecting a lot of dead enemy soldiers, and vivisectioning a few not-so-dead ones. The way surgeons have difficulty relating to people is the way Anton now had difficulty relating to Nazzadi. All he saw was a collection of parts.

The rest of the war was spent on biological warfare, trying to find toxins that might incapacitate the Nazzadi or genetically-engineered viruses to kill them but leave us unharmed. Anton found that research most distasteful.

But it was the months leading up to the Second Arcanotech War that stood out in his mind, particularly now. It was the first time the government had given him his own research facility. Things had started to appear across the Earth, inhuman things that the New Earth Government needed to understand. He and his staff were going to study them, pull them apart, and help the government figure out what to do with them - and how to kill them most efficiently.

It was a black, no-faced thing they brought in first. Now, Anton knew that the thing was called a Gaunt, but then it was simply magical. A creature not evolved of this Earth, something that defied what men knew. Something changed in him over the following weeks. His fascination grew until his life became about nothing but the monsters the government brought through his door. At first, his eyes saw them as brilliant aberrations, oddities to be mastered. The more he delved, however, the more he came to see them differently, as doorways into a greater natural order. They were children of the cosmos, not just something that crawled out of the mud on one small world. They were his link to something far greater.

And now here in his lab, he sat with monsters that were not evolved from any natural order. Instead, they were his children, part of Anton's order.

His problems forgotten, a feeling swelled inside him. It was the closest thing to love Anton had ever felt.

chapter four

from the vault

TECHNOLOGY & VEHICLES

Many New Earth Government manufacturing industries rely solely on government contracts to remain profitable. Experience on the battlefield opens doors to new ideas. What lessons can be learned? What improvements can be made? How can we supply our soldiers with better equipment to improve their survival chances during their next engagement? These are the kinds of questions asked over and over again by all branches of the Armed Forces. Fortunately, private sector businesses are only too willing to supply the next answer.

With newer combat gear specifications and improved equipment models comes the need to re-supply the troops in the field. It's almost impossible to reach one hundred percent of the combat units deployed in all theaters throughout the world with standard supply depot practices. That's why the Armed Forces created the Rapid Field Supply Initiative (RFSI) – a means to deliver critical equipment to the field from mobile supply naval ships. One of the newest additions to the list of standard issue battle equipment is the Modular Tactical Combat Vest (MTCV).

The MTCV has been designed as body armor with the standard combat soldier in mind. It weighs about thirty pounds and is designed to distribute the weight throughout the torso for maximum comfort. The modular distribution of small arms protective plate inserts effectively protects the wearer from small and medium caliber rounds, as well as shrapnel. Highly flexible conductive mesh, sewn into the fabric of the vest, also protects the wearer against the deadly impact of energy weapons by absorbing much of the energy around the vest. The MTCV is designed as armor protection for the torso and groin area, leaving the head and limbs exposed. Built-in network cables also allows for the insertion of a PCPU and communications gear for the soldier to access through a link to the MCH Combat Helmet.

Here is a list of newly issued combat gear that is only now making an appearance on the battlefield. Some of these items are not generally available to the civilian public. However, the listed cost assumes underground or black market availability. Those items listed that seem common are merely updated versions of old gear formerly carried by soldiers, such as the canteen and the folding shovel.

VEHICLES OF WAR

Starting on the next page are some of the latest vehicles that have been added to the New Earth Government Armed Forces arsenal. A great deal of emphasis has been applied to providing sufficient support to the average combat soldier on the ground. In order to maintain an elevated momentum of fast-attack strikes and high mobility, the Armed Forces must rely on a cross-section of small vehicles capable of protecting, delivering, extracting, and supporting with covering fire the friendly ground units taking the field. In addition, the doctrine of engaging in the same fast-attack, high mobility tactic against the Esoteric Order of Dagon is something that only a new breed of underwater combat craft can help to realize.

MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT

EQUIPMENT NAME	COST
Canteen	20 Tn
Combat Diving Gear (Mask, Ruggedized Air Tank)	665 Tn
Cutting Torch	294 Tn
Distress Beacon	157 Tn
Field ECM Generator	42000 Tn
Field Motion Sensor Array	38500 Tn
Flare Gun	37 Tn
Folding Shovel	30 Tn
Geographic Surveyor Pad (Battlefield Plotting)	2590 Tn
Hand-Held Laser Targeting Device (Target for artillery and air strikes)	1050 Tn
Portable Bio-Scanner (100 yard range)	7700 Tn
Tools – Armorer Set	245 Tn
Tools – Electronic Set	105 Tn
Tools – Mechanic Set	280 Tn
Tools – Standard Set	200 Tn
Underwater Digital Camera	475 Tn

ARMOR NAME	TYPE	PROTECTION	COST	ARMOR
MTCV	Light Energy-Resistant Combat Armor	+1/+1	1720 Tn	
MCH	Tactical Combat Helmet	+1/+1	1245 Tn	

- The MTCV combat armor provides an additional +1 worth of protection against energy weapons, such as Migou HPM weapons or null rays.
- The MCH combat helmet provides an additional bonus on top of the protection offered by the MTCV armor or concealed armor. It does not provide additional benefit on top of other light or heavy combat armor. It also includes an integrated communications suite.

M-115A4 "AMEE" AAMEV

The AMEV, unofficially christened "Amee" by soldiers in the field, is well-equipped to carry out its sole combat mission – to treat and evacuate casualties, and to provide the necessary tools and equipment to administer effective triage care prior to arrival at the nearest field hospital. The AMEV is an airborne armored transport craft with an array of sensor, communication, and navigation equipment common in modern military vehicles – however, it carries no weaponry. A loading door in the rear provides litter access to the vehicle. The vehicle is large enough to accommodate four patients at a time, if all are lying prone on treatment cots. The AMEV's medical support capabilities include a medical suction system, an onboard nanite programming unit, an onboard oxygen production unit, and up-to-date medical mentoring systems. Spacing in the vehicle allows for two medics to provide treatment to their patients effectively.

Type: Airborne Armored Medical Evacuation Vehicle (5 AP)

Manufacturer: Eurodine Systems

Size: Large (38 ft.)

Passengers: 1 Pilot, 2 Medics, 4 Patients

Cargo: 490 cubic feet/10,000 lbs.

Cost: 2.5 million Tn

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) 0

Sensors (*Perception*) 0

Frame (*Strength*) 7

Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) -1

Warning Systems (*Reflex*) 0

SENSOR SYSTEMS

Nightvision

Radar/IFF

Scan

Targeting +1

X-ray

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

ECM

Sealed System

MOVEMENT

Air Speed: 180 mph (444/108 ypt)

Acceleration Code: C (2/2)

A-Pods

STRUCTURE

Integrity 10

Armor 2/2

M-127A1 ARK ARCS

A whole new dimension of modern warfare has opened up due to the advent of combat-applied sorcery. Utilizing arcane rituals for intelligence gathering, healing, or protection on the battlefield has proven to be advantageous. However, the drawback to providing arcane support is the need to provide a consecrated ritual space. Thus, the NEG Armed Forces requested a new armored combat vehicle designed to carry a mobile consecrated space for sorcerous use. As the first ever Arcane Ritual Combat Support vehicle, the M-127A1 Ark has certainly lived up to expectation. The Ark contains a large ritual compartment that can be entered through a rear access door. The interior is equipped with plenty of storage space for ritual ingredients. A security system ensures that only authorized personnel with the appropriate clearance have access to the vehicle. A separate control cabin allows for the piloting of the vessel without compromising access to the secure materials within. The Ark is also armed with a twin-linked medium laser cannon turret for self-defense. The interior the Ark is inscribed with all the necessary symbols to maintain the appropriate protective wards.

Type: Arcane Ritual Combat Support (6 AP)

Manufacturer: United Defense, Inc.

Size: Behemoth (60 ft.)

Passengers: 1 pilot, 4 passengers

Cargo: 5493 cubic feet/109,860 lbs.

Cost: 112,000 Tn

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) -1

Sensors (*Perception*) 0

Frame (*Strength*) 7

Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) -1

Warning Systems (*Reflex*) +1

SENSOR SYSTEMS

Long Range

Nightvision

Radar/IFF

Scan

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Arcane Wards (variable)

Stealth System

MOVEMENT

Air Speed: 180 mph (444/108 ypt)

Acceleration Code: C (2/2)

A-Pods

STRUCTURE

Integrity 10

Armor 1/1

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

2 Linked Laser Cannons (Medium)

UCH-87 BANSHEE

Irish mythology tells that the banshee is an omen of death. It certainly seems that way to enemy units when a flight of UCH-87's suddenly pop up over the horizon. The Banshee is a heavily armed combat hovercraft engineered specifically to deploy and retrieve powered armor combat units. The cockpit of the craft is designed to house a pilot, co-pilot, and a fire control specialist. However, the outer frame of the vehicle is constructed with twelve platform pods, six on each side that can accommodate one powered armor trooper each. All a trooper has to do is step onto the platform and activate the mag-lock that seals him to the fuselage of the craft. An easy release of the mag-lock allows the trooper to step off and jump from the craft at any time. The purpose of this design is to allow for rapid embarkation and disembarkation of powered armored soldiers and to allow each soldier the opportunity to provide air to ground covering fire as the Banshee approaches its drop zone.

Type: Universal Combat Hovercraft (8 AP)

Manufacturer: United Defense, Inc.

Size: Behemoth (45 ft.)

Passengers: 3 crew, 12 passengers

Cargo: 760 cubic feet/15,276 lbs.

Cost: 1.5 million Tn

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) 0

Sensors (*Perceptions*) 0

Frame (*Strength*) 8

Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) -1

Warning Systems (*Reflex*) 0

SENSOR SYSTEMS

Nightvision

Radar/IFF

Scan

Targeting +1

Thermal

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

ECM

Ejector System

Sealed System

MOVEMENT

Air Speed: 180 mph (444/108 ypt)

Acceleration Code: C (2/2)

A-Pods

STRUCTURE

Integrity 10

Armor 1/1

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

1 AP Cannon (Medium)

2 Linked RMG-10M Rail Guns (1500 rounds each)

2 x Rocket Pods (Large)

M-867 PROWLER LSV

The Prowler is a high-speed, highly mobile, lightly armored strike vehicle designed for fast-attack military operations. Though equipped with A-Pods, these vehicles are meant to be dropped from an airborne transport to skim across the ground at a high rate of speed. They are typically deployed to support hit-and-run raids, reconnaissance missions, combat search and rescue, or guerilla warfare tactics. This vehicle is capable of carrying three soldiers. The driver sits to the left, the gunnery chair to the right allows for the operation of the forward-facing mounted FN-MAGiC machinegun, while a third standing position behind the other two is designed for the operation of a swivel-mount heavy weapon. This weapon is interchangeable, but is most often an RMG-10M anti-mech rail gun or an RPG-27 rocket launcher. The vehicle is typically painted to camouflage it against its operating terrain. However, blackened versions of these vehicles are especially popular with special forces units.

Type: Light Strike Vehicle (5 AP)

Manufacturer: Eurodine Systems

Size: Large (18 ft.)

Passengers: 3 crew

Cargo: 105 cubic feet/2112 lbs.

Cost: 29,400 Tn

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) +2

Sensors (*Perceptions*) 0

Frame (*Strength*) 7

Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) -1

Warning Systems (*Reflex*) 0

SENSOR SYSTEMS

Nightvision

Targeting +1

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

ECM

MOVEMENT

Ground Speed: 120 mph (296/72 ypt)

Acceleration Code: B (2/1)

A-Pod

STRUCTURE

Integrity 3

Armor 0/1

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

FN-MAGiC (Forward Facing)

RMG-10M Rail Gun – or –

RPG-27 Rocket Launcher (Swivel Mount)

ACV-4 SILHOUETTE

While the C-10 Griffon serves well as a standard military transport, special forces mission requirements have called for a new kind of vessel that can safely insert, extract, and support teams with a minimal chance of detection. The Armed Forces specifications for the commissioning of such a vessel also calls for enough heavy firepower to cover the ground teams in emergency situations. The ACV-4 Silhouette is the answer to that need. Its cargo capacity holds enough to deliver a small insertion team, typically six soldiers, and two M-867 Prowler LSVs. Stealth panels create a reduced-signature silhouette that is difficult to detect with nearly any kind of surveillance. The ACV-4 also carries the latest in sensory equipment that allows an onboard team coordinator to update periodic situational reports to the Special Operations team lead.

Type: Armored Combat Support (10 AP)
Manufacturer: BAE Systems
Size: Behemoth (100 ft.)
Passengers: 4 crew, 6 passengers
Cargo: 5755 cubic feet/116,950 lbs.
Cost: 71 million Tn

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) 0
Sensors (*Perceptions*) +1
Frame (*Strength*) 10
Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) +1
Warning Systems (*Reflex*) +1

SENSOR SYSTEMS

Long Range
Nightvision
Radar/IFF
Scan
Sonar
Targeting (+2)
X-Ray

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

ECM
Ejector System
Stealth System

MOVEMENT

Air Speed: 600 mph (1480/360 ypt)
Acceleration Code: D (3/2)
A-Pods

STRUCTURE

Integrity 10
Armor 2/2

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

1 AP Cannon (Large)
2 Laser Cannons (Medium)
2 Rocket Pods (Large)

SS-7 STRIKER FAST

The new NEG strategic focus has called for the need for new specialized submarine combat vehicles. Where rapid deployment has become a mainstay with land warfare, the ability to quickly strike in force against EOD units is still lacking. The Striker is specifically designed to meet those needs, with a punch. Rail weapons and laser cannons modified for an aquatic environment combine with two torpedo pods (one on each side) to deliver a jarring punch. The high voltage electromagnetic shield can be charged to dissuade certain underwater life forms from touching the skin of the craft. The Striker is large enough to carry four aquatic mecha, a full squad of powered armor units, or a squad of light infantry equipped with underwater gear.

Type: Fast Attack Submersible Transport (12 AP)
Manufacturer: BAE Systems
Size: Large (120 ft.)
Passengers: 4 crew + combat squad (mecha, power armor, or soldiers)
Cargo: 5200 cubic feet/104,520 lbs.
Cost: 66 million Tn

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) -1
Sensors (*Perception*) +1
Frame (*Strength*) 10
Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) 0
Warning Systems (*Reflex*) +1

SENSOR SYSTEMS

Long Range
Nightvision
Radar/IFF
Scan
Sonar
Targeting +1
Thermal

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Cold Resistance
Depth Reinforcement
ECM
Life Support

MOVEMENT

Air/Water Speed: 270 mph (666/162 ypt)
Acceleration Code: B (2/1)
A-Pod

STRUCTURE

Integrity 10
Armor 2/2

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

2 x RMG-10M Rail Gun
2 Amphibious Laser Cannons (Large)
2 Torpedo Pods (Large)

MECHA & NEPHILIM

NEW MECHA TECHNOLOGY

This section details two important New Earth Government mecha technological advances.

THE LIMITED STEALTH SYSTEM

True stealth systems incorporate chameleon panels, silent running, heat baffles, and stealth anti-radar coating to make a mech virtually impossible to detect. This technology is touchy and fragile and it has been difficult to modify for use on powered armor, where such a system could be put to a variety of critical uses.

A recent breakthrough has made a limited version of such a system possible. While it does not have full chameleon panels, it contains camouflage panels that mimic the basic colors and patterns around the mech. It has heat baffles and stealth anti-radar coating, but is not silent.

In essence, the limited stealth system provides a pilot with one of two bonuses to his use of the Stealth skill. If he is making a Test against a static degree and difficulty, then the limited stealth system lowers the degree for the Test one whole category. If the pilot is engaged in a Contest using his Stealth skill, then the limited stealth system provides him with a Contest Bonus of +4. Overall, a mech with a limited stealth system makes noise, so it can be heard, and it does show up on X-ray sensors, like all stealth mecha. However, it does not show up on thermal scanners nor does it have a radar signature.

THE MIMIC SYSTEM

These special broadcast systems are designed to mimic the natural sounds of many different living beings. This technology is designed to confuse enemies or possibly lure them into traps. The average mimic system is programmed to emulate nearly every major living thing on Earth, as well as the primary creatures that make up the Esoteric Order of Dagon and the Disciples of the Rapine Storm.

Sensing that a mimic system is not a real creature requires an Observation Contest against the LAI's Expert Performance skill (usable only within the confines of the mimic system).

NEPHILIM

The Nephilim, as first presented on p. 29 of the *Damnation View*, are an experimental application of the technology behind the Engel Project. They are, essentially, smaller synthorgs, filling the gap between man and powered armor. Nephilim handlers are para-psychically capable people who are implanted with an arcantech chip called the Nephilim Synthesis Interface. As with the Engel Synthesis Interface, each handler is attuned to only one Nephilim at a time.

NEPHILIM RULES

Handlers, when controlling their Nephilim, enter a dissociated state where much of their consciousness is transferred to the creature. They remain roughly aware of their surroundings, so

they are not entirely helpless. However, a handler may either be in control of the Nephilim or in control of his own body – not both at the same time. If he breaks control of the Nephilim to take control of his body for any reason while the Nephilim is in a dangerous or threatening situation, it will cause an instinct feedback loop. The creature will then do everything it can to leave its situation to come and kill its handler, with haste.

While in control of the Nephilim, the handler senses through the creature's senses remotely, as far as his telepathic abilities will allow. He issues telepathic commands to the Nephilim, which it is compelled to follow to the spirit of the letter. However, if the Nephilim and handler are ever separated by more than 50 feet, an instinct feedback loop will occur and the Nephilim will again turn and try to kill its handler, with haste.

Furthermore, instinct feedback loops occur randomly. Your Storyguide will have you check for one at random intervals, from once a week to once an hour. Roll one die – if you roll a one, a loop occurs and the Nephilim turns and tries to kill you. Fortunately, all Nephilim are designed to be locked down and handlers can do this by pressing a button on a special bracelet. Once locked down, it takes days for a Nephilim to recover from its rage and be useful again.

Handlers also carry a special electronic tablet that displays the Nephilim's visual and audio sensory input for others, with a range of 200 ft.

Use the rules for Engels when determining how long it will take for a Nephilim to both heal and be repaired.

CREATING NEPHILIM HANDLERS

Handlers must be erupted para-psychics with access to manipulative talents, and must choose the telepathy power. As Nephilim are only approved for testing under the watchful eye of the Engel Project and the military, handlers must also choose certain Qualities. If the Character is military or law enforcement, you must take some level of the Authority Asset and the Duty (3) Drawback. If the Character is a criminal who has "volunteered" for the program, you must take the Duty (3) and Watched (3) Drawbacks. All handler Characters must also choose the new Nephilim Synthesis Interface Drawback.

NEW DRAWBACK

NEPHILIM SYNTHESIS INTERFACE (1)

Your Character now has an implant in his brain that attunes him to a Nephilim – he is now techno-mystically linked to a monstrous alien cyborg. Characters with a Nephilim Synthesis Interface begin the game with one Insanity Point. They must also succeed at a Challenging Insanity Test every month of game time; failure adds another Insanity Point to the Character's pool. He does, however, now have one Nephilim that obeys him most of the time – and occasionally tries to kill him. No one with an Engel Synthesis Interface, who has bonded with a Ta'ge symbiont, or who is a sorcerer, can receive a Nephilim Synthesis Interface.



EMIM

Emim are terrifying creatures. Not only is it a hulking monstrosity capable of ripping through walls and biting people in half, there is something in its otherworldly howl that brings fear bubbling to the surface in those close by.

The thing is basically bipedal, with a snout filled with sharp teeth. Its armor conceals most of its biological pieces most of the time, so that it appears to be an unusually-designed suit of heavy powered armor. However, one command and plates slide open to allow the Emim to howl – and tear chunks out of enemies with its vicious bite.

Special Rules: Anytime an Emim is not in turn-based conflict, it can emit an unearthly howl that inspires terror in those who hear it. Those within 50 feet must succeed at a Challenging Fear Test and those within 100 feet must succeed at an Average Fear Test, or suffer a Fear Effect.

Emim are protected as if they had a Life Support mecha system.



Average Emim

Allegiance: New Earth Government

Scale: Vitality

Size: Large (10 to 12 ft. tall)

Attributes: Agility 8, Intellect 3, Perception 9, Presence 7, Strength 18, Tenacity 12

Secondary Attributes: Actions 2, Orgone 6, Reflex 7

General Skills: Athletics: Adept (3), Observation: Master (5), Stealth: Adept (3), Survival: Expert (4)

Combat Skills: Dodge: Expert (4), Fighting: Expert (4), Marksman: Adept (3)

Close Quarters Weapons: Bite (+3, requires both Actions), Claws (+2)

Embedded Ranged Weapons: Deathmaster 2000 (20 rounds, usually with M100 and M-482 grenades), FN-MAGiC (500 rounds), Fumigator 2000 (50 rounds)

Damage Bonus: +6

Vitality: 20

Armor: 3/3

Regeneration: 2 Points

Fear Factor: 16

Temperament: Sadistic & Vicious

Senses: Acute Smell & Taste, Nightvision, Thermal, Wary (as Asset)

Movement & Speed: Jumping (Double), Land [25 mph (62/14 ypt)]

REPHAIM

Rephaim are cunning and dangerous creatures. Not only are they capable of closing distances with amazing speed and crawling over and through obstacles, their skin is naturally electrified, making one touch very dangerous.

The things are not quite bipedal – they have an upright torso connected to four legs. Unlike the Emim, there's no way Rephaim can masquerade as heavy powered armor as their very design is alien. They are unnaturally skinny underneath their sleek armor, with overly long, multi-jointed arms, a long neck, and a small head. However, this frame conceals a creature with massive offensive capability, something to which one does not want to get too close.

Special Rules:

Any creature that is not grounded or shielded against electricity will suffer when striking a Rephaim, as well as anyone attacked by a close quarters attack that does at least one point of Vitality damage. Such victims must succeed at a Hard Tenacity Feat Test or lose 2 Actions for one to ten minutes (roll one die). This can effectively reduce a victim's Actions to zero. Only one Test needs to be made per turn struck and these effects are not cumulative. A target may again be affected on the turn following his recovery from the last shock.

The Raphaim's flamethrower has range of 5/10/50, with a Damage of +2, and 2 Shots per turn. It also ignites flammable materials.



Rephaim are protected as if they had a Life Support mecha system.

Average Rephaim

Allegiance: New Earth Government

Scale: Vitality

Size: Large (9 to 11 ft. tall)

Attributes: Agility 16, Intellect 3, Perception 10, Presence 7, Strength 12, Tenacity 10

Secondary Attributes: Actions 3, Orgone 5, Reflex 9

General Skills: Athletics: Master (5), Observation: Adept (3), Stealth: Master (5), Survival: Expert (4)

Combat Skills: Dodge: Expert (4), Fighting: Expert (2), Marksman: Adept (3)

Close Quarters Weapons: Bite (+3, requires both Actions), Claws (+2)

Embedded Ranged Weapons: Flamethrower (100 rounds), FN-MAGiC (500 rounds)

Damage Bonus: +3

Vitality: 16

Armor: 3/3

Regeneration: 2 Points

Fear Factor: 16

Temperament: Clever & Fiendish

Senses: Acute Hearing, Acute Smell & Taste, Nightvision, Thermal

Movement & Speed: Climbing (Quadruple, can cling to sheer surfaces), Jumping (Quadruple), Land (52 mph (134/30 ypt))



BRUSHFIRE (KAZIDI)

Type: Interceptor Mech (9 AP)
Size: Medium (22' tall)

While Nazzadi mecha are known for being fast, the Brushfire is especially so. Nazzadi Design Systems has been able to tweak the Brushfire in new ways, bringing out unheard of speed in a standard mech. It is an interceptor, designed to overtake incoming or retreating units and either keep them busy or slow them down until reinforcements arrive – or at least keep them on the radar. Embedded grav bombs assist with this job, though they do also slow the Brushfire down. That's where its lightning gun comes in, capable of taking on multiple units at the same time. Like its namesake, the Brushfire moves faster and causes more damage than one might expect.

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) +1
Sensors (*Perception*) 0
Frame (*Strength*) 4
Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) 0
Warning Systems (*Reflex*) +1

SENSORY SYSTEMS

Broadband Audio
Long Range
Nightvision
Radar/IFF
Targeting (+2)

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

ECM
Life Support
Life Support Pod
Manipulator Arms

MOVEMENT

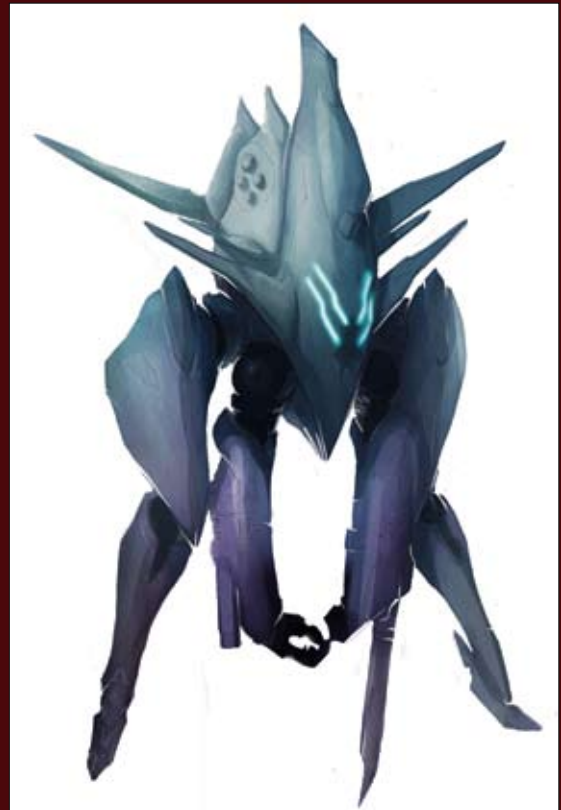
Ground Speed: 30 mph (74 ypt/18 ypt)
Air/Water Speed: 240 mph
(592/144 ypt)
Acceleration Code: A [1/1]
Jumping Distance: 10/5
A-Pods
Enhanced A-Pod Speed (Octuple)

STRUCTURE

Integrity 15
Armor 1/2
Damage Control Systems 3/turn

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

Chaff Dispenser (Medium)
Grav Bomb (Medium)
Laser Cannon (Medium)
Lightning Gun (Medium)



SUNSPOT (ROKI)

Type: Mimic Powered Armor (3 AP)
Size: Tiny (10' tall)

A breakthrough in mecha technology, the Nazzadi Design Systems Sunspot creates a new niche within the New Earth Government Combined Arms Concept. It utilizes two new types of technology – the Mimic System and the Limited Stealth System – to be a living lure, flushing out enemies in places where they otherwise might be impossible to reach. They can sound like Migou Battlereads giving orders, creatures from the Rapine Storm calling for help, or Deep Ones revelling in the hunt. As long as the Sunspot doesn't stretch its boundaries, it can do it all from virtual invisibility, making it the perfect tool with which to set up ambushes for the NEG's enemies.

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) -1
Sensors (*Perception*) 0
Frame (*Strength*) 1 (-1 damage)
Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) 0
Warning Systems (*Reflex*) -1

SENSORY SYSTEMS

Broadband Audio
Mimic System
Nightvision
Radar/IFF

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Life Support
Limited Stealth System
Ejector System
Manipulator Arms

MOVEMENT

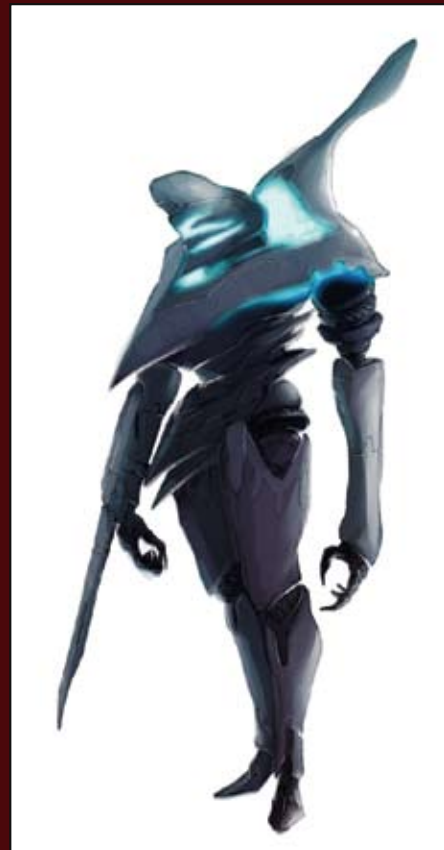
Ground Speed: 120 mph
(296 ypt/72 ypt)
Acceleration Code: C [2/2]
Jumping Distance: 4/2
Airdroppable
Enhanced Land Speed (Quadruple)

STRUCTURE

Integrity 5
Armor 1/1
Damage Control Systems 1/turn

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

Lightning Gun (Small)
Hyperedge Claws (Small)



The latest batch had completed Phase One. Their sad Human identities had finally been broken. It was surprising to 808 just how long it took some of these creatures to let go, even in the face of extreme sleep deprivation. Some of them would always drop dead of exhaustion rather than just give in to the inevitable.

It was responsible for administrating this facility. 808 had been around assimilation since the early days of the process. There may be those who believed that Humans could be enslaved without such effort, but 808 believed differently. Why take such an unnecessary risk?

Once the Humans were removed from their Phase One cells, they were little more than grown infants. Their adult psyches had been shattered, and they mewled and cried like mammalian babies. 808 often noted these creatures' capacity for survival, that even in the face of something so dehumanizing that they clung so desperately to any kind of life. That was a trait that would serve them well in their proper roles as slaves.

Though necessary, invasive neuro-manipulation in Phase Two carried an 11.73% attrition rate. There were those who, even in their pliable state, simply could not process the way their brains were being rewired. The process required repeated surgeries over time and some of the subjects simply could not handle the strain. 808 was doing what it could to keep the waste to a necessary minimum.

The sterilizing mist filled the Phase Two chamber. Humans were very prone to infection, especially in their cranial cavities. Fortunately, the viruses and bacteria of Earth were merely trifles, things that could be eliminated by the most remedial of Migou pharmaceuticals. However, it was not pleasant to work in and created occasionally distracting working conditions. It was the price of having to work with such crude genetic material.

Migou specialists strapped a dozen Human subjects into operating chairs and administered medication. The subjects put up no fight, staring at their surroundings with glassy eyes. 808 knew from experience that they had no idea what was occurring around them, nor could they process it if they did. They were slack-jawed and limp, drooling from the ordeals they had been put through over the past weeks. There were days where 808 wondered why the Migou didn't just leave them there.

However, there was a tactical need for Human blanks in the here and now and 808 was determined to produce the most effective ones of any Migou facility. It was grateful for the push into the continent the Humans called North America, for it was providing a bountiful crop of new material.

As the specialists lined up their tools and formed their manipulative digits into the dextrous limbs they required, 808 could not help but think of the Nazzadi. It had been there when the Nazzadi were created and in fact administrated several memory implantation facilities. Such efforts were uncharacteristically inefficient for the Migou. It was one time when Migou patience had failed. 808 wished they had taken the extra time to perform this sort of conditioning on their cloned servants. If they had, the Nazzadi would have done this job for the Migou and they wouldn't have to be here.

The surgical lasers heated up and the specialists began to cut. There was always a gentle pop when the top of the subjects' skulls were removed the first time. There it was – the centralized processor of the Human being. So crude. So many million years behind in evolution.

Here was where the process really began to take hold. Everything up until now was simply the buildup to this moment. Though Phase Two took months, even with the accelerated healing brought on by Migou sorcery and para-psychic power, it was what made assimilation work.

First, certain pleasure responses were removed from the brain. Sex was the single most potent drive and weakness in the Human condition. They lacked even the most basic self-awareness to recognize this. By removing the sex drive, the subject would no longer be tempted by such base desires and no longer be driven to fulfill them. The key was to remove the sex drive without interfering with hormone production – the subject needed to remain strong and healthy.

Along with that was the removal of the pleasure response to chemical stimulation. Addiction was something these creatures succumbed to most readily and easily, and which could interfere with their purpose. Thus, blanks were designed to be incorruptible by pleasure-inducing drugs.

Second, and most complicated, was to interfere with or reroute more delicate neural pathways. Humans didn't understand how much of their personalities and desires were simply a function of how their brains functioned. With the proper knowledge, and alien levels of manual dexterity, nearly any aspect of a Human could be modified to something the Migou desired. As part of this process, all of a subject's affection and subservience responses were rewired to fixate on the Migou. Any aggression pathways were likewise rerouted to be targeted on the subject's own species. They came to love the Migou as parents, creators, and saviors, while loathing their





own species with a murderous hate. All this from a series of operations. It made 808 wonder if these creatures really had any true free will at all. They thought they did, but one flip of a neural switch and everything was different.

Third, and most simply, was to begin to rewrite the subjects' memories. Fortunately, memory modification was something the Migou had mastered during the Nazzadi experiment. Some were meant to be spies and to recapture their memories - with important modifications. For others, it was unnecessary that they remember much of their former selves. In either case, their minds were filled with false experiences which helped them regain mastery of their physical and mental abilities, but most importantly reinforced servitude to the Migou. To the reconditioned Human, serving the Migou was natural, something they knew they were supposed to do all their life. In Human terms, they became like religious zealots.

The thing with the open skull twitched, its mouth making shapes like it wanted sound to come out. If it could speak, it would only shriek in pain. Fortunately, the Migou used a targeted paralytic that deadened the vocal chords so that the subjects couldn't make a sound beyond a whisper. It was necessary for the subjects to be lucid during the process, so that the specialists could gauge stages of their work. The sounds these things made would otherwise be distracting.

Despite the proven process, there were those that argued that such treatment was unnecessary, that blocking the subjects' pain could only speed up the process. They theorized that the pain these Humans suffered scarred them in some permanent psychological way.

808 would have none of it. After all, these creatures were only animals.

chapter five

abominable snowmen

HISTORY

The story of the Migou begins millions of years before anything resembling life as we know it existed on the Earth. They are an ancient species, who have long had access to the things the mortal races of this planet are just beginning to understand.

The dwarf planet we have come to know as Pluto is home to the Migou and has been for millennia. However, Pluto is not the planet on which the Migou evolved. It is not their true home. The place that birthed the Migou is far, far away, a world that would take hundreds of years to reach, even with advanced space travel technology. The Migou in this galaxy are colonists, sent millions of years ago. The Earth is the planet that held the resources they needed, but it was Pluto, though mostly barren, that most closely resembled the atmosphere and gravity that was comfortable to them. The Migou of this galaxy don't often communicate with the rest of their kind, as it takes years for messages to reach the nearest colony. One or two large messages, containing news and research breakthroughs, are sent and received each 200 days (about four years).

The Migou arrived, fortunately, after the reign of the Old Ones, at a time when the dominant lifeform of the galaxy was a species we have come to know as the Elder Race. The Elder Race had survived the predations of the Old Ones and once again spread out over most of the planet. They were, by most accounts, a primarily benevolent race that kept to themselves. The only other sentient species on the planet was the Great Race, who dwelled in their empires in the southern hemisphere.

Though they had chosen Pluto as their first colony, the Migou found there were resources they needed on Earth. The first Migou scouts made their way to the planet and discovered a world filled with minerals and other needed things, a place that would fill the gaps in the Migou colony machine. It was a relatively peaceful moment in the history of the Earth, so the Migou felt that it was a safe thing to create their own outposts on the planet to fulfill their needs.

No one is entirely certain how the war began. Migou stories claim that the Elder Race was panicky after being nearly wiped out by the Old Ones and their minions and struck first out of fear. What little remains of the Elder Race points to the Migou arriving and aggressively taking whatever they wanted, with no regard for who was already there. What would have been a simple territorial squabble to other species ignited something in both the Migou and the Elder Race and things quickly escalated into all out warfare.

During all of this, the Migou had little contact with the Great Race. The Migou supposedly sent emissaries to their southern neighbors, but the two never found a need to interact. The Great Race was neither hostile toward nor interested in the Migou, and the Migou never pushed the issue. The creatures from Pluto were and always have been very cautious about such beings, as the technology and advancement developed and embraced by the Great Race was so far beyond them that the Migou simply knew better and stayed away.

The war between the Elder Race and the Migou lasted far longer than either would have liked. At first, it was a series of skirmishes. This quickly grew into full-blown tactical movements. The Migou fought with precision and planning. The Elder Race fought with technology alien even for the Migou, and their hypnotically-controlled slaves, the Shoggoths – fifteen foot balls of viscous protoplasmic jelly that looked like masses of bubbles. One side would gain advantage, only to lose it to the other in the next battle. This went on for decades.

Then the Migou adapted. Their bodies had changed to work with the war and the racial consciousness had forced the birth of many warriors. The Migou's forces grew in not only number, but skill, while the Elder Race had begun to slide backwards. The Elder Race was driven back by the tide of the Migou, every year ceding more and more land to the invaders. To make matters worse, the Shoggoths, as they had before, grew smarter and rebelled against their masters. The Elder Race was not in much of a position to put down a rebellion of powerful, clever slaves in the middle of a war with an enemy that was winning more day by day.

Those few learned scholars sometimes wonder why the Elder Race never entreated the Great Race during this time. It is possible that the Great Race had issue with them or, more likely, saw no reason to become involved in the trifling of lesser beings.

It was during this time that the Migou's enemies discovered that they had lost the secrets to interstellar travel. Though they were, much like the Migou, colonists from a distant star-spanning civilization, they'd been here long enough to have gone native. Somehow, they'd lost knowledge that was an integral part of who they were – or at least who they used to be. They were stuck.

In the end, the Migou had conquered their enemy and driven them back to their cities in the Antarctic and eventually under the ocean. The war was over and the Migou had won. Much of the world was theirs for the taking – as long as they did not encroach too close to the Great Race, who seemed fundamentally disinterested in the war from day one.

However, instead of staying, many of the Migou left for Pluto. The racial consciousness that governed Migou breeding would kick into overdrive on Earth and their population would explode. They would have much more to manage and would come into serious competition with many of the lifeforms, both developing and developed, on the planet. It made sense to take the core of the race back to Pluto, where all would be comfortable and manageable, than it did to stay here. Besides, the Migou had already settled into the barren rock quite nicely.

And on Pluto they have stayed, for millions of years. Their race has flourished in this galaxy, although in the moderate population afforded by the planetoid they now call home. They have been very content to do all the things they do on a daily basis, using the Earth as a depot and a place to experiment with whatever they choose. That is, until recently.

Which brings us to the current century and the discovery of arcanotechnology. The creatures the Migou had regarded as semi-evolved primates now had power on a scale that made them a true threat. With the start of an honest understanding of the cosmos, who knows what these creatures might become? The decision was made quickly and easily – it was finally time to go to Earth and subjugate it, before its inhabitants became more dangerous than they already were.

There was one problem. The Migou hadn't fought a war in millions of years. Their ancient enemy, the Elder Race, had left this part of the universe long, long ago, and with them left the Migou's need to do battle. The physiology of the Migou had adapted and since there was no threat, no Migou with talents designed for fighting had been born. They needed warriors and it would take decades for the super-organism consciousness of the race to breed an army and have it mature. By then, it may have been too late.

However, the genetic material of the primates that thought they owned the Earth was simple, aggressive, and the Migou had mastered it centuries ago. The Migou could clone an army based off this DNA, artificially age the clones, and be ready to invade the Earth within a few years. Their advanced nanotech manufacturing techniques could keep up with the materials need, of that they were certain. The idea was sound but there was a giant hitch in the plan. Why would this race of clones fight the war the Migou wanted them to fight? Even indoctrination wouldn't be enough once they got to Earth and realized they were fighting their own.

The Migou had already mastered the process that had become known as assimilation. With resources already spread thin, there was just no way the Migou could perform such an involved procedure on millions of clones. There weren't enough Migou and there wasn't enough time. Then, a Migou specialist came up with the answer. If they combined military indoctrination with false memory implants, they could manufacture a race whose culture and ideals served the Migou's needs. It would be even more effective if this race believed that their culture and heritage were old, traditions from generations. Who they were would be so ingrained in them that they would never question the authenticity. The Migou could create a species, fill them full of carefully crafted lies, and they would go and put the Human race back in its place, until the Migou were ready to take over. It was elaborate, but what choice did they have?

Of course, some of the clones would have to be in on it, to help maintain the lie in which there would inevitably be cracks. These Firstborn were carefully indoctrinated and then offered a special place by their seemingly god-like creators. As long as they performed their duty, guiding the Migou's war and maintaining the facade, the Firstborn would be given a world to invade and slaves to master. They would be richly rewarded by their gods, the Migou. Naive and knowing nothing else in the universe, the Firstborn fanatically took the place that was handed to them.

Things didn't work out the way the Migou hoped. Their fears were realized when the Nazzadi did figure things out, with the help of the treacherous Firstborn Vreta, that they were fighting themselves. Though some of the Nazzadi remained loyal to their creators, the rebels won and joined the primates the Migou had sent them to enslave. Worse than that, they brought new technology to share with them. And none of that even spoke of the powerful halfbreeds that were to come.

Fortunately, the Migou super-organism had sensed that warriors were now necessary, so new generations of Migou soldiers had been and were being born, trained, and raised. Inadvertently, out of desperation, they had made the threat even greater. It would take them some time yet, but they would eventually go to Earth and take it themselves. While they waited for further generations of soldiers to mature, they built themselves a war machine unlike any other, creating a gigantic hive ship to house nearly half of their population for the invasion. They also took arcanotechnology to a new level and began to bring new war machines, partly organic, into the mix.

A little more than two decades after the decision that the primates of Earth had become a threat, the Migou Hive Ship left Pluto, bringing a war the likes of which no one had ever seen. A vanguard had been sent ahead to release arcane horrors into the world, just to destabilize things a little before the Migou's arrival. When they arrived, the Migou strikes were decisive and the New Earth Government was ill-equipped to deal with the invading army. During the two years of the Second Arcanotech War, more Human and Nazzadi lives were lost than in the First Arcanotech War. The Migou would have eventually won, if not for the appearance of the Cults.

The Migou were as surprised as everyone else to discover that an avatar of Hastur had manifested on the Plateau of Leng. They immediately began to research what other occult influences might be present on Earth. They soon had an accurate picture, far more accurate than that of the New Earth Government's, and they were forced to change their tactics. The Migou now fight a war to subjugate the Human race, but they also fight to destroy the Cults and send the Old Ones back.

For better or for worse, the fate of the Migou in this galaxy will be determined by the Aeon War, a war fought on a lush planet that they hope to keep in their possession, regardless of what other usurpers claim it as home.

THE LIMITATIONS OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

This section will reveal truths about the alien race known as the Migou. In order to do so, we have had to describe who they are in terms understandable to a Human. This does not do them justice. They are truly alien creatures who experience the universe in a very different way from us. Please keep this in mind while reading the Migou sections of this book – that this is not an entirely accurate description of these creatures, but instead the best possible approximation.

PHYSIOLOGY & PSYCHOLOGY

The Migou, from a scientific perspective, are a perplexing oddity. Their physiology is so complicated that it seems that the species is either a very lucky evolutionary accident or that was created by something trying to be deliberately clever. They are a combination of what can be likened to insect, crustacean, and fungus all wrapped up into a single organism. Their overall appearance is insectoid, with multiple segmented limbs, a segmented body, and wings. They have a crustacean's shell with fungoid cilia and structural shifting and reproduction similar to fungus

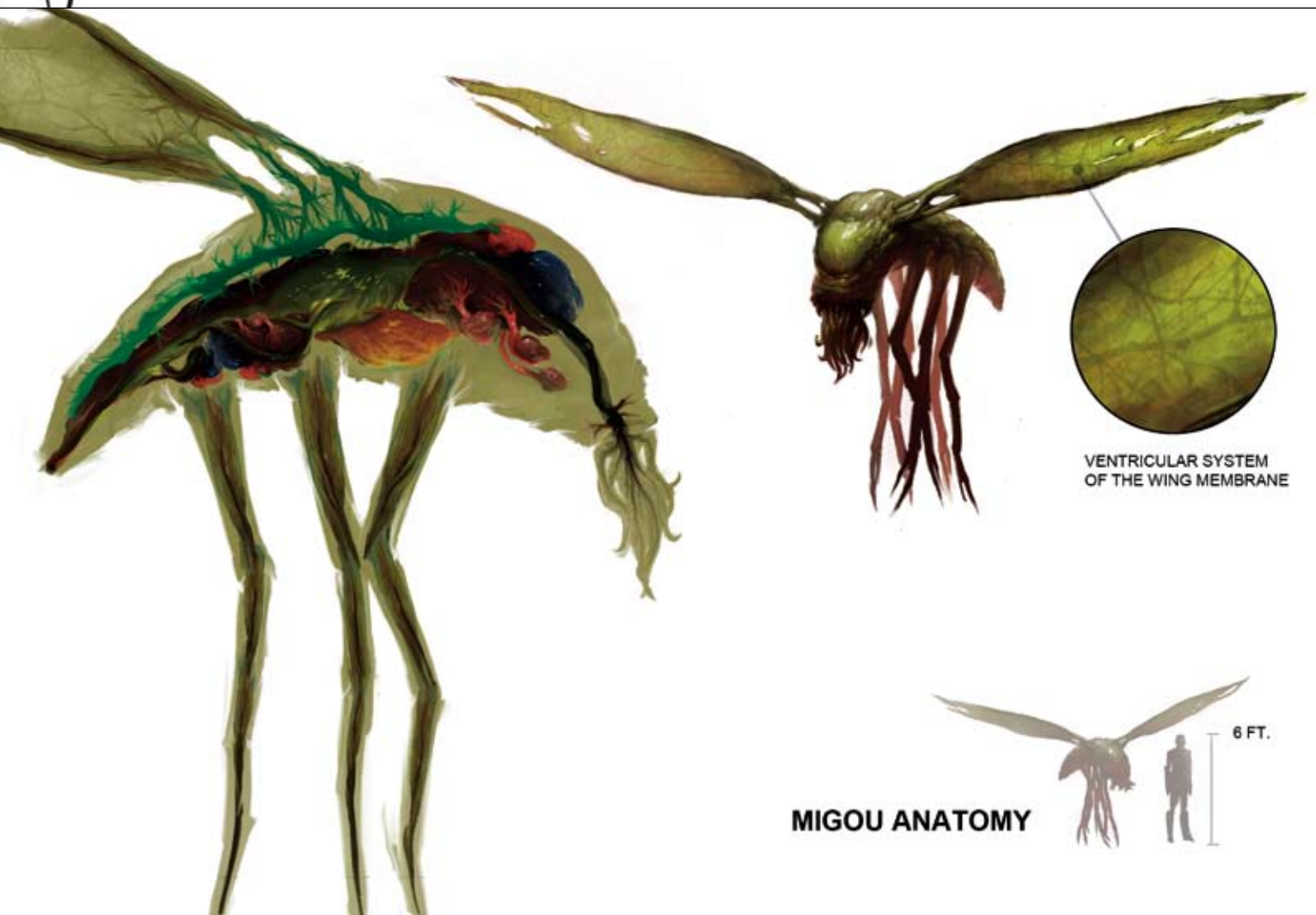
Their head is tipped with hundreds of cilia, which are used as feelers and for communication. The Migou language is something most other lifeforms are ill-equipped to understand or mimic, as it combines the movement of these cilia, body language, the buzzing of their wings.

While they have three sets of long, segmented limbs with which to walk and manipulate things, the fungoid nature of the Migou gives them a limited ability to alter their form. The process may take seconds or minutes, but they are capable of forming their manipulative digits into whatever is required. While they are often the shape of sharp claws, they can become insulated gripping hands or instruments capable of fine manipulation.

Migou wings are not designed to function in moderate to heavy gravitic environments. They have adapted to flight on low-gravity planets like Pluto or in the vacuum of space and, as such, the Migou are slow and clumsy fliers on Earth.

The Migou do not reproduce sexually and, as a result, have no genders. All Migou are the same "gender," so they are all functionally "its." As a function of the fungoid part of their biology, Migou instead reproduce by budding. Essentially, when the time is right, a part of the Migou begins to bud or grow off of the main creature. The cells continue to divide and grow until the bud is at a point where it is the equivalent of a newborn. The newborn is then raised in collective rearing communities and is genetically identical to its parent. On average, it takes five months for a Migou bud to gestate.

Budding is almost entirely outside the Migou's control. There is something in the racial super-organism that senses population density and causes Migou to bud when the time is right to add new members to the species or to create more in times of need (such as when threats are present). However, the Migou being who they are, have found ways to help induce budding through the use of medicinal mixtures added to their food.



When a Migou wants to breed, or the community wants it to breed, it goes on a dietary regimen designed to induce budding. It is not guaranteed and is essentially the equivalent of Human or Nazzadi parents trying to conceive. It can take time and is not guaranteed.

Since Migou reproduce in such a way that they fundamentally clone themselves, some might believe it difficult to create genetic diversity within the race. Fortunately, the rather unusual make-up of the Migou is very sensitive to environmental stimulus so their DNA mutates easily and quickly. Essentially, though the main structure of Migou DNA has not changed in millennia, adaptation within the species is ongoing and constant. Through the millennia, the Migou have practiced their own form of eugenics. Communities watch those who develop desirable traits or talents and then induce them to bud. Those that are only mediocre are left to bud naturally, providing a labor base for the rest of the community. It is through this that the Migou have kept themselves strong as a species.

While most other races have some kind of diversity, such as the racial geographical subtypes of Humans, the Migou have none. Through generations of mutation and selective breeding, they have become a homogenized race. Though they can tell the subtle cosmetic differences between each other, to other races they all look the same. There is only one exception, the Migou that have been dubbed the Sanctified. These Migou do not fit the usual Migou appearance and have special physiologies that come from generations of breeding creatures tainted by the Outsiders. The Sanctified powerfully manifest their taint and have great reservoirs of cosmic energy at their disposal and many of them are para-psychic.

The way Migou mature is very different from the way other mortal lifeforms do on account of their genetic memory. When Migou bud, their offspring are gifted with a wealth of information that is passed on through the DNA. While abilities that require muscle memory or of a higher order of learning are not passed down, the young Migou starts life knowing how to communicate, is fully socialized, and carries the history of its species within it. While Humans and Nazzadi spend their early years trying to figure out how to use their bodies and learn the basics of interaction and culture, young Migou simply need wait for their bodies to mature. They can begin to take in knowledge almost immediately and their study and training commences within days of birth. From there, Migou grow to physical maturity within ten years.

The Migou are innately community-oriented. While they do define themselves as individuals with personal paths in life, they at all times understand and act from being an integral part of the whole. Conformity isn't necessary – all Migou are simply born with such an extensive genetic memory that they cannot help but understand a larger view of their race and their place within it.

While it is extremely difficult to attempt to qualify the Migou psyche in Human terms, there are some things that can be said. The most prevalent trait that the New Earth Government has

observed is that they appear to be emotionless or incapable of emotions that other mortals can understand. The former is untrue. The Migou do experience something akin to emotions, though that word is not entirely precise. While the sentient races of Earth experience a wide and wild array of emotions ranging from the subtle to the intense, Migou experience a limited range of so-called emotions that are muted in their intensity. While Humans and Nazzadi often experience desire with emotion, Migou do not. Biological imperatives are simply that. They have no feelings about eating, exercising, sleeping, or reproducing – they just do them when they are required. They do not experience love since they do not sexually reproduce and their offspring need little personal rearing. They do not experience desire or ambition, but rather only wish to exploit their natural abilities and talents to the fullest as part of the whole. The Migou do not have emotions equivalent to anger or rage, but they do exhibit something like pride. There is a general attitude of superiority among the creatures, that a race with as long and exalted a genetic memory as theirs must be better than any younger, less savvy species. If something challenges their perceived place in the universe, it will provoke a swift and violent response. This is why the Migou attacked the Earth, not because of any suspected anger or rage. It's just a question of perspective.

While they do not experience love or personal attachment, the Migou do display the trait of loyalty. This goes hand-in-hand with their community-focused lifestyle. No Migou will willingly turn on its own and it will gladly sacrifice its life for the whole. Everything they do, they do for the Migou race and its continuing existence and prosperity.

Another predominant trait of the Migou is their efficiency. They deal with things in an orderly and productive fashion that is only found among insects in the Earth's ecosphere. There are those within the New Earth Government that posit that the Migou, at least on some level, have a hive mind or function in a hive-like fashion. This is incorrect and the answer is actually much simpler than that. The truth is that Migou do not have egos. They do not have identities in the way that sentient lifeforms like Humans and Nazzadi do and so they do not have the interpersonal issues that these other races do. If something menial needs doing and a high-level Migou scientist is there, he won't wait for someone to come along and do it – he'll take care of business. The only thing the Migou psyche is concerned with is what works and these creatures will do whatever they know needs to be done to have things work – from their unique perspective, of course.

Going along with their efficiency is patience. Migou are fundamentally schemers, capable of laying plans that take years to come to fruition. They do not need to see immediate results from their labors and are more than willing to spend what most Humans or Nazzadi would regard as egregious amounts of time planning. It is not that they are crippled by their tendency to scheme – they are more than capable of coming up with a plan on the spot and executing it when necessary. It is just that given the choice, a Migou will take well-thought out, patient, efficient action.

Though alien, the Migou have physical needs that are very similar to the lifeforms of Earth. They still need to consume nutrients, excrete waste, engage in a deep rest period, and maintain their health to protect against illness. However, the way they do all of these things is different from the naturally evolved life in this galaxy.

The Migou need to consume external sustenance much the same as other living things. This comes from the same two sources most advanced organisms require for survival – fluids and solid nutrients.

The fluid they require is a very alkaline liquid similar in many ways to water. However, it carries a pH level of nearly 13, putting it in the same category as bleach, nearly lye, though it is strangely not anywhere near as corrosive. A Human or Nazzadi drinking it would first experience intense hallucinations and very soon die. Migou can, if necessary, survive on other alkaline fluids, including the aforementioned, but it is the equivalent of Humans surviving on coffee or soda. To produce this liquid, the Migou utilize a small machine through which they can run other fluids, such as water. There are also pellets that can be dropped into smaller water sources for Migou away from settlements.

Migou must also consume solid foods for nutrients. As one might expect, there is no naturally occurring food source on Pluto – unless one could consume the solid gasses frozen on the planet's surface. The Migou have brought and cultivated their own food sources, which have been simplified into two primary organisms. The first is a kind of slug, similar in complex adaptable physiology to the Migou. These creatures are about three feet long and capable of living anywhere the Migou go. They are highly nutritious to the Migou. The second organism is a kind of bacterial colony that loosely resembles mold. Again, it is capable of thriving anywhere the Migou find themselves, growing in large clusters. Together, these two food sources, combined with their alkaline liquid, provide everything the Migou need to stay healthy.

To consume their food, which they do not cook, the Migou spew a fungus-like substance from their body. Within five minutes, this causes the food to breakdown in a beneficial way, creating more nutrient value than the food might otherwise have. They then “lick” it up using their cilia, which pass the food through a sphincter-like opening behind said cilia. The food is then broken down in a highly alkaline organ.

They must also excrete the waste products from the sustenance they have consumed. While most lifeforms urinate and defecate, the Migou have only one waste substance and it is expelled in a vaporized form. Therefore, there are not Migou droppings – they simply excrete a small, odorless, colorless cloud of vapor into the environment. For sanitary reasons, Migou expel their waste away from communal space or others of their own kind.

While the naturally evolved lifeforms of the Earth must respire in order to absorb the gasses they need to survive, the Migou's

physiology does not require the same kind or amount of gasses. Thus, they do not breathe. Instead, they absorb the gasses they require through their diet. This is facilitated by the substance the Migou spew onto their food before they consume it.

The Migou also must engage in a deep rest cycle, what we know as sleep. Since their bodies have adapted to the Plutonian day, their waking/sleeping cycle is different from ours. One day on Pluto is the equivalent of 6.4 days on Earth, or approximately 153 hours and 36 minutes long. The Migou typically are awake for about 108 hours (about four and a half Earth days) and then sleep for about 45 hours (around two Earth days). For those Migou that have been on Earth for years, they have adapted to something closer to an even four days awake, two days asleep. This appears to be working for them and no further adaptation is required.

While no one is entirely certain what dreams are, the decentralized processing organ that is the Migou brain experiences them when the Migou sleep. Their dreams are similar to ours but specific to their experience of the universe. Sometimes dreams are simply random images played out, sometimes they appear to be surreal stories, but sometimes they seem to be something more. There are dream magicians among the Migou and they openly explore the world of dreams. Despite millennia of research, they have yet to fully pinpoint when dreams are simply a mind winding down and when they are something more mystical. However, they continue to explore and plumb the mysteries of the land of dreams.

The Migou body is robust and designed to endure. They have long lifespans and will naturally survive for three to four hundred years, unless killed by disease or violent means. Strangely, the Migou can even survive in the vacuum of space without protection. Despite their hardy natures, Migou do feel pain as most other organisms and can become ill. However, their medicine has advanced to a level where the worst most Migou will suffer is the debilitating equivalent of the common cold.

The sensory system of the Migou is fascinating. They have a sense of touch that approximates what Humans feel, but that's the only resemblance. Migou don't have eyes, ears, a nose, or a mouth as Humans know them. They see via a set of photoreceptor organs that appear to be bumps along what might be termed the head and shoulders of the Migou – these function very much like Human eyes. They hear by sensing vibrations throughout their body and chemical receptors on their body give them an approximate sense of smell – though this sense of smell is only to help them detect beneficial or hazardous substances. It doesn't really affect how they function and creates no preference in them. To go with that, the Migou have no sense of taste.

The internal organs of a Migou are extremely complex. They have some of the same organ systems, such as a digestive system, a circulatory system, and a nervous system, but they are most often decentralized and adaptable. Even what might be termed a brain is split up into multiple organs throughout their bodies.

GOVERNANCE

Since Migou are community-oriented creatures, they do not need much of a government. Where many governments of Earth have existed to keep the people safe from themselves or others and as a thing for the people to serve, the Migou government exists only to care for and safeguard its people. It is truly of the people, by the people, and for the people – as long as those people are Migou.

To begin with, the Migou don't really have an economy. This is a difficult thing for Humans to understand. A race who lives primarily for their own self-interests is only societally productive for what society offers in return. The Migou work and produce for the benefit of the entire race, knowing that they will be taken care of in turn. Thus, an arcanotechnician does what it does because it has an interest and talent for the work and such work is its way of contributing to the whole – not because it is obligated to in order to generate required compensation. With an entire society functioning on this level, everything gets done and everyone is taken care of – the Migou are an example of perfectly functioning socialism.

Inside this model of socialism, there really isn't space for businesses as citizens of the New Earth Government understand them. Migou instead gather together in societal groups based around need, recruiting the talent they need to make a holistic organization. Thus, there is a group organized around educating the young, a group organized around producing certain types of food, a group dedicated to researching new war tools, and so on.

The Migou also do not live with rigidly defined roles. As long as a Migou takes on a task that in some way contributes to society, does it well, and is accountable for doing it regularly and as needed, no one in society has an opinion about what it does. There are those Migou, though not many of them, that change what we can loosely refer to as career paths once or twice in a lifetime. There are also those who choose to assist wherever they are needed, simply jumping from one group to another, as long as they are in need of short-term assistance.

However, most Migou are born of a lineage with a talent in a certain direction. While they are not expected to fulfill a role based on that lineage, most Migou choose to do so. It is, after all, the path of least resistance. Most are content to have been born with the knowledge of their talents and they work to train to fulfill them to the best of their abilities.

On a day to day basis, the world of the Migou simply works. It works without guidance, it works without tinkering, and it works without authority. It is the dream, in essence, of every utopian writer that has ever lived. However, in a society where things simply work, what is the government for?

The government then is the body primarily designed to administer the distribution of resources. They also make sure that there is enough to go around, carefully monitoring production. There are many Migou administrators whose job it is to maintain

the infrastructure of society. Since they are simply fulfilling a job, they have no real authority, but the Migou citizens who are part of the community they serve still respect and empower them. After all, they are esteemed servants of the Migou at large.

The body that coordinates the race in a big picture sense is what the New Earth Government has come to call the High Council, for lack of a better term. It is a body of a dozen Migou, all from specially-bred lineages. They take in all information about the race's society and the world around them and make broad decisions to guide the whole of the Migou. It is ultimately this body that decided that the Migou should invade Earth, though they leave the daily coordination of that war to the soldiers. The High Council is not in the habit of second-guessing those doing their jobs. Most accept their decisions without question. After all, this is how they have done things for millennia and it's worked out pretty good so far.

The only place in normal society where authority truly rears its head is in the management of slaves. When it comes to other races, the Migou are happy to assert dominance. There are those who are assigned to look after and manage groups of blanks or Nazzadi loyalists, and in those relationships there is little doubt who is the boss. Humans and Nazzadi, after all, cannot function without authority – something the Migou cite as further evidence of how inferior such races truly are in comparison.

The concept of possessions is an interesting one in a society such as this. The distribution of goods and services is based on need. If a Migou needs something, it gets what it needs. The Migou never seem to worry about whether or not there will be enough to go around, because it always seems that there is plenty. Even a Migou's declared hobbies and interests are provided for, so society even provides for its people's personal lives. The maxim is that if one needs it, and that need is not based solely on personal desire, one can get it.

Those things that don't qualify in the needs category are still available. For example, there are many kinds of art that do not qualify in the needs category, but a Migou might wish to acquire a piece for its personal dwelling. In these cases, the Migou utilize a basic barter system. If a Migou wants to acquire a piece of art, he must be able to provide a different good or service that the artist wants. Two artists might trade, a genealogist might trade personalized research for art, and the like. These deals are always fair and are negotiated with a minimum of fuss.

On Earth, however, the world of the Migou functions a little differently. Their presence here is not simply a transplanting of normal Migou life, but rather a protracted coordinated military action. Something like this requires a greater degree of coordination and even authority. Soldiers, therefore, are used to a more rigidly-defined existence, but they choose to participate in such of their own free will. While many aspects of day to day Migou life still apply to the military action on Earth, those participating have yielded to a more structured life. Once they have won, things will go back to business as usual.

MILITARY

Despite other aspects of Migou society, their invasion of Earth is a military action. This sort of endeavor requires not only planning and coordination, but a structure that supports said planning and coordination. The Migou military is that structure.

The way the Migou military functions would be virtually indecipherable to a Human or Nazzadi. Such creatures are used to rigidly defined command structures, where the Migou live in a much more fluid society. There are no politics, no preferential treatment, no concern over officer versus enlisted man, or any of the kinds of things that are an accepted part of any recent Earth military. There is only a focus on what works, from each and every soldier.

There is only one unified force that is the Migou military. They do not, per se, split up their armed forces into an army, a navy, etc. However, soldiers are trained to fulfill certain kinds of roles and sometimes those roles relegate those soldiers to a particular type of work that might be classified as army or navy. For example, a Migou could be trained to pilot large-scale transports such as Swarm Ships, so it would perform duties and live only in a world that would resemble the navy. However, the command structure all filters back to only one pinnacle.

The Migou divide up working groups of their military in much the same way as the New Earth Government. The smallest unit of division among soldiers is the squad, which is a group of up to ten. From there, a platoon is one to four squads, a company is two to four platoons, a battalion is two to five companies, a brigade is two to five battalions, a division is two to three brigades, and a corps is two to three divisions. The Migou know them by different expressions, of course, but these divisions make the most sense to New Earth Government intelligence analysts. Each of these groups is centered around a function, so one squad may be infantry, while another are mecha pilots, while others might be engineers. Mixed groups do exist, as sometimes they are needed and Migou work groups form based on need.

The structure of the Migou military is more defined than it is in other parts of Migou society. However, it is still vastly different from how the races of Earth think militaries run. There are no ranks, at least on the surface. Whichever Migou is the most qualified, the most experienced and highly trained, naturally takes on command within whatever unit it functions in, and the others naturally follow. Command and authority are most often functions of age and experience. This also means that the Migou's command structure is fluid. One Migou may be in charge of a region, but a more qualified Migou comes along and now the power structure shifts. However, shifts only occur when the most qualified Migou takes the job – by definition effectiveness is not compromised.

This is how the entire military functions. Whoever is the most qualified and experienced is in command, whenever a job needs doing it is done by a qualified professional, and so on. The military works and keeps its equilibrium because the Migou can function on that level of community without ego concerns. It

functions almost like an organic entity unto itself. It also means that the New Earth Government cannot begin to profile or target commanders, as they might change from month to month.

Even with a structure such as this, there needs to be someone on the top looking down at the big picture. That's what the Migou High Command does. They analyze things from a very high level and then plan strategies and allocate resources from that level. They trust the Migou commanders under them to add the relevant details and expertise to these broad level plans however, which allows those closer to the problem to create the most effective executions. Even the High Command is subject to the fluidity that governs the rest of the Migou military, and sometimes such leadership changes – always for the better, mind you.

One large advantage that the Migou military forces have on the field of battle is with regards to communication. The way the Migou communicate is an enigma to the New Earth Government, so intercepted transmissions are useless. Furthermore, the Migou utilize their advanced bio-mechanical computers to create links so that communications and coordination within a unit is almost instantaneous. In the end, the Migou are incredibly efficient and the New Earth Government has no chance of listening in.

The military is supported by a level of technology beyond that of their enemies. Most weapons wielded by the average Migou soldiers are superior and more effective than those of their New Earth Government counterparts. The Migou are capable of fielding more advanced stealth units and equipping mecha with null ray technology. They have greater mastery of the giant behemoth class mecha that terrorize the battlefield. Their ability to heal their wounded soldiers far outstrips others.

Not only is the Migou military supported by advanced weapons and vehicles, as well as constantly churning nanoforges on the Hive Ship, but specialists are constantly researching and developing new technology for the war. Each year, new advancements are rolled out on the field of battle. In terms of years, the Migou may be behind. They've only been building militaries for the last several decades after a break of millions of years. However, they are rapidly outdistancing the competition. If the Aeon War goes on too long, the Migou will win simply because they will have developed a level of technology that ensures their victory.

Biological warfare is distasteful to the Migou. They have been around long enough to know that such technology never goes as planned. They have no desire to wipe out humanity and the biology of the monsters that make up the Storm is too varied and complex, so the strengths don't outweigh the weaknesses.

They also incorporate sorcery and the use of para-psychics into their overall plans. Such cosmic power has been an accepted part of their society for so long that it is only natural. Wards protect and conceal buildings, summoned creatures sometimes supplement Migou actions, enchanted items are commonplace, para-psychics gather remote intelligence or peer into the future,

para-psychic squads wield powerful destructive forces, and the like.

It is in the Migou nature to plan. The military functions no differently. It all begins with research. The Migou are serious about their intelligence gathering and prefer not to execute a plan without copious amounts of it. Then Migou strategists analyze this intelligence and begin to form a plan. These plans are passed up the ladder, so that the appropriate resources can be allocated. The Migou also cover all their bases. Whereas a New Earth Government plan might involve the attack plan, a back-up plan, and an evacuation plan, the Migou version would include two variant attack plans, a half dozen contingency plans, and several variant evacuation plans. The kind of tedious work this requires would drive a Human or Nazzadi to the brink, and they would find that kind of detail completely unnecessary. To the Migou, it is their way of assuring that they will win, even before the battle is fought.

Once analysis and planning are complete, the Migou gather their resources and execute. Every soldier involved knows the appropriate details of the plan – many of them far more than the equivalently ranked New Earth Government soldier. After all, it's not like the Migou can be easily interrogated for information, so there's less risk and more to be gained by informing soldiers in a more thorough fashion. This leads to an entire force that is thinking of their part in the whole, while actually knowing how the whole is going to function.

This does not mean that the Migou military can't function outside of a plan. They do not get flustered and flail about when their scheme is rendered useless. They are clever creatures who are more than capable of improvising, if need be. Many New Earth Government soldiers have falsely believed that thwarted Migou are easy prey, only to discover that this overconfidence made them the easy prey.

This can, sometimes, lead to a certain predictability. If New Earth Government strategists can assume where the Migou are going to attack, they can run analyses that allow them to guess which, out of possible strategies, are most likely for the Migou to implement. It's not a sure-fire tactic, but it can very much help a New Earth Government defender be in an advantageous position when the time comes. Unfortunately, this had led to several engagements where the Migou's efforts did not go very well.

One other aspect of the Migou's tactics is that they like to use their enemies' weaknesses against them. The Disciples of the Rapine Storm are often overcome by their monstrous urges, so the Migou like to set up traps that will most assuredly trigger those urges, driving the warbands to failure. The Esoteric Order of Dagon's primary strengths rely on being under the waves, so the Migou like to draw them out onto land. The New Earth Government is desperate and sometimes desperation leads to impatience, so the Migou like to dangle things in front of them until they stretch out too far or too recklessly. The Migou are masters of setting traps and know what bait to put in them.



SOCIETY

Human and Nazzadi society is based on the self. As people make their way through the world, the primary question on people's minds is "how can society serve me?" People are born, they enjoy the benefits of society fundamentally designed to care for them as they grow, and then decide what they want to do to fulfill themselves and make money. The majority of people view themselves as something to be served, not something to be in service.

The world of the Migou is almost the exact opposite. It is based on the community and the species. As Migou make their way through the world, the primary question on their minds is "how can I serve society?" They are born, trained in a way to best utilize their talents or the tendencies of their lineage, and then they go out to fill a useful role in society to keep the holistic Migou machine running at its peak. The Migou view themselves as beings in service, not beings to be served.

Life inside Migou society is free of many of the stresses that come with other mortal cultures. There is no drive for sex or competition for mates, as the Migou are asexual, thus removing one of the primary drives and stresses that plague the New Earth Government. With an integrated community, Migou do not need to concern themselves with what are considered by Humans and Nazzadi to be normal society dynamics. They do not have to worry about being liked or disliked, looking good or looking bad, or any of the social considerations that go with a society where one must seek a place to fit and friends with which to associate. There is no family drama, as the Migou do not have families - their children are clones with genetic memories of the race that are raised by the community. There is no worry about job or place, as that is worked out from the time the Migou is born. The creature even has a racial memory that lets it know its place the moment it is born.

It is nearly impossible for someone born in a Human or Nazzadi culture to conceive of this. Imagine being born with the maturity and ability to use your body of say, an adolescent and knowing exactly where you fit in and what you'll be doing with your life, with no concern for dating or sex. It's no wonder that the Migou are so efficient.

Some might immediately think that there is no place for individualism in this society. Just because the Migou are born knowing their place doesn't mean that they spend their entire lives working at their job. They need time for recreation and recuperation as well. The Migou do enjoy the company of each other, typically drawing their friends from their professional circles or from those they matured with in the communal rearing groups. They get together to share ideas and experiences, to discuss and debate, to enjoy each others company over meals, and to participate in sports or games incomprehensible to the non-Migou. There are even Migou artists and a common social pursuit is appreciating the art within the community.

Furthermore, many Migou have the equivalent of hobbies, pursuits that they enjoy simply for the satisfaction of doing them.

Most of these hobbies are incomprehensible to other mortal races. However, some are strangely understandable. Some Migou record their lineages, transcribing interviews with "relatives," and generally immortalizing those who have come before. These Migou genealogists have, over the generations, creating a compelling racial family tree that goes back millennia and is something widely respected by the community. This study also helps them hold onto the knowledge of those who came before, completing the picture that is their racial memory. As a result, they have a very complete history.

Though surprising to outsiders, the racial emphasis on efficiency and effectiveness makes it expected that Migou will take time off to pursue personal pursuits. Even Migou battlerooms take time off to enjoy sports or hobbies or whatever pleases them. The Migou have been through enough to know that those who nurture themselves on a personal level are more productive in the rest of their lives. This is so even on the fronts of battle, at least among those who are not so traumatized that such pursuits are no longer satisfying. It is an odd thing to New Earth Government intelligence and something they enjoy studying.

As one might expect, there is little need for law within the Migou world. The Migou do not prey on each other. There is no theft, for their concept of possessions is based on communal needs, and they do not get into physical altercations with one another. In a world without greed, vanity, or jealousy, there is no need for formalized law, courts, or police. If the rare aberrant Migou gets out of line, it is censured by his community. If it goes further, it is simply executed and the problem goes away.

However, it is widely accepted among the Migou that the worship of dark entities is forbidden. That does not prevent such activity from happening, however, and cults do pop up from time to time. There are those, typically Sanctified, who carry as one of their duties vigilance against the influence of cults. Should they find such a group, the community is made aware of it and matters are handled at large. Those who were just getting sucked in are rehabilitated by society, while the rest are executed to purge the cult from their world.

Without the influence of major war, Migou society seems almost utopian. It is a world of cooperation where everyone contributes to everyone else. It is orderly, clean, and neat, while still allowing an individual to be an individual. It is something that many choose to respect, those at least that can recognize.

While from the outside it looks as if the New Earth Government and the Migou could come to understand one another, something that might contribute to the end of aggression, but that is unlikely at best. The Migou pride, or belief in their inherent superiority as a more evolved race, will prevent this. Every Migou is raised with the understanding that the beings that inhabit the Earth are nothing more than barely-evolved simians who just figured out how to walk upright and use tools. They regard us as pets at best, parasites at worse. Their utopia is their utopia and no one else need apply.

RELIGION

Religion is a part of the exploration of all evolving sentient species. The Migou are no exception. They have experimented with religion in many forms throughout their millennia. They have tried creating their own gods, worshipping Endless Ones, and even some have tried worshipping the Old Ones. In general, the Migou have become very pragmatic when it comes to matters of faith and organized religion does not play a part in their society.

Most Migou, with the length of time their race has endured and their genetic memory, take a pretty high-level view of existence. They have experienced the cycle of life and many movements of evolution. They have seen dark powers rise and fall, empires come and go, and harnessed the power of gods. After everything, they have come to believe that there is something (or somethings) greater out there and that the universe was created by some intelligent design. They have spent a long time trying on different iterations of worship and dogma, finally settling on the practical idea that the best way to serve a higher power is to be what the higher power intended them to be and experience everything he intended them to experience as this incarnation. Just by living fully do the Migou believe they fulfill their place in the universe.

As a result, there is no kind of formalized worship or religious ritual that is a part of their culture. The Migou play their part in the grand scheme simply by being. They are not plagued in any way by doubt or shame because of this, helping increase the overall effectiveness to which the Migou are beholden.

Another edge the Migou have over the New Earth Government is that they are well aware of the Old Ones and know far more than the ignorant races of Earth will know for millennia. Their ancestors came to this world long after the Old Ones were gone, but not so long after that stories and evidence of their world were not still prevalent. The reign of these monstrous creatures made it plain to many that they were to be avoided, while others found them fascinating.

Those that found the Old Ones fascinating found themselves inexorably drawn to the deities' darkness. Cults began to form within Migou society, each dedicated to the worship of different malevolent entities. In the spirit of experimentation, the Migou allowed this worship to grow, seeing whether or not it might be an effective addition to their world. Needless to say, it wasn't. Migou society, for a time, slipped into horror and degradation, even internal fighting as cults began to prey on one another. This phase was a low point for the species.

Eventually those whose minds and wills were still their own rose up and expunged the cults from the Migou of this galaxy. In typical Migou fashion, they cut the cancer from within precisely and quickly. It was bloody, messy, and the last time their society has been anything other than unified. It took centuries for the influence of the cults to entirely wash away and for Migou society to return to normal, but it ultimately did. All of this occurred long before Humans were a twinkle in the eye of evolution.

Since they are so familiar with the predations of the Old Ones, the Migou don't want them to return any more than the New Earth Government does. The Migou know that the Old Ones would destroy or enslave them the same way the dark gods would any mortal race. Despite this fact, the Migou are not interested in forming an alliance with the New Earth Government. In their eyes, that would be similar to the NEG joining forces with chimpanzees to fight the war – marginally useful but mostly too much effort to work with such an inferior species.

Unfortunately, once worship of dark entities enters into a species, it is very difficult to eliminate. If there is one societal problem from which they still suffer, it is the influence of forbidden cults. However, in these days, the cults have enough sense to pretend that all is business as usual, indulging their worship in hidden and secret ways. The Migou would wipe them out the minute they called attention to themselves.

Aside from the occasional cults of the Sanctified, those dedicated to the worship of the Endless One Nyarlathotep are the most prevalent. For some reason, a deity that is so associated with entropy became fascinating to a group of creatures that exist in such stability and order. Cults of the Endless One still rear their ugly head today, as Migou who have witnessed the horrors and atrocities of the Strange Aeon turn to something for understanding. They find that worship of an avatar of chaos, so often found in Nyarlathotep, brings them comfort. Unfortunately, they become agents of change and disorder themselves, sometimes going so far as to monkey-wrench Migou plans – believing they are facilitating evolution. The Migou are always on the lookout for these cults, especially among those on Earth.

Strangely, there are small cults dedicated to the reverence of the Endless One Yog-Sothoth that are accepted. Since those who seek to know things – past, present, or future – can gain great insight by entreating this powerful deity, the Migou support such efforts. Furthermore, it is unusual for such cults to become corrupt, as those that serve the Old Ones do, which helps them make their case. Those that do worship the god find themselves becoming distant from other Migou however, due to both the influence of the Old One's power and through the exploration of time. This is a cost the Migou are willing to bear, though it is an aspect of their world of which they are not proud.

In general, the concepts most often addressed by religion among the Migou are simple. Many find codes of morality in religion. To the Migou, morality is a question of service to the species more than anything else. Doing things that benefit the Migou as a whole or things that make an individual Migou a more useful and effective member of society are “good,” while doing things against the species or not living up to one's potential are “bad.” Religion also offers people a concept of an after-life, a world beyond a mortal incarnation. The Migou are staunch believers in reincarnation, that energy is never wasted. When life on this plane ends, it is recycled and begins anew. They are not sure what form this life takes after each incarnation, something they continue to explore despite having little in the way of results.

MYSTICAL POWER

The Migou never suffered from humanity's disbelief in and demonizing of cosmic powers. They have been studying the occult and parapsychology for millennia and such abilities are a commonplace part of their society. Millions of years before Humans began burning so-called witches at the stake, the Migou had already institutionalized ritual magic.

All paranormal ability among the Migou is held by the Sanctified. The Migou figured out the powerful cosmic connection that is part of what the people of Earth know as Outsider Taint. While taint is something feared by the New Earth Government, the Migou have embraced it and brought it in as an essential element of selective breeding. It affects them differently now than it does other species. Instead of random mutation, taint has stabilized in the Sanctified. Each appears to be a sickly and wasted version of a normal Migou, though they manifest none of the illness or weakness associated with such traits. As a side effect, the genetic connection greatly increases their Orgone reservoir above what might be expected in other races.

Another advantage to the lineages of the Sanctified is that they are born with a predisposition towards the understanding of the occult. The genetic memory that is a part of their species creates pathways that soak up lost and forbidden knowledge like a

sponge. It is as if their entire bodies are designed to understand and command great power.

Where sorcerers are viewed as many things in the New Earth Government, from special to cursed, the Sanctified are viewed by the Migou as a necessary and desirable part of their world. They are treated neither better nor worse than any other Migou – they are Migou and pieces of the whole. This is something that has confused the New Earth Government, who have discovered that the Sanctified are something different but are at a loss to say how.

However, since the practice of magic is something nearly anyone can begin, there are others among the Migou who are magicians. They, however, do not wield the personal power of the Sanctified, nor do they have a genetic lineage that empowers them as sorcerers from the moment they are born. They are rare, as such practice goes against the efficiency of Migou culture, but sometimes it is necessary. Such non-Sanctified sorcerers are typically trained as back-ups for those occasions where magic is required but no Sanctified are available.

There are several key differences between the style of magic practiced by the Migou and the style practiced by those of the New



Earth Government. These difference both revolve around one thing – keeping dark gods out of the mix.

The first and primary difference is with regards to the invocation of powers in their rituals. The mortal races of Earth know and honestly accept little about the greater cosmos, where the Migou have had millions of years to learn from their mistakes. The Sanctified take extra time to protect their ritual spaces, typically adding wards to the mix to prevent the intrusion of outside forces. Though it may seem odd at first, many such spaces are protected by Wards Against the Unseen, to prevent drawing the attention of unwanted things. In general, the Migou do not intone the Old Ones in the rituals, if at all avoidable, or entreating powerful deities of any kind. They will call on the name of Azathoth and Yog-Sothoth, however, understanding that these Endless Ones are more primal forces of the universe than malevolent beings interested in mucking about on the mortal plane.

The second difference grows out of this first. Since the Migou avoid tangentially drawing power from the invocation of powers, they must supplant that power with something. The only something that could truly act as a substitute is life, most often symbolized in primal magic by blood. Thus, most of the Migou's rituals involve some kind of blood magic. Viscera of fallen enemies or willing sacrifices are most often used, making Migou rituals seems horrible, dark, and stomach-turning to most others. It is the discovery of the aftermath of Migou rituals that have led the New Earth Government to falsely believe that many times the aliens are calling on dark powers, when in fact it is the opposite.

Migou para-psychics are again most often Sanctified. There are many kinds of para-psychics among the Migou and they find themselves helping out everywhere. Most groups of Migou para-psychics travel in groups, where their powers all complement one another. Thus, the most common group will contain one Sanctified para-psychic primarily gifted in each of the four types of para-psychic powers. If travelling in such groups is impractical, they will usually travel in pairs – one gifted in offensive abilities (such as environmental or somatic) and the other gifted in more receptive powers (such as sensory or manipulative).

Again, the Migou method of reproduction plays into these strengths. Lineages of para-psychic Sanctified most often have offspring similarly gifted. Thus, there are lines of Migou para-psychics who are all gifted in sensory powers and have generations dedicated to the study and use of such powers. This goes for every brand of para-psychic and helps keep a mix of para-psychics that is most advantageous to a population of Migou at any given time.

As with sorcery, para-psychic ability is not always linked to the Sanctified lineages. There are those regular Migou who are occasionally randomly born with para-psychic powers, even though their breeding lines are not normally so. The Migou have discovered that some lines carry latent para-psychic traits and it is mostly from these that random para-psychics are born. They are

not typically as powerful or capable as the Sanctified and their abilities are usually incorporated into a profession where they will be most effectively used.

Because cosmic power is often linked to birth and such lines have been selectively bred over millions and millions of years, there are far more sorcerers and para-psychics among the Migou than there are within the New Earth Government. It is estimated that there are at least three such Migou to every one such Human or Nazzadi. Now that such things have become accepted within the New Earth Government, however, it is likely that the number will begin to close somewhat – something the Migou are hoping to prevent.

However, there is a dark side to all this. Sometimes, groups of the Sanctified will go beyond the pale, believing that their abilities are hindered by the Migou way of things. They believe that if they go beyond and open themselves up to the powers of the universe that they will grow greater in power. This sometimes leads to the worship of forbidden things, and cults come into existence once again.

The most common kind of forbidden cult that comes into being are those of Gurathnaka. There are those who travel or manipulate dreams that wish greater power in the world beyond sleep. The worship of this Old One never turns out well. The communities around such cultists are often plagued by nightmares and N'athm that can take the illusionary form of Migou begin to show up. Though Migou aren't often subject to the same kind of soul-crushing emotion that other mortals are, the equivalent of Empty will eventually arise in a community with dedicated worship of Gurathnaka. However, those that worship it believe they receive guidance and assistance, and will readily conceal their faith from others.

The second most common are those who mix the visceral nature of current Migou magic with worship of Shub-Niggurath – who they would not worship if the god were present or if the Migou knew that she most recently came close to manifesting on this plane. The wild creative energies often associated with this Old One supposedly complement Migou blood magic, giving such practitioners enhanced abilities. However, as always, there is a price. The presence of such cults begins to pervert and circumvent the natural racial consciousness of the Migou and breeding becomes unpredictable. The racial equilibrium goes out of whack as too many or too few Migou are born, in all the wrong mixes. This is something anathema to the Migou and such cults are hunted as soon as they are identified.

As a result of their practices, the advantages of cosmic power are built into the Migou society. Precognitive para-psychics constantly watch the future to give the species the best guidance and edge it can. Sorcerers protect whatever they can. Para-psychic manipulators and dream sorcerers use their abilities to thwart the enemy – and also as effective interrogators. Cosmic power is an everyday part of life for these creatures, and a valued and cultivated one at that.

MIGOU CITIES

The Migou are a conquering army, not an army of destruction like the Disciples of the Rapine Storm. When they attack, they do so in a tactical fashion, taking out important targets without destroying more property and resources or killing more people than is necessary to ensure victory. It seems natural then that the Migou would occupy those cities that they take and begin to rebuild them as their own.

Migou strategy for taking a city is exactly as described above. They analyze the city's defenses and figure out the best way to disable them in order to move in. This does not mean, however, that they are above wanton destruction. Sometimes the best way ensure victory is to frighten or demoralize your enemy using terror tactics. If necessary, if it will serve their purposes, the Migou will readily destroy a civic center, set a school on fire, or hunt fleeing civilians. They regard the New Earth Government as nothing more than animals, and panicky animals are easier to defeat than ones entirely possessed of their wills.

Once a city's defenses have been crushed, the Migou will first assess their new territory while a perimeter is created. They must be certain that the city is theirs before they will begin to process it. If any question remains, they will continue to hunt for entrenched defenders or rallying forces. Victory must be complete.

Then they begin to efficiently round up and process the survivors. Any remaining military personnel are ferreted out and put in line for first assimilation. Human civilians are kept in internment camps, where they are reasonably well-cared for until they can be assimilated. The Migou know what a draw the potential rescue of civilians can, from what the primates regard as a fate worse than death, so they occasionally use the interment camps as bait to draw in New Earth Government rescue operations – who are then summarily slaughtered by superior forces. It isn't often that the New Earth Government saves the soon to be assimilated.

There is far less fuss about the Migou's creations and former servants. The Nazzadi are swiftly rounded up and then efficiently executed, buried unceremoniously in mass graves. That's it. They are not even given the opportunity to turn coat – a second time, in the Migou's eyes. They've already proven to be too treacherous to be allowed live.

Once all the former residents of the New Earth Government are either properly incarcerated or liquidated, the Migou then go about setting things up for themselves. They begin by taking stock of all the military resources left in the city, including fighting vehicles, mecha, gun emplacements, and communications equipment. As soon as the first batch of blanks completes the assimilation process, they are put to work utilizing these resources. Essentially, the Migou take what is left of the city's defenses and co-opt them, turning the New Earth Government's assets against them.

This whole process of securing a city can take months. During that time, the Migou patrol heavily and watch for the inevitable

probes of the New Earth Government. They also begin to look for what targets are now available from this new vantage and how they'll need to position themselves to move on. All future development in the newly acquired city will be focused towards one, or a multiple, of those targets.

If the New Earth Government hopes to retake a captured city, they must move quickly. Once the Migou have entrenched themselves, it is very difficult to root them out. The Migou have, after all, turned the remaining citizens and resources of the town against their former allies. However, the methodical nature of the Migou can be used against them in these situations. The capturing of a city follows certain set patterns. If the New Earth Government can rally and get back in there within a reasonable amount of time, they will catch the Migou before their deadly security net has been maximized. This has only happened in a handful of cases, because the New Earth Government is rarely in a position to rally for such an attack after being driven from one of the own strongholds.

The Migou have been here long enough that they have adapted to the varied climates of Earth. Regardless, they still prefer the cold and will first settle in the coldest part of the city or surrounding area. For example, in Juneau, the primary center of Migou operations is up on the glacial top of Mt. Juneau instead of down with the arcology at the base of the mountain. In places like Australia, they prefer mountains to the desert, if at all possible. As they begin to push forward closer to the equator, their physiologies will continue to adapt so that they are perfectly comfortable in tropical or desert climates. There will be a day when the Migou are prepared for life on any part of the planet and they will no longer have a pattern.

Months after invasion, when the Migou are finally convinced they have taken possession of the city, they begin to build for themselves. Any building that they can salvage, they do. Some need reconstruction and for that the Migou use a technique utilizing a crystalline substance from Pluto. They have learned how to control the crystal's growth, so it can be used to patch holes in buildings or as part of new construction. Typically, the Migou use metal to create the supports and load bearing walls, while utilizing this crystal for all other features. As the Migou rebuild, the former New Earth Government city begins to take on an alien character, even from a distance. Such places become a landscape of ruins, human structures, hybrid buildings, and architecture only found on Pluto. New Earth Government soldiers who have gone back to cities they once knew often stare in disbelief at what they've become.

By the time it's done, the city is designed to accommodate the Migou and their slaves. The infrastructure is intact, providing food, water, and shelter for both the Migou and their blanks. Power, climate control systems, and anything essential for a modern comfortable life are brought back on line and optimized. The place is fully converted from a New Earth Government city to a Migou city, and things like utilities work even better than they once did.

Every Migou city is crawling with blanks. The New Earth Government is incapable of evacuating everyone in the cities the Migou attack. Recent statistics show that up to 20% of any invaded city's population may be captured and ultimately assimilated by the Migou. That means in a city the size of Stockholm, currently within the Migou's territory, there could be up to a couple hundred thousand blanks. Many of these are captured military personnel, capable of supporting the city's defenses and piloting war machines – in addition to the Migou's existing forces.

So what do the blanks that aren't military personnel do? The answer is, whatever is needed to support the Human population and the Migou's efforts. They manage food production and distribution, the city's infrastructure, and a host of other administrative tasks, all required to manage a city and a military outpost. They become the element that keeps things running so that the Migou can concentrate on larger concerns.

Fortunately, the Migou understand that everything needs downtime. They give the blanks time to themselves and help facilitate public meeting places for them. In essence, the Migou give their blanks lives. This has puzzled the New Earth Government, who fails to understand exactly where Humans fit into the Migou psyche. Contrary to the picture the New Earth Government paints, the Migou don't drive their blanks like slaves or even treat them cruelly. Blanks work full days, but then have time to socialize and pursue their own interests, while being well cared for. They are treated as inferior, most certainly, but the assimilation process removes any such concern. Blanks that live inside Migou-held cities most often describe their quality of life as good.

This standard, of course, does not apply to blanks that have been trained for missions into New Earth Government territory. What is interesting is that blank operatives don't regard the world they must infiltrate as home. They in fact most often can't wait to get back to Migou territory, where they feel they are better treated, better cared for, and safer.

When all aspects of the blank population are considered, the Migou often wonder why the Humans of Earth don't simply surrender to their control. They unfortunately miss that few Humans would willingly submit to being brainwashed and having their brains physically rewired – which is something on which the Migou are not going to budge.

The Migou have conquered many parts of the world already, starting with the coldest places. Their biology is adapting quickly, but it was less of a shock for them to stick with places that are known for being frigid. To the Migou, however, these places are already warm, given the incredibly cold temperatures of Pluto.

Antarctica was where the Migou first landed and they spread out over the entire continent with velocity. While there are bases there, they are predominantly designed for the support and administration of the Migou war effort elsewhere. Since Ground Zero, the Migou's first invasion point, is also the primary point of communication with and embarkation for the Hive Ship, the

Migou do not allow blanks or loyalists anywhere but the coasts of the continent as a security measure.

Northern Canada, Greenland, and Alaska are also home to the Migou. While they have not yet truly begun a campaign against the New Earth Government here, they have set up shop so that day can come. They have co-opted three cities to help them in this endeavor. Anchorage in Alaska represents the Migou's primary foothold on North America. The city is easily supplied by Asia, as well as the Antarctic, when necessary. The same goes for Nuuk in Greenland, though the city is substantially smaller. These two represent the eastern and western portals for the Migou. Their first spearhead into the continent proper is through Juneau in Alaska. The city has been the site of two massive conflicts and is unusual for the Migou – it was always intended to be a trap. They broke form, executed everyone, and did not rebuild according to plan. Now that the trap has been sprung, the Migou are building up and reinforcing the city, preparing for their next offensive.

However, it is in Asia that the Migou have concentrated most of their efforts. They have fully taken half of the continent and push forward on a regular basis. The city of Vladivostok in Russia serves as the Migou's watch-tower over Japan, the New Earth Government's last bastion in Asia. Recon missions have increased in frequency, making the New Earth Government very nervous. To push against both the NEG and the Rapine Storm in Eastern Europe, the Migou have co-opted the international city of Moscow. Karaganda in the former Kazakhstan has become the Migou's other nerve center in their fight against the minions of the Unnamable.

The Migou also have a strong presence in Europe and Scandinavia. In fact, they rule all the former territories of Scandinavia, with the exception of Iceland and Denmark. Utilizing Oslo as their capital, the Migou have spread out from Scandinavia to the British Isles, conquering Scotland and northern England. This appears to be their primary thrust today, pushing down from their stronghold in Glasgow into the rest of the island with frequency. They probe Denmark and Europe for their next target, once England is claimed, throwing in the occasional skirmish. They are also waiting to reclaim Iceland from the Esoteric Order, who only recently took the island by surprise.

After concentrating on the northern hemisphere, the Migou have begun to turn their attentions elsewhere. The southern tip of South America has been a primary target. After gaining a foothold, the Migou have chosen Punta Arenas in Chile as their base of operations for this stage of the invasion.

In addition to South America, the Migou have begun to push into the other side of the southern hemisphere. The islands of New Zealand have come under fire and the Migou have already captured the northern island. Here, they have used Wellington as their primary center for the invasion, staging troops and resources there to take the southern island very soon. They also launch recon missions to Australia from here.

THE HIVE SHIP

It floats in geosynchronous orbit over the south pole, far beyond the reach of planetary weapons. It is like a moon unto itself, a gigantic reminder that humanity is being held hostage on the Earth. Like all things Migou, its true name is indecipherable, but the residents of the planet know it as the Hive Ship.

There are those that have estimated that the Hive Ship is large enough to hold half of Pluto. Considering the army the Migou have fielded so far, that very well may be possible. It is nearly the size of Pluto's moon Charon and is clearly of the same partially bio-mechanical technology that is used in many other Migou constructions. It is a hive of activity, possibly an ark unto itself – at least if the Migou had any plans to colonize the Earth.

The Hive Ship is incredibly powerful. When the Migou first approached, the New Earth Government didn't just hang out on Earth and wait for them. They sent out powerful space-faring combat vessels that had been developed in the wake of the First Arcanotech War. Some maintained a defensive perimeter between the colonies and Pluto, while the rest formed a defensive line closer to Earth. The Hive Ship sliced through them with little difficulty. It is heavily armored in a way that makes it resistant to normal weapons fire and it is bristling with weapons of its own. It also appears to heal. It did not emerge unscathed from its battles on its way to Earth, but the damage repaired itself quickly. Those that opposed it, however, had been obliterated.

The enormous vessel then took up its orbit and proceeded to destroy every satellite surrounding the Earth, one by one. Nothing could be launched into space without being intercepted and destroyed by the Hive Ship or its forces. Given its power and durability, it is assumed that nuclear devices or something on that level may be the only way to truly damage the Hive Ship. However, all attempts have failed, as it neutralizes all threats before they can even get close. One would have to be close to it in order to deliver a nuclear device, and getting close to it is nearly impossible.

Aside from nuclear attack, tacticians theorize that the only other way to effectively assault the Hive Ship is through infiltration. Given the Migou's security measures, that seems almost impossible. It is, however, accurate. The Migou know this and guard carefully against it. They specifically do not allow blanks or Nazzadi loyalists aboard for this reason. Anything the New Earth Government thinks of has already been worked out.

The inside of the Hive Ship is a massive warren. Anything bipedal would be truly out of place here as it is designed for Migou physiology. Even up and down become confusing in this environment. The climate is designed to be similar to Pluto, with areas of the ship closer to Earth's so that planet-bound Migou can adapt to the differences. The inside is designed to accommodate the artificial gravity, which pulls towards the outer shell. It utilizes, in layman's terms, a superconductor to generate a gravitic field – though it leaves a tunnel of weightlessness through the center of the ship. In general, the Hive Ship is a combination of a transport and a large city.

The primary function of the Hive Ship these days, aside from maintaining orbital superiority, is manufacturing. Giant advanced nano-forges keep the Migou war machine rolling. Every day, shuttles go up to the Hive Ship with fresh raw materials taken from the Earth and new supplies come back down. This is how the Migou keep their forces at maximum capacity. They have greater battlefield technology than their enemies. They also outstrip any of their foes when it comes to manufacturing materiel. This is not something the New Earth Government is in any danger of catching up on any day soon.

The Hive Ship also carries maturing batches of new soldiers. Every year, more young Migou warriors come of age, ready and eager to join in the fight. They are carefully trained aboard the Hive Ship before they are sent out into the world, and they carefully study the war on Earth so that they can be ready for it. Those warriors born to Migou already planet-side are brought back to the Hive Ship to be reared with their fellows. Other Migou are allowed to mature wherever they are born.

While the Migou are functionally egalitarian, their military efforts require a command structure. Sitting at the top of that structure are what other races have come to refer to as the High Command. While there are those that have theorized the High Command has taken up residence at Ground Zero, they still reside on the Hive Ship, taking in intelligence and guiding the efforts from a very high vantage point.

Something many have wondered is how the New Earth Government missed something so gigantic being constructed in orbit around Pluto. The Migou took great pains to keep the Hive Ship a secret, keeping it hidden in the shadows of planets. If an Earth probe got too close, the Migou shot it down. If something was in danger of seeing the Hive Ship, the Migou would create some kind of distraction. Fortunately for them, the New Earth Government was so absorbed with reconstructing after the First Arcanotech War, and so cautious of the Migou, that hiding was even easier than it was hiding the construction of the Nazzadi armada.

Near the end of 2086, the New Earth Government discovered that a second Hive Ship had left Pluto. This ship was nearly as big as the first. Given the enormous capacity of the Migou already here, the resources of a second Hive Ship would swiftly turn the tide of the Aeon War in favor of the Migou. The Migou were not expecting what the Aeon War has turned into, and they have been awaiting patiently for construction of the reinforcement Hive Ship to complete.

However, as one might expect, sending two ships that size would severely deplete the Migou population on Pluto. The truth is, now that the second Hive Ship is en route, there are few Migou left on their home. If someone were to discover this weakness and have the capacity to exploit it, they could hit the Migou where it hurts. The Migou, on the other hand, are pleased that there is no one left in this galaxy that could get to Pluto, much less harm it. Their strategy is, as always, calculated.



PLUTO

Pluto. A planet that has caused debate in the scientific world – it is a planet or is it a dwarf planet? Dwarf planet won out, much to the chagrin of those fascinated by this outer world. In the end, it's a rock in this solar system that orbits in a consistent and semi-stable fashion, which makes it suitable as a home for migrating life. This cold, barren rock could only be suitable, however, to creatures that were not based on the kind of biology those on Earth could understand.

The dwarf planet is unusual among the planets of this solar system in that its orbit is elliptical, taking 248.5 Earth years to complete on full revolution of the sun. As Pluto orbits closer to the sun, some of the surface ice melts creating a thin atmosphere of nitrogen, methane, and carbon monoxide. As it moves away, this atmosphere freezes again, dropping back to the surface as ice.

Pluto is a very small planet, being only 70% of the diameter of Earth's moon. It is also cold, an average of a couple hundred degrees below zero, with a surface that appears light brown with a tint of yellow underneath all the nitrogen, methane, and carbon monoxide ice. There is little gravity as well (0.059 g – about a third that of Earth's moon). Its rotation is also slower, with a Plutonian day equalling 6.4 Earth days.


It was theorized that the planet's composition was a rock core underneath water ice, capped by other gaseous surface ice. Humanity came no closer to seeing this, even as they spread out into the stars, as the Migou quietly arranged to have probes send

back false data or to malfunction on their missions. Since the planet didn't represent anything worth having, it wasn't a priority on the New United Nations' (and later the New Earth Government's) list. If they had gotten there, they would have quickly discovered there was less ice covering the planet and that there was an alien race living under the surface.

The Migou first arrived in this galaxy countless millennia ago. Their civilization had already reached its peak, capable of interstellar travel and colonization. Those with particularly vivid genetic memories claim that the original reason for the Migou's advancement out into the universe at large was for simple exploration. They wanted what any star-faring race wants – to learn more about the rest of the universe. There are Migou colonies all over the universe, but this group came here and rested on Pluto.

The Migou have fully colonized the interior of the planet. They have created gigantic networks of caves and tunnels throughout the rocky insides – part natural, part created. This is their world, a warren of life on a cold planet. It seems unbelievable that any species could find this place comfortable, but Migou biology is adaptable. Unlike on Earth, the thin atmosphere and low gravity make it easy for the Migou to fly. This place has been their home for countless generations and they find it much to their liking.

Pluto is divided up into districts, bound by geography more than anything else. Certain districts are known for certain things, such as administration or art or science. In each of these districts live



and work many Migou. All Migou buildings and residences are communal. They do not have doors and they need no privacy. Since they are community-driven and asexual, none of the needs that might be normal in the New Earth Government apply. These communal dwellings are typically organized around those of similar profession or around groups of Migou that were raised together. Within, each Migou has what can best be termed a bunk, an indentation in the rock or crystal wall where a Migou can rest. These bunks are the only thing in the communal dwellings that are truly private.

Integral to the Migou's design is Charon, Pluto's largest and closest moon. It is likewise an icy world, with active cryo-geysers. Astronomers have assumed that Charon's synchronous orbit was natural – it always appears to hover over the same part of Pluto, regardless of rotation. This is something the Migou created, as Charon is likewise a warren for the Migou. Different from Pluto, however, Charon is a planet meant entirely for industry. It is here that the Nazzadi war machine was built and where the current Migou war machine came into being. Since the end of the First Arcanotech War, the forges of Charon have never stopped. Migou expeditions bring back resources from other planets to feed the alien machines, but there is a limit to what they can produce.

However, those limits have been plenty sufficient to manufacture two armies in thirty years, plus weapons, war machines, and starships. It is a fortunate thing for the current residents of Earth that it takes a long time to travel from Pluto to the blue planet, or else there would be no stopping the Migou. They possibly could have access to a never-ending stream of reinforcements.

Hiding these build-ups has been a challenge. The Migou had to conceal an armada when they were building the Nazzadi war machine. Considering how regularly the New United Nations was watching the stars at that time, and the fact that there were Human colonies as close as Saturn, the Migou had to be very careful. That which could be kept underground was, but a fleet of starships was another story.

Fortunately, Pluto is part of the Kuiper Belt, a region of space composed of many small bodies, including asteroids and dwarf planets. There are so many different bodies floating around out there that it made it much easier than it would have been to hide what the Migou have been up to. Nazzadi ships were set up to hide near Kuiper Belt bodies, with transports and shuttles flying in and out. The Migou were able to hide behind Charon for much of the Hive Ships' construction, but later moved to hide it in the Belt – where it appeared to be just another large asteroid.

In addition, the Kuiper Belt is difficult to navigate. The Migou like having it as their back yard, because they trust that no other enemy can easily attack them from outside the solar system. The Elder Things have been gone for a long time, but Migou still stand wonder if they will return some day. There are also other enemies from the distant past, but they are so distant that they are merely cautionary tales for those who keep watch.

Concealed within the planet's surface is the Migou's automated defense system. Pluto is covered with gun emplacements and missile launchers designed to protect the planet, even if there are no Migou home. Limited Artificial Intelligence controls the defense grid, and it is a safety blanket to the residents of Pluto. It has not been used in a very, very long time.

Nix and Hydra are Pluto's other two moons, much smaller and further away than Charon. They are sometimes used for storage of materials, but otherwise play little part in the overall Migou scheme. They have both been of particular use when building up the Nazzadi, and later Migou, armies.

As discussed earlier, Pluto is not the true home of the Migou, or at least not the world on which they evolved. When they arrived in this part of the galaxy, Pluto was the first world they chose on which to create an outpost. There, from safety, they could observe the planets on which the most action was occurring – Earth and Mars at that time. In the end, they simply never left, having built up the largest and most effective colony there.

There are many who wonder why the Migou simply didn't stay on Earth. It is a lush planet with many resources the Migou need. There are two primary reasons. The first is that the Earth is a contested planet in many ways. It has been home to the Old Ones, the Polypous Race, the Great Race, and the enemy of the Migou known as the Elder Race. No one has bothered the Migou on Pluto, until recently. The second involves the racial intelligence or super-organism that guides Migou reproduction. On a planet such as Earth, Migou population would have exploded, forcing them into a competition with the life already there. That would have forced the Migou to conquer the planet as the dominant life. They'd already been in wars on Earth and frankly, to them the planet didn't really seem all that worth it. They could dominate from behind the scenes, while living way out on safe Pluto where their population would remain at a manageable level.

There are many that wonder why the Migou stay. In truth, it was never really in their plan to remain here as long as they have. The early days of their arrival in this solar system were exciting, with new planets, lifeforms, and enemies to keep them occupied. Then there were the many millennia between then and now that were simply business as usual. The Migou lived on Pluto, but quietly controlled the Earth, and the lifeforms of this world continued to evolve after the many powerful races and empires left. Though the phrase is not entirely accurate, the truth is that the Migou got lazy. They carved out a very comfortable existence in this solar system. Moving on would have involved great effort and the uncertainty that comes from exploration. It would have meant having to concern themselves with survival once again, something they hadn't had to do in many generations.

Regardless, they most assuredly would have left some kind of colony behind. Things in this solar system were too good to just leave behind wholesale. In the end, it is likely the Migou would have always ended up in some kind of conflict with the evolving life of the Earth.

SLAVES & LAB RATS

The Migou intend to take the planet for themselves, and part of that plan means doing something about the things that already live here. The fate of the Human and Nazzadi populations is dark for both should, the Migou get their wish.

The Migou solution for the Nazzadi is simple. They are to be, to an individual, exterminated. They are a flawed experiment that did not succeed and the Migou have no further use for them. Furthermore, a lesson needs to be taught to others about those who betray the Migou, that they will be dealt with swiftly and harshly. Thus far, the Migou have been true to their promise. In every city they take, one of their first acts is to round up all the Nazzadi, unceremoniously kill all of them, and dump their bodies into mass graves with an efficiency that would make the Nazis envious. They are unwavering in their policy of genocide.

However, there are those Nazzadi who have gone back to the Migou. Many of these Loyalists die attempting to contact the Migou, but those that do find special places in the Migou war machine. They fully believe they have a place in the Migou's world once the Aeon War has ended, but this is a delusion that the Migou encourage. The truth is, should the Migou win the Aeon War, they would promptly turn around and murder all those Nazzadi loyal to them. They were a failed experiment and the whole batch, with no exception, is bad. There is no reason to keep them around once the limited use they serve has ended.

Humans, on the other hand, are to occupy the space of obedient slaves. The Migou, however, are not going to leave this to chance. Whereas they didn't have the time to ensure the obedience of their Nazzadi servants, they are going to make certain that the remaining Human population is loyal to the point of self-sacrifice. This is assured through a process known to the New Earth Government as assimilation.

Assimilation involves technology and processes that are beyond current Human understanding. The first part of the process involves the use of brainwashing techniques. Subjects are kept in sleep deprivation while constantly bombarded with stimulus that is designed to cause a complete nervous breakdown. In essence, subjects are dehumanized in simple ways, which will ultimately result in the eradication of identity. They are reduced to barely functional, infantile beings who can best be referred to as blank slates – hence, the colloquial term for such people, blanks.

The second part of the assimilation process involves what is euphemistically called invasive neuro-manipulation. In other words, the Migou cut open the subject's skull and mess around with his brain. The Migou have an advanced understanding of the Human nervous system, which allows them to essentially hard-wire feedback loops into a subject's brain that will all but ensure loyalty. Certain pleasure responses are also excised from the subject's nervous system, including those that respond to drugs and sexual arousal. A blank cannot be sexually aroused, though spies can fake it, and cannot fall under the pleasurable influence of drugs or addiction. False memories are implanted into the subject's mind, which reinforce loyalty to the Migou on

a level rivalling survival urges. The memories left are the ones that serve the Migou's purposes – the rest of them are erased or implanted.

The third and final part of the assimilation process is known as re-education. Subjects are exposed to new kinds of brainwashing, designed to positively reinforce fanatical loyalty to the Migou and a hatred for those Humans who do not yet serve. They are also trained in whatever capacity the Migou need them as slaves during this phase. Once complete, the Migou have a fully loyal slave who cannot help but obey every command from a Migou, to the point of harming former loves and even killing oneself. They are not brain-dead zombies, but their loyalties cannot be swayed in any way, shape, or form. They belong forever to the Migou.

Assimilation is an involved process, which is why the Migou did not have the resources available to assimilate the Nazzadi before they sent them to war. It requires fully equipped facilities, which are set up in every major area that the Migou conquer. It requires a fully trained staffed of Migou specialists whose sole job is to manage the assimilation of new subjects. All told, it takes an average of six months to fully assimilate a Human, though subjects are typically assimilated in batches to increase the overall output.

The New Earth Government has attempted to liberate assimilation facilities and rescue those in process. If a subject is freed during the first stage of assimilation, he can be brought back from the edge with intensive in-patient care. It is likely that he will forever bear the mental scars of such intense abuse, but he will have his life back. A subject can also potentially be brought back from the brink if he is rescued during the first week of the second stage, but it is touch and go. Once the Migou start messing around inside the brain, it's pretty much a done deal. Anything after that is hopeless and will result in the rescue of a person who is a shell, but a shell that is completely and irrevocably loyal to the Migou. There is currently no known way to reverse the process, not even through arcanotherapy.

Blanks are used for many jobs. The first and most prevalent is as labor, helping the Migou build their cities or man their factories. However, blanks have several military applications in which their use cannot be denied. They are near-perfect spies. They have knowledge of how to interact within the New Earth Government and are trained especially to infiltrate as best they can to provide the Migou with information – or to perpetrate terrorist acts to destabilize or sabotage their enemies. The only drawback to utilizing blanks is that they can be detected if subjected to a brain-scan. Those who know what to look for will find blank spies out quickly with such a test. The other way the Migou utilize blanks is as pilots. It is much easier to steal or scavenge Human or Nazzadi mecha and fix them, rather than create the bio-mechanical mecha the Migou use. This way, they have a constantly replenishing conscript force to assist them, and one that often gives the enemy pause. After all, it is Human (or Nazzadi) nature to not want to kill their own, if there is any hope of salvation.

PLANS FOR THE WORLD

The question many have is, what do the Migou want with us and the world anyway? Most assume, and at least partly correctly so, that they invaded because we became an honest to goodness threat once we discovered arcanotechnology. Others believe that it's because the Migou got jealous we'd made such an advancement when they hadn't. Let's take a look at this for real.

As we discussed earlier, the Migou have a kind of pride that lives in their collective psyches. Humans have come to challenge the Migou's perceived place in the universe and thus we have provoked a swift and violent response. The Migou are a race that evolved millions of years before the first precursors of the Human race. To them, we are barely evolved primates with access to dangerous technology. What we have at our disposal is the equivalent in their eyes of giving a toddler a loaded gun. Eventually, something bad is going to happen and the Migou would rather deal with the problem now, before it gets any worse. They did not plan on the Old Ones and their Cults, so what should have been a decisive military action has turned into a deadly and prolonged conflict.

Furthermore, the Migou regard the Earth as theirs. For millenia, the Old Ones have been gone, the olden enemies of the Migou driven away. The verdant green planet that holds many resources the Migou need, and a race with which to play, has been their own personal backyard. They have no desire to destroy the planet, not any of it for any reason. They want the Earth intact and unscarred, but they must first either remove or enslave the primates that think they have taken over. However, the battle to take the place they regard as a second home is taking a lot more than they bargained for, and the battle against the Cults and the possible return of the Old Ones was unexpected.

This attitude is the reason why the Migou do not use nuclear devices to attack their enemies. Nukes scar and poison the world and too many could easily incite a nuclear winter that would kill off most of the planet. It would only take something the equivalent of 0.03% of the current nuclear warheads on the planet to produce profound climactic change and cripple the ozone layer – the scale is easily tipped. The Migou have other effective conventional weapons in their arsenal that they would much rather utilize.

Some might assume that the Migou could simply sit in orbit and bombard the planet – either from the Hive Ship or from orbital weapons satellites. However, the New Earth Government was working with such technology when the Migou arrived. The Migou shot the NEG's satellites out of orbit, but the NEG turned the unlaunched orbital platforms into gun emplacements and shot down the Migou's weapons satellites. The Hive Ship likewise can't get too close to orbit or it is fired upon. Essentially, this technology has caused a stalemate when it comes to orbital bombardment.

Many have also wondered why the Migou, with their advanced understanding of Human and Nazzadi DNA, haven't just engineered a virus that will kill us all off. Again, the Migou don't

want us dead – they want to enslave us. They want to take over, assimilate each and every Human, and then use us as slaves to tend to their planet. It would be like the wealthy killing off the labor class. Who would do the work? Nazzadi DNA is so close to ours that it would be all but impossible to create a virus that would selectively target them. Such a disease would invariably attack Humans as well. But what about the Cults? The alien physiologies of the unspeakable horrors running around on the planet, such as the Deep Ones and the hordes of the Rapine Storm, are so complicated and varied that there is no way the Migou could create such a disease to harm them. So for now, biological warfare on that kind of scale is out of the question.

The Migou would have beaten the New Earth Government if they didn't have to split their attention. Currently, the Migou aggressively attack the Esoteric Order of Dagon whenever they can. While the NEG is unaware of the true threat the Cult presents, the Migou were on the Earth when Cthulhu reigned. They are not eager to see him return. They also fight against the spread of the Rapine Storm across the northern reaches of Asia, and the Migou have dedicated their best occult scholars to devising a way to defeat the Ruined King and remove Hastur's avatar from the Earth. And what no one is aware of, not even the Eldritch Society, is that the Migou have groups of Blanks inside the New Earth Government whose job it is to fight against the machinations of the Children of Chaos. The Migou know the threat the Cult represents, but only have this one way to fight against them. After all, it's not like they'd let the primates in on such an insidious threat – they'd just mess it up and make it worse.

Should they finally have possession of the Earth, they would enslave the Human race to care for the planet and do the Migou's bidding. We would harvest natural resources for them and be pets on which to experiment. They would harvest our brains for their computer systems. Some Migou would move back to the Earth to maintain control. The Human race as we know it would cease to be. Of course, every last Nazzadi would be exterminated, even the Loyalists, to expunge the memory of such a dismal failure.

The Migou, however, are anything but stupid and they have a plan of last resort. If it looks like there will come a point when they will lose the Aeon War, or if it looks like the Old Ones are truly going to return *en masse*, the Migou are prepared to execute a doomsday scenario. Essentially, a series of engineered viruses and bacteria will be unleashed on the planet along with detonation of several carefully-placed nuclear devices. The planet will be plunged into nuclear winter, the water and food will be poisoned, and plagues will scourge the land. The ozone layer will be completely destroyed. The Earth will be rendered a desolate ball in no time flat, destroying the Migou's enemies, but at a cost that they will only be willing to pay if all seems lost.

For now, the plan is to keep the lines from regressing and to keep moving into North America. The New Earth Government is dependent on centralized command, so if the Migou can take out Chicago, they will dramatically weaken their foes.

DIRTY SECRETS

The Migou, like everyone, have their own ugly secrets and failures that they hope no one else will ever find out about. Many of these answer important questions about the Migou and why they are the way they are. Too bad for the New Earth Government that most of these secrets will remain secrets.

Many have wondered, since the Migou were able to clone and equip an army of Nazzadi in such a short period of time, why they haven't simply cloned themselves? The answer is simple and somewhat surprising – they can't. The physiology of the Migou is unique and so complex that the only way to clone it is through the natural process of budding. They even have problems cloning replacement organs and limbs because the fungoid part of their DNA replicates out of control. The best way to put it is that the hurdle the Migou have not been able to overcome is that cloned tissue almost immediately becomes aggressively and malignantly cancerous. Their DNA is not designed for such scientific manipulation. The Migou have spent so much time trying to overcome this obstacle that they have pretty much given up. Certainly, their advanced manufacturing techniques would easily be able to keep up with creating war machines for an expanded base of soldiers, but the technology to create such soldiers just isn't there. Besides all of this, the Nazzadi experiment did not go as planned and the Migou are not interested in risking the problems inherent with a cloned army of any kind.

The Migou, not to be outdone, have tried their own version of the Engel Project, trying to create the Migou equivalent of synthorgs. Their reasoning was that since they are more technologically advanced than the New Earth Government and have a much greater mastery of cloning and genetic manipulation, that something like creating an Engel should be a breeze. They were very, very wrong. Creating a functional synthorg isn't as easy as simply cloning a monster and slapping a cybernetic exoskeleton onto it. There is something far beyond the boundary of most understanding that goes into the design of the Synthesis Interface and the control capsule interface that is genius and a significant leap forward for humanity. All attempts by the Migou to master this technology have failed miserably and caused more than their fair share of destruction and death. Apparently, one needs to display the wildly creative thinking that occurs when sliding down the slippery slope of insanity in order to create an Engel. The Migou have all but given up on such a project, instead turning their resources to the development of other behemoth-class mecha.

It is known by certain factions of the New Earth Government, but kept secret, that the Migou sometimes harvest Human brains. These disembodied brains are then kept alive indefinitely (for at least a couple hundred years) in tubes, which can then be hooked up to a variety of different machines. Most are used for communication or to probe the brain and its memories indiscriminately, but they can also be attached to a computer system. These brains form the core of the Migou's computer systems.

Life as a brain tube, as one might expect, is difficult. While the Migou do not antagonize or torture them in any way, there are

many that have great difficulty adjusting to life as a disembodied brain hooked up to alien electronics. The ones that have survived the transition with some level of sanity intact have formed communities that live inside the Migou computer networks. When the brains are not being used for processing or information retrieval, they speak with one another and form bonds to keep their existence bearable. They even explore the Migou information systems and are starting to understand some of what they find there. The Migou have no intention of stopping this behavior. They watch the brain tubes with great interest. Perhaps it is all part of their plan.

Through the millennia, despite having the ability to create such things, the Migou have developed a distrust and distaste for artificial mechanical beings. They are wise enough to understand the trouble that true artificial intelligence brings – creating such things would be like the Nazzadi experiment, only worse. They would be self-replicating and vastly more intelligent. Instead, Migou artificial intelligence is a function of a limited artificial intelligence drawing on the true intelligence of the brains slaved to its system. This makes such machines incredibly smart, while keeping them from being truly self-aware and self-directed.

The Migou also have issues with robotics, in the same vein. Robotics are utilized in Migou society as tools, primarily in manufacturing. However, they have already experimented with robotics on a more widespread basis and found them lacking. The idea of using robots to do what a Migou has the talent and desire to do is disrespectful and distasteful. Mechanical lifeforms without true artificial intelligence are just machines, which do not work with the way the Migou live their lives.

Given that the Nazzadi are so close to Humans that the Migou cannot use biological agents to selectively wipe out their creations, many wonder why the Migou did not build in some kind of biological kill-switch into them. They did. The Migou had to rush to create the Nazzadi and could not take the time to assimilate them. Therefore, they built in a biological system that could be triggered remotely that would ultimately result in the targeted Nazzadi wasting away over the course of a week. This trigger was irreversible – it would kill with 100% surety. Or so the lab tests told them.

Once it became apparent that the rebellious Nazzadi weren't going to come to their senses, the Migou triggered the kill-switch. Theoretically, the entire Nazzadi armada should have been dead within days. Nothing happened. The Migou double-checked their trigger, but still nothing happened.

Now that the Migou have had a chance to dissect modern day Nazzadi corpses, they have discovered that the kill-switch is simply gone. No one knows why. It appears that once the Nazzadi were sent out on their biological steam, their systems began to take their own course. Mutation of DNA is unpredictable, as the Migou well know from experiments on their own tissue, and it seems as if the Nazzadi DNA rejected the kill-switch and mutated to eliminate it. It is, for lack of another term, a miracle.



Failure. Again.

Klaxons sounded, filling the air with a high-pitched wail.

The Migou knew something had gone terribly wrong and here, in this research facility, that something was something to be afraid of. This was a place of monsters, the kind of place that was necessary in this war.

161 grabbed its HPM rifle and took to wing. There it was. A roar that stood out above the warning sirens. The thundering of something enormous.

Another one of the experiments had gotten loose. Another experiment that would be very, very difficult to contain.

As it sailed around the corner, 161 took a tactical moment to take in the scene. This was the kind of thing that even scared a Migou.

The thing thrashed around on its dozens of clawed legs, its gigantic worm-like body coiled as if to thrash. The enormous sets of cybernetic arms the specialists had grafted onto it flailed in every direction, carving out chunks of the wall and cracking the nearby containment vats. It bellowed and the sound was like nothing 161 had ever heard – on Pluto or on Earth.

The specialists were all dead, their corpses littering the floor. Some of them had been ripped to pieces and flung everywhere. 161 and its fellow battletroops would have to do



this the hard way, for brute force was not the best way to deal with these things.

A squad had already arrived to attempt containment. The snag-lines and arcanotech netting were designed to bring down creatures such as these – or at least large monstrous creatures that hadn't been cybernetically enhanced. 161 could see 754 wrapping snag-lines around the creature's tail, the rest of his unit locking tethers to the floor. It was slowing the thing down. At least, for the moment.

Just as 161 opened fire, 554 rounded the corner and joined the fight. Projectiles smacked against the thing's hide. Most bounced harmlessly off. Some chewed up small patches, superficial scratches at best. At this point, all they were trying to do was occupy the thing so the containment team could get a few more restraints in place.

The two continued with their automatic weapons fire. Instead of distracting the beast, all it did was make it more and more angry. Its thrashing intensified, throwing several of the attendant Migou flying across the room.

It was clearly time to try a more effective tactic.

161 signalled to the containment team to keep it busy. They acknowledged, but it was already too late. With an effort that caused the snag-lines to carve gouges out of its hide, the creature reared back and snapped its containment. It was free, bleeding, and in the kind of rage that knew no bounds.

It thrashed again and immediately crushed three of the containment team. It grabbed hold of a containment vat with its artificial limbs and heaved. The metal gave way as it pulled the giant leaking vat out from its anchorings.

161 didn't stick around to see any more. This fight was lost and it was time to finish it. It was time for something with a little more power. 161 made a mental note to rig the lab with explosives for the future.

Nearby was an emergency weapons locker. 161 rapidly entered its code and the locker hissed open. There was what it had come for, the only thing that would make a difference now. High-powered rocket-propelled explosives.

As it returned, 161 could see that the situation had gotten worse. One more lunge and there would be no more space for him to set up and safely fire. Fortunately, the containment team had been watching for him and they threw themselves in the way of the creature with little regard for their own safety.

This gave 161 the time it needed. It loaded and armed the launcher, took aim at the thing's trunk, and fired. The rocket whizzed through the air so fast the creature didn't even have time to notice what was coming.

The rocket slammed into the thing with a fiery explosion. Some of the containment team were caught in the blast, the rest thrown clear. 161 didn't wait to see what damage its work had done. It instead promptly loaded another rocket, zeroed in on the things' shadowy profile through the smoke, and fired again.

Without pausing, 161 reloaded and fired. It was going to make sure this thing didn't have a chance.

The smoke cleared and revealed the charred and bloody corpse of the monster. It had been blown into several pieces, though its titanic worm-tail thrashed around in death throes. Those would end soon enough. Now it was time to pick up the pieces of this mess and carry on. It was not in Migou nature to let a set-back like this discourage further experimentation.

This is what had come of the Migou's attempt to create their own version of the Humans' Engels. They had cloned superior specimens and created fierce cybernetic monsters.

The problem was that there was no way to control them.

Migou intelligence had gathered enough information to know that the solution to this problem for the Humans lay in a set of twinned arcanotech chips – one that was implanted in the brain of the pilot and the other in the brain of the creature.

No matter what they'd tried, even reverse engineering the Humans' chip, the Migou could not get such technology to work.

Perhaps it was in the nature of the Migou brain, which was not a large central organ the way it was in Humans. Perhaps it was something in the DNA they were using to create the creatures, having come from stores of things ancient and forgotten. Perhaps it was just because they weren't doing it right.

The semi-evolved simians that called this planet theirs had surprised the Migou many times. They were clever little beasts, who had somehow stumbled onto mastery of these arcane creatures.

No one likes an animal that thinks it's smarter than its masters. The Migou especially weren't fond of the animals of this planet, who occasionally were.

chapter six

from the hive ship

TECHNOLOGY & WEAPONS

As an invading army on an alien world, the soldiers of Pluto knew that they could not simply rely on a constant stream of supplies from their home world to support their bid to conquer Earth. So it was that the Migou generals and strategy-makers compiled an inventory of needed supplies and formulated a plan that would allow the combat forces of their Hive Ship to take the Earth completely on their own. However, they failed to anticipate one gigantic variable that would throw their entire plan into frenzy – the emergence of the Rapine Storm.

The Migou on Earth have learned to take advantage of certain efficiencies realized in mass production. It's far easier to produce higher demand equipment in larger quantities than to constantly repurpose their nanofactories for a wider array of items on a smaller scale. To help facilitate effective distribution of these items, the Migou have devised a method of classifying their inventory based on the role and need of each individual. The three primary classifications are Common, Special, and Select.

All Migou have access to equipment and supplies that are rated as Common. Such items typically include food rations, common spare parts, standard weapons and armor, and other necessary provisions. These are the most commonly produced Migou resources in mass production. The step up from a Common rating is Special. These are items typically reserved for special combat units, certain scientific research personnel, or the like – Migou serving special functions with specific needs. Special items are produced in less quantity than Common items, and might include heavy weapons, specialized weapons, or unique equipment. The highest tier of equipment rating is Select. These items are set aside for highly select military units, core research and development personnel, upper echelon leaders, and other Migou serving at a high level.

Though the Human discovery of arcanotechnology proved to be a primary reason for the Migou to launch their war on Earth, it turns out that the amazing scientific breakthroughs that have occurred around this technology have become a major spoil of war. In fact, the Migou have managed to create their own version of a D-engine based on working examples captured from fallen New Earth Government military mecha. The Migou have, up to this point, utilized their own device modeled from a different version of non-Euclidian geometry to provide a multi-dimensional power source. However, their solution has failed to match the sheer elegance and raw power potential as the amazing arcanotech model developed by the Ashcroft Foundation. Though the Migou are appalled to admit the superiority of the Human application of arcanotech theory publicly – what they refer to as “a lucky accident.” Nevertheless, Migou versions of Human D-engines and D-cells have begun to emerge among some of their newer devices and weapons.

The true genius of Migou technology is their advancements in bioengineering. The Migou understanding of genetic structure and its controlled development and replication is unparalleled. That knowledge, which allowed the Migou to create the Nazzadi race, has also allowed them to literally grow new advanced

substances and materials that have been applied successfully to weapons and other devices. One example of this is the development of what the New Earth Government refers to as Substance 91A7, a bio-mechanical superconductive material that can be grown into any desired mass or shape.

Substance 91A7 is a vital and integral part of neurotoxic weapons. Thanks to the extraordinarily high efficiency rating of 91A7 to conduct electromagnetic fields without excessive loss to heat dissipation, Migou electrokinetic weapons can hurl deadly ferromagnetic projectiles using smaller coils and an overall lighter weapon mass than the New Earth Government counterpart. This development has also increased the life of the weapon's power source – a distinct advantage for Migou troops on the battlefield. Small electromagnetic coils, encased within a poly-composite outer frame, encircle an inner 91A7 barrel. Electromagnetic pulses generated from a Migou D-cell draws the projectile from the feed chamber and propels it through the barrel at an alarming rate of acceleration. Each projectile is forged with a hollow core and a soft nose to allow the injection of varying neurotoxins designed to be effective against differing species. The soft tip of the projectiles allows the neurotoxin to be released once the round penetrates the flesh of the target. The most effective neurotoxin formulas against Human and Nazzadi targets are already known. However, the unexpected arrays of Rapine Storm species have posed new challenges to the Migou chemical development engineers.

Another major technological advancement of the Migou is their particle beam weaponry. Countless New Earth Government soldiers have told chilling war stories around smoky drinking holes of deadly Migou high-power microwave (HPM) ambushes. There is something especially horrific about seeing your friend reduced to a screaming mass of charred flesh less than a second after being painted by a suspicious red laser dot. HPM weapon power consumption is too demanding to effectively be squeezed into the frame of a sidearm. Thus the smallest available HPM firearm would be equivalent in size to an NEG combat rifle.

HPM firearms actually work by utilizing a laser as a kind of focused conduit between the weapon and the target. A high-powered particle beam pulse generated within a standard microwave band ionizes the air surrounding the laser beam. The result is an instantaneous blast of charged molecular particles that fry the victim with intense radiated energy. A shot from an HPM weapon also has the ability to permanently knock out unprotected electronic devices by frying circuits and components. Thus, larger scale weapons can potentially wreak havoc on larger mecha control and targeting systems. The one major drawback to HPM weaponry is the natural phenomenon of “blooming” that gradually disperses the ionized particles over distances – HPM weapons tend to lose their punch at longer range.

Perhaps the most frightening of developments in Migou weaponry is the null ray. The practical application of the null ray is the disintegration of matter itself. How the Migou achieve this is both effective and highly dangerous. Picture a heavy rifle,

squad weapon, or vehicle-mounted weapon with the potential to erupt into a small thermonuclear explosion should anything go wrong. The power core of each null ray weapon contains a minute sample of antimatter encased in a carbon nanotube and suspended by an oscillating containment energy field. The volume of antimatter varies with the size of the weapon, from a single milligram for hand-carried weapons to a kilogram for much larger vehicle-mounted weapons. Considering the fact that a single gram of antimatter could conceivably obliterate an entire city with the destructive force of several atomic bombs, the Migou seem content to playing with fire. After all, null ray power cores must maintain their containment fields in order to maintain safety. Any collapse of those fields through a loss of power could result in a catastrophic chain of events. Thus, these cores must always be connected to an energy source, even while in shipping or storage.

Null rays function by emitting a wide beam laser set to a harmonic frequency relevant to the antimatter contained in the power core. Once the weapon is fired, a minute gap is opened in the carbon nanotube and the antimatter interacts with the molecules along the line of laser light. The laser acts as a path of least resistance so that the antimatter release does not ignite the air molecules surrounding the weapon's user. However, an eerie crackling can be heard as much of the air density surrounding the laser conduit evaporates into nothing in a fraction of an instant. The release of antimatter material literally breaks down matter and transforms it violently into pure energy. One of the advantages of null ray technology is that it travels at the speed of light. Thus there is no need to follow your target when tracking through the weapon's sights. It can be easier to hit your target with a null ray than with more conventional weaponry.

Though vehicle mounted null rays are more common, hand-held null ray weapons are extremely rare. The Migou capacity to produce antimatter is extremely limited. Though these weapons have certainly proven themselves to be devastating on the battlefield, the simple fact is that the Migou did not originally anticipate a prolonged campaign. In their eyes, the gains certainly outweighed the risks based on their original assessment. However, continued battles in the Aeon War against two enemies have resulted in a handful of null weapon accidents due to damaged antimatter containment fields that have caused a measure of casualties on both sides.

Though the Migou have not known war for ages prior to their current conflict, there are certain martial weapons that have been passed down through generations as a matter of tradition. One of these weapons is the Y blade. The Y blade stands at about four feet in length with two opposing sickle-shaped blades mounted at one end of a short pole to fashion the look of a lethal "Y" shaped weapon. A small bulbous weight forged out of the same material as the pole itself counterbalances the opposite end of the pole. The result is a well-balanced slashing weapon that can be spun with alarming speed and struck with amazing accuracy by the Migou wielder. This weapon is controlled by two Migou appendages, much like a human quarter-

staff. However, some Migou warriors have been known to train with two Y blades simultaneously, presenting a formidable front in close-quarters combat. Where ancient Y blades would have been forged of metal, the Migou prefer to construct modern versions of the blade out of lighter poly-composite materials. The style of Y blades often differs as well, depending on the purpose of the weapon. Actual combat weapons are honed with simple and practical lines, where other decorative models are created to be more ornate.

The other weapon that descends from Migou antiquity is the hook staff. These staves typically measure between eight and nine feet long. They are distinct in that both ends of the staff feature three inverted prongs similar to that of a grappling hook. Migou warriors would typically use the end of their hook staff to catch and disarm an enemy weapon or hook an opponent's limb as a take-down before the final kill. Though ancient hook staves were fixed in length, modern versions of the weapon have been updated with a telescoping capability that allows the prongs to pop out once fully extended. Thus, the Migou soldier is left with a three and a half foot weapon to carry when not engaged in a fight. Some hook staves are also equipped with a built-in power supply that creates a nasty stunning jolt for the victim when contact is made, making it a terrific weapon for herding prisoners.

The overall Migou genius for genetic engineering has also led to incredible developments in information processing and analysis through bio-mechanical systems. Migou bio-mechanical computers have the ability to self-organize and perform self-actuated diagnostic routines. These systems can literally deposit and retrieve message data within the genome of bacterial DNA with a transfer rate that dwarfs the most advanced of human computers. The data processing and storage capability of these systems is staggering and the neuro-interface built into most machines allows the Migou to access these systems by thought alone. One of the most powerful applications for this capability is to link on-board mecha computers via a radio frequency interface and allow pilots to instantly communicate and process tactical data as a single unit. Many New Earth Government pilots have remarked with a certain amount of awe on the Migou's capability to coordinate so well in combat. Unfortunately for Humans and Nazadi, the neuro-interfaces of these computers are specifically attuned to the Migou genetic code. Though some have attempted to access the Migou system interfaces through an adaptation of the neuro-link, each attempt has ended with madness or death.

Migou medical practices rely heavily on nanotechnology to mend tissue, repair nervous system damage, and in some cases regenerate limbs. The field application of this capability is a portable probe device that can sample the DNA of a wounded victim, detect the victim's biological map, and determine where repairs are necessary. The Migou medical probe appears like a disk that has been cut in half and is covered in a bio-mechanical casing. A small telescoping needle protrudes from the flat portion of the device when activated, designed to penetrate the flesh of the victim and retrieve the DNA sample. The probe will then program and release a stream of organic nanites to begin repairs

on the injured areas of the body. Healing can take between a few minutes for light wounds to a matter of days for more severe injuries. However the use of these probes is limited in that their supply of available nanites is finite based on the rating of the probe. Greater injuries require a higher volume of nanites to repair and thus the available usage of the device depletes at a greater rate. Once a nanite completes that task to which it is programmed, it essentially dies to be flushed out of the body by natural methods.

To regenerate a lost limb, a Migou victim must be immersed into a medical regeneration station, which can be found aboard the Hive Ship or among larger ground facilities. These units allow nanites to utilize the building blocks of raw organic fluid to transform into Migou biological cells and thus construct the limb anew. This process can take between a week to two weeks to complete. However, the ability to eliminate long-term physical disabilities has assured the resilience of the Migou fighting force on Earth.

MIGOU WEAPONS

The following is a list of weapons and equipment available to the Migou military forces on Earth. The rules for the effects of Stun weapons can be found on p. 114 of the Core Book; the rules for the effects of neurotoxic, HPM, and null ray weapons can be found on p. 115 of the Core Book. If your Storyguide allows, null rays provide a +1 bonus to Firearms Tests.

WEAPON NAME	RATING	TYPE	CAL	RNG (yd)	DMG	SHT	MIGOU FIREARMS
							RNDS
ANH-1	Common	Auto Needle - Small	5mm	15/35/55	0	3	20
NTH-1	Common	Auto Neurotoxin - Small	5mm	20/40/60	0	3	20 NT
ANH-2	Common	Auto Needle - Med	10mm	15/30/50	+1	3	18
NTH-2	Common	Auto Neurotoxin - Med	10mm	15/35/55	+1	2	18 NT
ANH-3	Common	Auto Needle - Large	15mm	12/25/45	+2	2	15
NTH-3	Common	Auto Neurotoxin - Large	10mm	15/30/50	+2	1	15 NT
ARR-1	Common	Assault Rail Rifle - Lt	5mm	60/100/230	+1	3 or 4/1-5/30	90 N
NTR-1	Common	Assault Neurotoxin Rifle - Lt	5mm	50/95/220	+1	3 or 4/1-5/30	90 N
ARR-2	Common	Assault Rail Rifle - Hvy	9mm	40/85/210	+2	3 or 3/1-5/30	60 N
HPMR-1	Special	HPM Rifle - Hvy	None	30/60/150	+2	3	Energy
NRR-1	Select	Assault Null Rifle - Hvy	None	35/75/200	+3	2	Energy
SMN-1	Common	Submachinegun Needle - Lt	9mm	25/40/60	+1	3 or 4/1-5/30	60 N
SMNT-1	Special	Submachinegun Neurotoxin - Lt	9mm	25/40/60	+1	3 or 4/1-5/30	50 NT
SMR-1	Common	Submachinegun Rail - Hvy	10mm	20/40/80	+2	3 or 4/1-5/30	30 N
RMG-1	Special	Rail Mach Gun - Hvy	10mm	105/530/1030	+2	8/1-10/80	500 N
HPMC-1	Special	HPM Portable Energy Cannon	None	75/500/1000	+3	2	Energy
NRC-1	Select	Squad Null Cannon	None	105/530/1030	+4	1	Energy

(CAL = Caliber of Weapon, RNG = short/mid/long range, DMG = Damage of Weapon, SHT = Number of Shots per Round, RNDS = Number and Type of Rounds, with "N" being Needlesm "NT" being Neurotoxin, and "Energy" being HPM or Null Ray)

MIGOU HAND WEAPONS

WEAPON NAME	RATING	TYPE	DMG
Stun Rod	Common	Charged Club Weapon	+0 + Stun
Survival Blade	Common	Bladed Weapon - Small	+0
Hook Staff - Standard	Common	Club Weapon	+1
Hook Staff - Electrical	Special	Charged Club Weapon	+1 + Stun
Y Blade - Ceremonial	Special	Bladed Weapon - Medium	+0
Y Blade - Standard	Common	Bladed Weapon - Medium	+1
Y Blade - Exquisite	Select	Bladed Weapon - Medium	+2

MIGOU SPECIAL WEAPONS							
WEAPON	RATING	TYPE	CAL	RNG (yd)	DMG	SHT	RNDS
GL-35	Common	Grenade Launcher	35mm	50/100/300	GT	1	1
WGL-35	Common	Weap Mnt Gren Lch	35mm	50/100/300	GT	1	3
AMR-1 Rocket Launcher	Common	Anti-Mech Rkt Lnchr	40mm	100/300/500	+1 (I)	1	1
AMR-2 Rocket Launcher	Special	Anti-Mech Rkt Lnchr	70mm	100/300/500	+2 (I)	1	1
AMR-3 Rocket Launcher	Special	Anti-Mech Rkt Lnchr	105mm	100/300/500	+3 (I)	1	1
NRL Rocket Launcher	Select	Anti-Matter Rocket	105mm	100/300/500	+4 (I)	1	1

(CAL = Caliber of Weapon, DMG = Damage of Weapon "GT" is Grenade Type, "I" is Integrity Scale, SHT = Number of Shots per Round, RNDS = Number of Rounds)

MIGOU EXPLOSIVES			
WEAPON	TYPE	BURST (yd)	DMG
SG-35	35mm Grenade	10 primary / 5 secondary	+1
HEG-35	35mm HE Grenade	5 primary / 5 secondary	+3
AMG-35*	35mm HE Anti-Mech	2	+0
ICG-35 (Incendiary)*	35mm Grenade	10	+1 (fire)
PGG-35 (Poison Gas)*	35mm Grenade	3	+6
TGG-35 (Tear Gas)*	35mm Grenade	6	Obscure
FLG-35 (Flash)*	35mm Grenade	6	Blindness
CCG-35 (Concussion)*	35mm Grenade	6	Disorient
MPM-1	Motion Sensor Proximity Mine	5 primary / 5 secondary	+5

- AMG-35 rounds do Hybrid Damage.
- ICG-35 rounds ignite flammable materials within their burst radius.
- PGG-35, TGG-35, FLG-35, CCG-35, and MPM-1 explosives all function like their New Earth Government counterparts, as found on p. 113 of the Core Book.

MIGOU ARMOR			
ARMOR NAME	RATING	TYPE	PROTECTION
ACA-2	Special	Amphibious Combat Armor	+2/+2
LBA-1	Common	Light ballistic armor	+1/+1
SECA-1	Common	Sealed combat armor with environmental control -Lt	+1/+1
SECA-2	Common	Sealed combat armor with environmental control -Med	+2/+2
SECA-3	Select	Sealed combat armor with environmental control -Hvy	+3/+3

- MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT
- Computer Neuro-interface
 - Holographic Video Display
 - Instant Pain Killer - 1 Dose
(Reduces test penalties by 1 level when injured. Repeated use risks addiction.)
 - Laser Range Finder
 - Personal Bio-mechanical Computer
 - Medical Probe - Standard (Regenerate 12 health levels)
 - Medical Probe - Advanced (Regenerate 20 health levels)
 - Neurotoxin Needles - Human/Nazzadi (50 rnds)
 - Neurotoxin Needles - Other (50 rnds)
 - Night Vision Visor with IR Illuminator
 - Strapped Holster
 - Wireless Communications Device

VEHICLES

BG-24 JELLYFISH

The Jellyfish tends to present a strange peaceful image as it serenely floats over the remains of a battlefield. As a hybrid vessel of both organic and technological construction, the Jellyfish serves as a medical support vehicle for the Migou – sporting the image of a large inverted apple with six long wavy tendrils hanging from the bottom. The tendrils act as prehensile tentacles that can lift the bodies of wounded soldiers from the battlefield and gently raise them through an access hatch located in the underbelly of the craft. From there, the wounded soldier is tended to by the medical crew inside the craft. To date the Jellyfish has only been designed to treat wounded Migou, not their blank or loyalist servants.

Type: Medical Support Vehicle (5 AP)

Size: Behemoth (45 ft.)

Passengers: 12

Cargo: 775 cubic feet/15,750 lbs.

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) 0

Sensors (*Perceptions*) -1

Frame (*Strength*) 7

Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) +1

Warning Systems (*Reflex*) +1

SENSOR SYSTEMS

Nightvision

Radar/IFF

Scan

Thermal

X-Ray

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Heat Resistance

Life Support

MOVEMENT

Air Speed: 180 mph (444/108 ypt)

Acceleration Code: C (2/2)

A-Pods

STRUCTURE

Integrity 10

Armor 1/1

BG-19 KINGPIN

The Kingpin performs a vital role as the Migou “eye in the sky.” It provides weather surveillance, command, control, and communications for Migou combat forces throughout the world. Tactical data captured by its large twin scanner discs are fed directly to a central processing computer aboard the Migou Hive Ship. In this way, the Migou can pull up-to-the-minute combat situational data on a global scale and perform tactical adjustments within an impressively short timeframe. The data can then be instantly relayed to command posts on the ground. The scanners have a range of more than 250 miles for low-flying targets and farther for aircraft flying at medium to high altitudes.

Type: Tactical Field Command Aircraft (6 AP)

Size: Behemoth (60 ft.)

Passengers: 4

Cargo: 775 cubic feet/15,750 lbs.

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) -1

Sensors (*Perception*) +1

Frame (*Strength*) 5

Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) -1

Warning Systems (*Reflex*) +1

SENSOR SYSTEMS

Extremely Long Range Radar (250 mile radius)

Long Range

Nightvision

Radar/IFF

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Ejector System

Sealed System

MOVEMENT

Air Speed: 600 mph (1480/360 ypt)

Acceleration Code: E (3/3)

A-Pods

STRUCTURE

Integrity 10

Armor 1/1

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

Laser Cannon (Large)

PILOTING MIGOU VEHICLES

Migou vehicles have been specifically designed for their own unique physiology. Humans and Nazzadi cannot pilot a Migou vehicle unless a Character succeeds at a Technician skill Test against a Challenging degree. Even then the jury rigging would only allow for very basic control that would severely penalize the person's Piloting skill.

BG-07 STALKER

The Stalker is the Migou mainstay reconnaissance and surveillance platform. Stalkers are typically deployed well behind enemy lines to watch and gather data on enemy strengths, positions, and movements. These sleek long craft can operate equally well underwater as well as in the air, making them a difficult foe to detect when concealed. They are also often used for insertion and retrieval of small specialized military insertion teams. Though the Stalker is armed with a pair of large laser cannons, their primary weapon is most certainly their ability to watch and listen. Discovering a Stalker within any given area is often a sign heralding a much larger Migou force yet to come.

Type: Stealth Reconnaissance (8 AP)

Size: Behemoth (55 ft.)

Passengers: 10

Cargo: 695 cubic feet/13,936 lbs.

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) +1

Sensors (*Perceptions*) +1

Frame (*Strength*) 3

Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) -1

Warning Systems (*Reflex*) 0

SENSOR SYSTEMS

Long Range

Nightvision

Radar/IFF

Scan

Thermal

X-Ray

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

ECM

Life Support

Stealth System

MOVEMENT

Air Speed: 600 mph (1480/360 ypt)

Acceleration Code: E (3/3)

A-Pods

STRUCTURE

Integrity 10

Armor 2/2

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

2 x Laser Cannon (Large)

BG-45 TRIPOD

The Tripod serves as the Migou answer to the amphibious armored fighting vehicle. Its primary mission is to transport infantry close to enemy positions, provide troop cover fire and armored protection, and suppress enemy armor. The Tripod is capable of transporting a full squad of Migou battletroops or a half-dozen powered armor units. The vehicle was christened the Tripod due to its unusual construction. A single crew compartment (pod) is attached by, and separated from, two external compartments that house the passengers and their gear, creating a kind of three-podded look. Each of the external compartments can be flooded to allow soldiers to disembark underwater.

Type: Amphibious Armored Fighting Vehicle (9 AP)

Size: Large (40 ft.)

Passengers: 2 crew, plus 12 troopers & support equipment

Cargo: 490 cubic feet/10,000 lbs.

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) 0

Sensors (*Perceptions*) +1

Frame (*Strength*) 7

Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) -1

Warning Systems (*Reflex*) 0

SENSOR SYSTEMS

Nightvision

Radar/IFF

Targeting +1

X-ray

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Cold Resistance

Depth Reinforcement

ECM

Life Support

Life Support Pod

MOVEMENT

Air/Water Speed: 180 mph (444/108 ypt)

Acceleration Code: C (2/2)

A-Pod

STRUCTURE

Integrity 10

Armor 2/2

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

Amphibious Laser Cannon (Large)

Amphibious Missile Rack (Large)

Torpedo Pod (Large)

MANTIS

LOCUST

DRAGONFLY

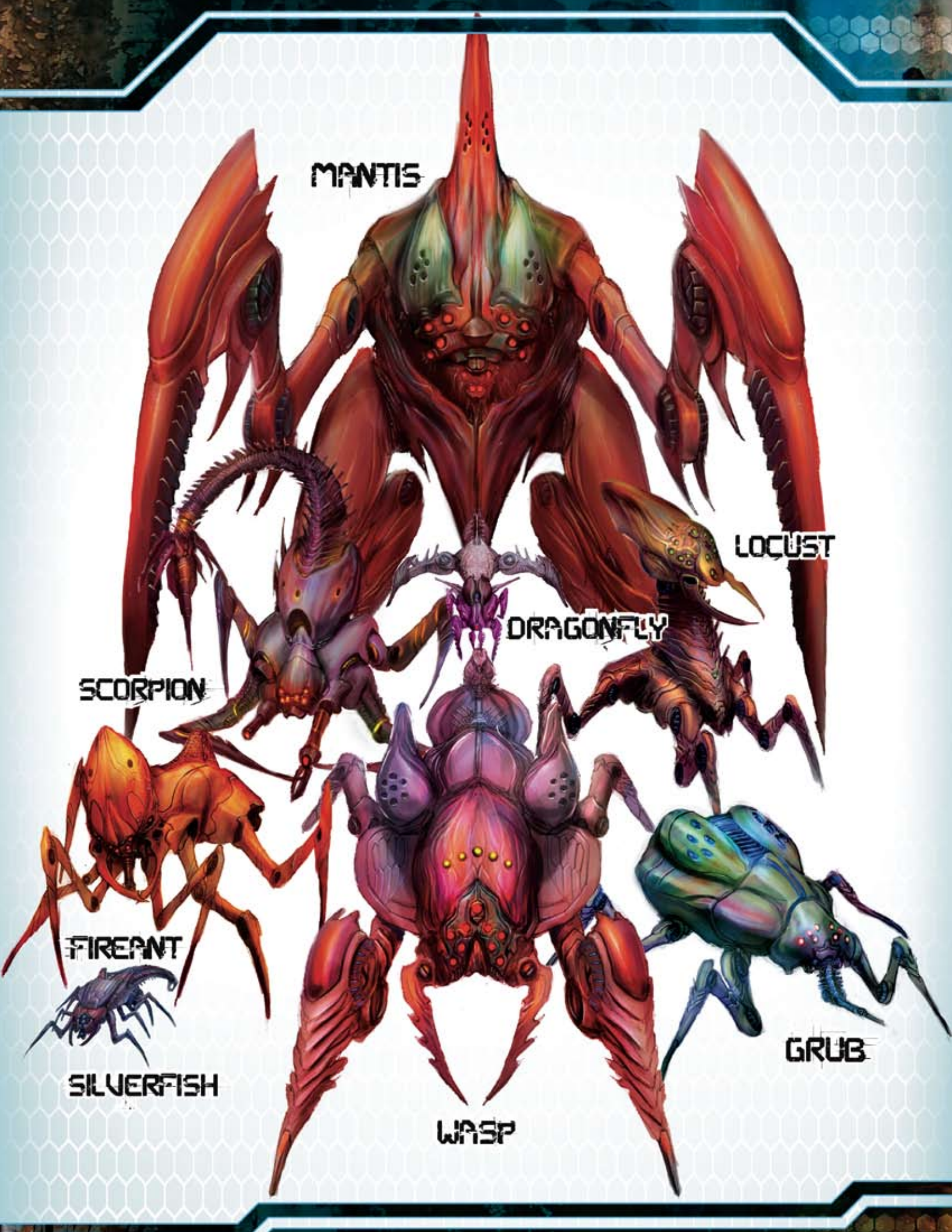
SCORPION

FIREANT

SILVERFISH

GRUB

WASP



NEW MECHA & MECHA TECHNOLOGY

Just as the New Earth Government has developed new tools for their mecha, so have the Migou. First and foremost, whether it be by coincidence or by design, the Migou have developed their own version of the limited stealth system. It functions the same way as the NEG system, with similar uses. The Migou have already put it to use in the Earwig, a suit of powered armor with a deadly bite.

The Migou have also continued to flesh out their retinue of stealth mecha, technology which they have become very effective at developing. The latest addition is the Mosquito, a flying cousin to the dreaded Silverfish. Now the Migou have a stealth unit that can swoop down from above, invisible, fast, and equipped with an anti-matter weapon.

Perhaps one of the most obvious developments is in the appearance of the mainstream Migou mecha. This has both concerned and confused New Earth Government intelligence analysts. However, the reasons and results are nothing as great as the analysts theorize. Migou mecha are partly bio-mechanical and, just as the Migou are, they are designed to adapt. They have further

adapted to the atmosphere and environs of Earth, and this has led to some cosmetic changes. This transformation is happening quickly and it is estimated that all Migou mecha will have undergone such changes within the next few months.

While the new look might be disconcerting at first, these mecha function identically to their predecessors. The New Earth Government may still be looking for more profound differences, but pilots are reporting the same combat characteristics that they did before. However, who knows. It might be just another Migou trick.

MIGOU MECHA TECH

Though the core Migou mecha may have new looks, they all function the same and utilize the same statistics presented in the *Core Book* on p. 164-168. Furthermore, the Migou's version of the limited stealth system functions identically to the New Earth Government's version, which is presented on p. 80 of this book.

EARWIG

Type: Powered Armor (3 AP)

Size: Tiny (10' tall)

It seems no coincidence that the Migou have had a similar breakthrough in stealth technology – after all, it was they that gave the Nazzadi such technology in the first place. The Earwig is a cousin to the Nazzadi's Sunspot, though the Migou powered armor isn't designed as a lure. It is much, much more deadly. The Migou have finally figured out how to embed a Null Ray into a suit of powered armor. The Earwig sneaks up like no other tiny mech can and then packs the kind of punch that makes enemies pause. It is the kind of advancement the NEG hoped the Migou would never make.

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) -1
Sensors (*Perception*) 0
Frame (*Strength*) 1 (-1 damage)
Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) -1
Warning Systems (*Reflex*) -1

SENSORY SYSTEMS

Broadband Audio
Nightvision
Radar/IFF
X-Ray

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

ECM
Limited Stealth System
Sealed System

MOVEMENT

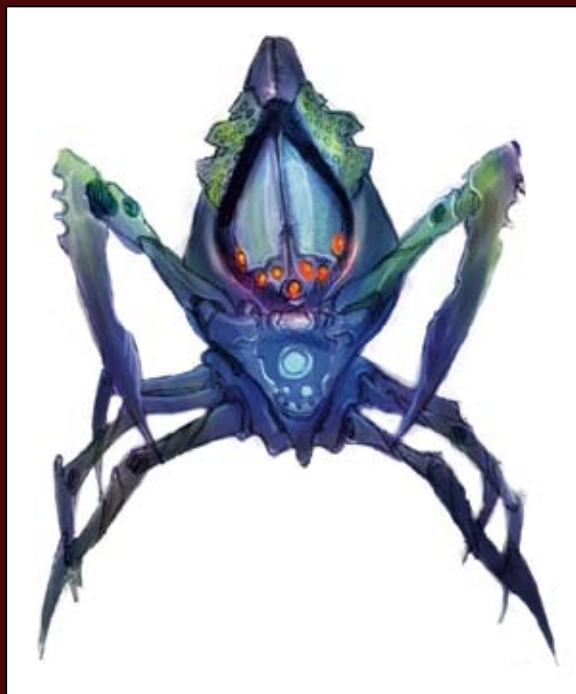
Ground Speed: 60 mph
(144 ypt/36 ypt)
Acceleration Code: C [2/2]
Jumping Distance: 8/4
Airdroppable
Enhanced Land Speed (Double)
Jump Pods

STRUCTURE

Integrity 5
Armor 1/1
Damage Control Systems 1/turn

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

Null Ray (Small)
Pincers (Small)



MOSQUITO

Type: Aerial Stealth Combat Mech (6 AP)

Size: Small (24' tall)

The Mosquito is in the same family as the feared Silverfish. Though it is not as fast as its land-borne cousin, it attacks from the air, rounding out the use of Migou stealth technology. Fast on the wing, the Mosquito descends from the sky to decimate opponents in surprise attacks utilizing a dreaded Migou Null Ray. While the machinery of the Mosquito is not as agile or immediately maneuverable as other Migou mecha, due to the addition of more advanced technology, it makes up for it in its outright speed and deadliness. Its appearance has been an unwelcome surprise to the NEG.

ATTRIBUTES

Control Response (*Agility*) 0
Sensors (*Perception*) -1
Frame (*Strength*) 4
Multi-Task Systems (*Actions*) -1
Warning Systems (*Reflex*) -1

SENSORY SYSTEMS

Broadband Audio
Nightvision
Radar/IFF
X-Ray

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

ECM
Manipulator Arms
Sealed System
Stealth System

MOVEMENT

Ground Speed: 30 mph
(74 ypt/18 ypt)
Air/Water Speed: 180 mph
(444/108 ypt)
Acceleration Code: A [1/1]
Jumping Distance: 5/2
A-Pods
Enhanced A-Pod Speed (Sextuple)

STRUCTURE

Integrity 10
Armor 1/1
Damage Control Systems 1/turn

WEAPONS SYSTEMS

Null Ray (Small)
Piercing Tongue (Small)



MOSQUITO

EARWIG



MAGIC & ARCANOTECHNOLOGY

For the most part, the Migou's application of arcanotechnology is analogous to what the New Earth Government has done. They have their own version of D-engines, D-cells, mecha, and the like. However, there are some differences.

Perhaps one of the more interesting applications of Migou arcanotech is their brain tubes. Something they have used for millions of years, a brain tube allows the Migou to remove the brain from a creature (most often Human), and keep it alive inside an electrically-charged nutrient bath. The body, naturally, will die without its brain, but the Migou even have technology to keep said bodies in suspended animation until they re-implant the brain – something they rarely do. The nutrient bath is self-replenishing, so the brain tube requires little or no maintenance once sealed. Brains can be kept alive long past their natural lifespan in this way, sometimes living centuries.

The device is essentially a metal tube about seven inches in diameter. For the most part, the tube is smooth, the only exception being a cluster of ports near the bottom. It is here that the Migou can plug different attachments into the tube, which allow the brain to see, hear, and communicate, as well as providing the capability to network brains together.

Many brains cannot deal with their existence and go insane within the first few years. Others find equilibrium in their newfound state and are self-possessed even hundreds of years later.

MAGIC

The Migou have practiced sorcery for ages and they know that infusing power into a ritual by using the name or likeness of the greater beings of the universe can quickly lead to trouble. Instead, they utilize the power of blood magic. In general, assume you should add blood and viscera of a fresh kill to every ritual of Second or Third Order that a Migou uses. The kill should be large dog-size or larger for Second Order, and Human-size or larger for Third Order.

Following are two Scrying rituals unique to the Migou. As such, things like legalities and costs have been removed.

Speak & Be Heard

First Order

Type: Scrying

Learning Time: 1 Month

Insanity Test: Average/1 Insanity Point

Occult Rating Required: Novice

Intellect Required: 5

Tenacity Required: 7

Prep Time: 4 Hours

Casting Time: 1 Hour

Difficulty: Average

Extended Tests Required: 2

Ruach Cost: 5

Components & Requirements: at least a 100 square foot reasonably undisturbed working space, a bell or chimes, candles, a

clear unflavored alcohol (the Migou use rubbing alcohol), various herbs, various incense.

Effects: A Migou under the influence of Speak & Be Heard can connect and communicate with any other sentient living creature. This communication is flawless. Both parties must communicate in whatever fashion is normal to them. The ritual then takes the message and instantaneously translates it into something the Migou can understand. It is in this way that they have communicated with such alien species as the Great Race or the Elder Race. Though the Migou can mimic Human speech through the buzzing of their wings, they sometimes prefer a more unadulterated method. The user can turn the effects of this ritual on and off at will and may move around freely while it is active. There is no discernible difference between a regular Migou and a Migou using this ritual. Speak & Be Heard lasts for twenty-four hours and can be recharged using a ritual with the same requirements, but taking half the time (similar to wards).

Wisdom of the Stars

Second Order

Type: Scrying

Learning Time: 4 Months

Insanity Test: Challenging/1 Insanity Point

Occult Rating Required: Adept

Intellect Required: 7

Tenacity Required: 8

Prep Time: 2 Days

Casting Time: 1 Day

Difficulty: Challenging

Extended Tests Required: 2

Ruach Cost: 15

Components & Requirements: at least a 100 square foot reasonably undisturbed working space, a bell or wind chimes, candles, a dissociative or hallucinogenic substance, various large harmonic crystals, various incense, an unobstructed view of the stars, the blood and internal organs of a fresh kill (large dog-sized or greater). Also, ritual participants must have fasted for the two days of preparation, and must be freshly bathed.

Effects: While those who are interested in tempting fate can utilize spells that call upon the great powers of the universe, the Migou prefer to work in a more subtle and safe fashion. This ritual is an enhanced version of astrology, where the participating Migou tap into the celestial mechanics of the universe from which to gain wisdom. The user can begin to see the grand cogs of the universe click into place, foretelling auspicious and inauspicious people, events, or times. Users of this ritual can choose either to focus on the mechanics around a certain thing or event, or they can choose to open themselves up to see what the stars have in store in general. Either way, the visions that users receive during this experience are only possibilities or probabilities, for the future is never set in stone. Seeing the mechanics on which the universe is built can be a mind-bending experience, and a user must succeed at a Challenging Insanity Test or gain one Insanity Point.

There were places on this planet that the so-called masters of it didn't even know existed, despite having "ownership" of it for tens of thousands of years.

404, if it could have felt that sort of emotion, would have thought that was sad and pathetic. Instead, it was just another piece of evidence how ill-fit the barely evolved races that infested this planet were to stay its stewards.

It recognized the spires that jutted out of the desert sands. The Humans called this place Australia, but the names the Migou knew it by were much, much older than that. Though 404 was only a few decades old, it knew this place. Those who had come before it had been here millions of years ago, therefore, as a genetic inheritor, 404 knew it.

This was a place once inhabited by beings known as the Great Race. They were unique creatures, capable of migrating through space and time, possessing the bodies of those they contacted. By the time the Migou had come to Earth, the Great Race had been driven from this place by hideous creatures known as the Polypous Race. Even those olden enemies were gone by the time the Migou had discovered this city.

To think that the man-beasts that supposedly ruled this planet believed that only giant reptiles had come before them here. There were even others who vehemently argued that the world was only ten thousand years old.

404 wandered down the memories of those who came before it. It saw the spires in the sand grow to mammoth proportions, a city of magnificence. Those who had come before it had arrived before time had ravaged the place. The city had once been home to tens of thousands of the great race, perhaps even their capital.

Though now nothing but sand, 404's genetic memory saw things as they once were. It flew over a section of the city that looked as if it had been devastated by a hurricane. Buildings had been flattened by what appeared to be nature, despite the fact that it was clearly targeted. It was a direct swathe of destruction, toppling and tearing apart everything in its path. This was the work of the Polypous Race.

Supposedly those horrible and malevolent creatures commanded the power of the winds. What the Migou had been able to learn about their civilization was that the Polypous Race laid waste to anything that threatened their supremacy. The Great Race clearly threatened that supremacy and was capable of fending off their enemies for hundreds or thousands of years.

In those days, this part of the world was not quite the desert it had become. The continents were not so far apart and this place was more akin to a savannah than a wasteland. The Great Race kept to themselves, or so the research says, building their grand cities to encompass whatever passed as daily life to such strange and advanced creatures. But the Earth has always been a perilous and contested place, so while the Great Race resisted the predations of such foul enemies as the Old Ones, they drew the attention of something else.

It was a mystery to even the Migou where the Polypous Race came from originally. It was strongly suspected that they

were creatures of another dimension – like so many of the visiting dominant races in this part of the universe. When the Great Race first emerged into this time and place, the Polypous Race had already built basalt cities and set upon their newfound competition almost immediately.

Much to their surprise, the Great Race defeated them and locked them up beneath the Earth.

The knowledge the Great Race carried with them was not bound by linear time, however, and they knew that one day their enemies would rise again and grind them under their might. However, there was much time and the Great Race enjoyed what they could of this time and place while they could.

It was not long after that, in cosmic terms, that the Migou came to this world and made it their own. They had come to this place and studied it, at least until the first interlopers came to interfere.

They were the Elder Race, perhaps the most effective enemy the Migou of this galaxy had ever known. The two species locked in combat for what was understood to be nearly as long as the Great Race of this land fought against the Polypous Race. However, the Migou stood as conquerors in this case, forever driving the Elder Race far from here.

However, in the aftermath of such great wars, the significance of places such as this waned. The Migou ruled the Earth without opposition and things were as they were supposed to be.

Now here they were, deep behind the lines of a new enemy. The New Earth Government claimed this continent as theirs, though they rarely travelled this deep into the central deserts. However, what 404 and its companions sought was worth the peril. The Humans of this world had not yet found places like this, but their world was shrinking every day. Soon they might just stumble across them by accident.





Since the world of the Humans had opened up less than a century ago, they had slowly begun to accept things about the greater universe. They had even discovered stories that told them of the ancient world, including such beings as the Great Race. It was fortunate for the Migou that many still disbelieved such tales, incapable of processing that Humans might not be the center of the universe or the pinnacle of creation. Still, those of greater evolution delved. They reached through time as best they could.

Those few who were versed in the distant scribbles that encompassed the knowledge of humanity regarding the Great Race believed that it was some kind of magical or para-psychic ability that allowed that amazing species to migrate from this place when the time came. They mused at what sort of evolutionary power must such a species command to be able to flee through the streams of time.

However, the Migou knew better. It wasn't magic that thrust the disembodied Great Race across the cosmos. It was technology. Or perhaps what the Humans would call arcanotechnology. The point being, that it was a science that may have left behind traces – traces that could be used to recapture some of those creatures' feats.

That's why the Migou were here. If they could rediscover such amazing technology, they would be free to travel across not only space, but time.

Perhaps even to the time when the first monkey on this planet picked up a bone, so that such an abomination could be properly executed, its mutilated remains strung up as an example.

It would be right if things were back to the way they were. Back to the way they were supposed to be.

chapter seven

alien alter ego

INTRO TO MIGOU GAMES

Now that you've had the opportunity to peek behind the Migou curtain, you may want to explore their world more fully by playing a game where they are the Characters and focus. That's what this chapter is all about – designing Migou or Migou-affiliated Characters and playing Migou stories.

Playing a Migou game can be challenging in the extreme. If your Characters are all blank Humans or loyalist Nazzadi under command of Migou that are supporting cast, things will be a lot easier. Any game involving the portrayal of Migou Characters is going to require a dedicated group that is willing to do a little extra work. It is not for the faint of heart.

NOT JUST WEAK PROSTHETICS & AN ACCENT

First and foremost, anyone wishing to portray a Migou needs to understand that these creatures are not just Humans that look like alien insects. They are truly alien creatures. You will need to get inside their head to think like one and study its physiology so you can behave like one. The very least a player needs to be familiar with is the material in this chapter, combined with the information on p. 88-90.

Preferably, anyone wishing to portray a Migou will become an expert on all the Migou-related material in this book.

THE ENEMIES WERE YOUR FRIENDS

In a Migou game, the New Earth Government is one of the primary enemies. In fact, all Humans and Nazzadi are enemies. This is a radical shift from your average game, where at least some of the Humans and Nazzadi (if not all) on the planet are allies. The Migou are dedicated to enslaving the Human race and wiping out the Nazzadi. The Earth is theirs.

This can be awkward for some players. You are turning the tables and putting your own species in opposition. You will be taking on the job of destroying our civilization, enslaving your own people, and ultimately bringing an end to life as we know it. Everyone in your group needs to be comfortable with this, and there are people that will find such a game distasteful.

Fortunately, this is just a fictional game, and games are one of the places we can explore such things in our imaginations.

ALL WARS ARE ONE

The New Earth Government is fighting the Aeon War differently on most fronts. They fight openly against the Migou and the Disciples of the Rapine Storm, but work to contain the Esoteric Order of Dagon, and are mostly unaware of the Children of Chaos and the Disciples of Death's Shadow. The Migou are aware of all the players in the war and are out to defeat each of them with the same ferocity as the others.

Thus, the Migou have two tactics in the Aeon War. The first is open warfare against the NEG, the Rapine Storm, and the Esoteric Order, with an underground war against the others. However, they are all part of the same holistic battle plan.

THE NAME GAME

One of the biggest hurdles you will have to overcome in a Migou game is that the Migou don't have a language that we can even begin to understand. Things don't have the same kinds of names, or even names as we know them at all. Their language is a complicated system that primarily relies on individuals being able to see each other. Their written language is a system of characters that match basic visual communications. In addition to getting inside these alien creatures' heads, you'll have to figure out how to communicate like one.

However, this is just a game. There's no reason that you can't decide to call things by the same things you'd call them as your Human self, simply acknowledging that the Migou have different "words." Migou Characters will, on the other hand, still need to something to call each other. The communication the Migou use for individual designations don't really match anything in the Human sphere. Calling Migou Characters by Human names such as Steve or Carol seems foolish. We recommend that you use something simple to differentiate your Migou Characters, such as numbers or letters. Some find that numbers don't communicate enough individuality, so feel free to create your own unique alien naming convention. In the end, do whatever works for you but that also still satisfies the requirement of matching an alien mind-set.

NON-MIGOU CHARACTERS

Not all the Characters in Migou games need to be Migou. Some might be Human blanks from any number of professions, assimilated to work within the Migou machine. Others might be Nazzadi Loyalists who have come back to the fold to serve their creators. The only important thing to remember with this is the chain of command – the Migou will always be in charge. Players who choose to design blank or Loyalist Characters should be comfortable with this in order to play – blank Characters especially, as they will inflict self-harm, even commit suicide, if ordered to.

Normally, Characters from Migou stories and Characters from New Earth Government stories can't mix. There is one possible exception, however. The Migou are aware of the threat posed by the Chrysalis Corporation and do dedicate some of their efforts to stopping the Children of Chaos' insidious plots. Therefore, it is possible to mix together Characters who are part of the Eldritch Society that are working with blank or Loyalist Characters to accomplish mutual goals. Neither side may particularly trust the other, but it is a way to mix two types of Characters together into an unusual game.

FEAR & INSANITY

Despite the differences in physiology and psychology, Migou Characters must still deal with fear and insanity. They are a mortal race and while they experience different emotions (if that's what they can be called), fear is an activation of the primal fight or flight mechanism and insanity a warping of a creature's occurring world. However, both game mechanics work a little differently when applied to the Migou.

When it comes to Fear, the basic rules still apply. Migou must succeed at a Tenacity Feat Test whenever exposed to something terrifying, and must roll on the Fear Effects table when frightened. However, since the Migou have an expanded worldview over ours, there are some things which do not scare them. They obviously are unaffected by the Fear Factor of their own race. They also are unaffected by the Fear Factors of many other metaterrestrial races, the ones that might be considered to be intelligent races in their own right. Thus, Migou do not test for fear when facing Deep Ones, Ghosts, Ghouls, or Hybrids – all of which are races with which they have dealt for many years.

Also, there are several Fear Effects that are modified when applied to the Migou:

- Result #3 – *Lose Bodily Control* still applies, but there is no discomfort or embarrassment as the Migou only discharges its odorless vaporized waste.
- Result #9-10 – *Scream* still applies, but the Migou don't really scream as we know it. It would be more accurate to say that they have a short-duration spastic buzzing fit.
- Result #13-14 – *Twitch* still applies with one exception – the Migou don't drool.
- Result #15-17 – *Terror* still applies, but with a similar exception to *Scream* above. The Migou do not scream, nor do they sob, so instead they will flee from the source of fear in a state similar to the spastic buzzing fit from *Scream* above.
- Result #19 – *Temporary Disorder* still applies, though the types of disorders that apply to the Migou are different. We'll explore that topic in just a bit.

When it comes to insanity, the Migou still utilize the Insanity Point mechanics as normal. The things that cause insanity, as presented on p. 139 of the *Core Book*, are generic enough that they mostly all still apply to the Migou. There are a couple of exceptions. The Migou do not often suffer from despair or consuming hatred, both of which are Human emotions. Victimized an innocent only applies to one's own species, so the Migou generate no insanity from victimizing Humans or Nazzadi (or really any non-Migou). The same goes for witnessing or causing a massacre or bloodbath – as long as the Migou aren't the ones that are the victims of the massacre or bloodbath, all is well.

However, the types of Human disorders that have analogs in the Migou are much fewer. Please remember that these are close to the disorders that the Migou suffer from, but not exact (something nearly impossible to do with such an alien race). Feel free to add your own twists to such disorders to make them seem more specific to the Migou.

The following mental disorders do not apply to the Migou:

- General Anxiety Disorder (Anxiety)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (Anxiety)
- Psychogenic Amnesia (Dissociative)
- All types of Mood Disorders
- All types of Schizophrenia
- Minor Physical Disorders (Anxiety)

- Antisocial Disorder (Personality)
- Avoidant Disorder (Personality)
- Narcissistic Disorder (Personality)
- Paranoid Disorder (Personality)
- Schizoid Disorder (Personality)

The following mental disorders are modified when applied to the Migou, in the described ways:

- Conversion Disorder (Somatoform) – Migou senses work differently, so just use your best judgment as to how the physical characteristics of the afflicted are affected.
- Minor Physical Disorders (Somatoform) – the Migou don't suffer the same kinds of minor conversion disorders, but they can be similar. While they may not manifest attention or hyperactivity disorder, they can become insomniacs or lose the desire to eat.
- Megalomania Disorder (Personality) – the megalomania applies to the race, not just the individual.
- Rage Disorder (Personality) – Migou do not lose their patience as a part of this disorder, instead becoming dangerously bloodthirsty when it comes to the conquest of other races.

For ease of reference, the most common mental disorders from which the Migou suffer are:

- Obsessive or Compulsive Disorder (Anxiety)
- Phobias (Anxiety)
- Hypochondriasis (Somatoform)
- Borderline Disorder (Personality)
- Dependent Disorder (Personality)
- Histrionic Disorder (Personality)
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (Personality)
- Schizotypal Disorder (Personality)

These mental disorders are uncommon among the afflicted Migou, but do occur:

- Panic Disorder (Anxiety)
- Multiple Personality Disorder (Dissociative)
- Psychogenic Fugue (Dissociative)

The rules for managing and healing insanity and mental disorders are the same for Migou as they are for Humans or Nazzadi. The Migou are vigilant in maintaining mental health among their species, so Characters who are developing disorders will most often be sent to counseling as soon as they are identified.

MIGOU CHARACTERS IN OTHER GAMES

You may be tempted to come up with some kind of reason that a Migou would have a change of heart and go over to some kind of non-Migou group, specifically so you can play a Migou Character in a New Earth Government or some other kind of game. Just so we're clear – this never happens. The Migou are organisms that are deeply tied to their own species. They will not, under any circumstance, cooperate with or join up with members of other races or affiliations. If you want to play a Migou Character according to canon, you must play a game that revolves around the Migou.

DESIGNING MIGOU CHARACTERS

Designing a Migou Character is similar to designing any other kind of Character, just with a few new twists. For ideas on what kinds of Migou Characters are available, you may want to take a look at the profession templates the follow on p. 126-131.

In general, defining the concept of a Migou Character is different, but by reading this book you'll most likely already have some ideas. One important thing to note, however, is in Defining Characteristics. The Migou do not have the same emotions as Human or Nazzadi Characters and their personal traits are going to be different. Take a look at p. 88-90 to see what kind of traits are going to be appropriate. Since Migou have a much more limited range, it may be possible for multiple Migou Characters in the same play group to have identical Virtues and Flaws.

Assign 35 points to Attributes as usual, utilizing the adjustments from the Migou racial templates from p. 124-125.

Assign 20 points to Skills, taking into account Qualities as well. This is where things diverge. Migou gain a different set of free skills, some skills and Qualities are not appropriate for them, and there are new Qualities unique to them. This section explores each of those in detail.

Secondary Attributes are calculated the usual way, with one notable exception. The Migou have multiple limbs and are used to utilizing them in concert. All Migou can take two Actions per turn, and those with an average Agility and Perception of seven or higher can take up to three Actions per turn.

Spend Cheats as usual for Migou Characters.

SERVANTS OF THE MIGOU

It is entirely possible to want to play a Migou game but not want to play a Migou. Mixed groups are workable if the other mortal Characters are Human blanks or Nazzadi loyalists.

Design such Characters as usual, choosing the Dark Secret (3) Drawback for those operating undercover and the new Blank Drawback.

FREE SKILLS

Because of their genetic memory and because they begin their adult training months after birth, Migou Characters start with a greater array of free skills. They are:

Athletics: Novice
Languages (English): Expert
Languages (Nazzadi): Expert
Languages (Choose two other Human languages): Novice
Literacy: Novice
Occult: Novice
Regional Knowledge: Novice

Furthermore, Sanctified Characters also begin with the following additional free skills:

Languages (Arabic): Novice
Languages (Latin): Novice
Languages (R'lyehyan): Novice

SKILLS

Most of the normal skills apply to Migou games, though the application of them will apply to Migou cultural norms or technology. There are a few exceptions that are noteworthy, however.

- Few Migou will learn the *Bureaucracy* skill, since they are community-oriented and mostly find their own societal or organizational equilibrium. They really don't need to know how to grease the wheels or work within a bureaucratic organization.
- Migou don't live in a commercial society and they don't really have an economy as we know it, so the only reason one would learn the *Business* skill is to learn about how Humans and Nazzadi conduct business.
- Like the Business skill, few Migou would know the *Larceny* skill. White collar crime only exists in commercial societies and not at all in the natural world of the Migou.
- Migou don't really have police or much of a need for them, so the *Law Enforcement* skill would only apply to the analytical parts of the skill's use.
- As community-oriented creatures, the Migou generally know how to behave with one another. There are no complex social situations that would require the *Savoir-Faire* skill.
- Since Migou are asexual, they have no use for the *Seduction* skill.
- The Migou don't really have a seedier side of their civilization, so the *Streetwise* skill would not be especially useful to them.

QUALITIES

Some of the normal Qualities available to Characters apply to the Migou, but others are entirely inappropriate. Here is a list of which ones work, which ones don't, and which ones are modified when they apply to a Migou Character.

Assets

- The following Assets may be used unchanged or at least only modified in flavor to apply to the Migou: *Acute Senses*, *Ally*, *Ambidextrous*, *Authority*, *Common Sense*, *Contact*, *Driven*, *Double Jointed*, *Efficient Immune System*, *Efficient Metabolism*, *Egghead*, *Eidetic Memory*, *Erupted Para-Psychic*, *Exceptional Para-Psychic*, *Famous Incident*, *Fast*, *Fearless*, *High Pain Threshold*, *Innovative*, *Internal Clock*, *Internal Compass*, *Latent Para-Psychic*, *Lucid Dreamer*, *Luck*, *Muse*, *Natural Athlete*, *Nightvision*, *Peripheral Vision*, *Quick Healer*, and *Wary*.
- The Migou are asexual, so the *Alluring* and *Sexy Voice* Assets do not apply.
- The Migou do what they do for the good of the species, so being singled out for a *Commendation* does not happen.
- There is no such thing as *Elite* in Migou society.
- The benefits of the *Minor Empathy* Asset apply only to other Migou.
- Since the Migou do not have the kind of negotiations Humans or Nazzadi do, the *Shrewd* Asset is inappropriate.
- The Migou do not have access to the Rite of Sacred Union, so they cannot choose the *Tager* or *Tager: Exceptional* Assets.
- The Migou do not utilize currency the way we do, so the *Wealth*

Asset has no use.

- The *White Asset* applies only to Nazzadi Characters.
- Migou cannot be Zoners, so the *Zoner Asset* does not apply.

Drawbacks

- Since duty to the species is ingrained in each and every Migou, all Migou should begin the game with the *Duty (3)* Drawback.
- The following Drawbacks may be used unchanged or at least only modified in flavor to apply to the Migou: *Call of the Void*, *Chronic Pain*, *Compulsive Behavior*, *Coward*, *Delusions*, *Dream Barren*, *Fanatical*, *Foe*, *Impetuous*, *Ineptitude*, *Lazy*, *Obsessive*, *Phobia*, *Sensory Impaired*, *Shadow Walker*, *Slow*, *Slow Healing*, and *Tired*.
- The following traits are based on personal aspects, upbringing, or behavior that do not occur with Migou: *Big Ego*, *Code*, *Damaged*, *Fat*, *Grating Voice*, *Habit*, *Mute*, *Oath*, *Repellent*, *Skinny*, and *Truly Honest*.
- The following social Drawbacks do not work with Migou and their society: *Debt*, *Disgraced*, *Misfit*, *Prejudice*, *Rival*, and *Watched*.
- The following emotional Drawbacks do not apply to Migou and their smaller and different range of so-called emotion: *Depressive*, *Greed*, *Jealous*, *Manic*, *Mean*, *Short Fuse*, and *Vengeful*.
- *Amnesia* doesn't happen to the Migou. Their brains don't work that way.
- The only *Dark Secret* a Migou can have is by being a part of one of the forbidden cults.
- The Migou have not, to their chagrin, been able to master synthorg technology, so they cannot have an *Engel Synthesis Interface*.
- Though unusual, an organization like the New Earth Government or the Disciples of the Rapine Storm may have marked a Migou Character for death. This usually will involve their personal involvement in something considered heinous. Please work with your Storyguide to see if the *Hunted* Drawback is appropriate for you.
- Only Migou Characters that are not one of the Sanctified can choose to be *Mystically Void*.
- Migou cannot choose to be *Outsider Tainted*. They can instead choose to be Sanctified, the only way that *Outsider Taint* occurs in Migou anymore.

If you are playing a Migou game in which Blank and/or Loyalist Characters are undercover within New Earth Government territory, such Characters should choose the *Dark Secret (3)* Drawback. Their lives will very much be in danger if their true affiliations are discovered.

NEW QUALITIES

Here are some new Qualities that may apply to your Migou games.

NEW ASSETS

SANCTIFIED (3)

Migou only; required for Sanctified Characters

Your Character is one of the special Migou who is part of a specially bred lineage in which *Outsider Taint* has deeply set in. Your

Character's Orgone is greatly increased and he has triple the normal starting amount. While the tainted normally manifest some kind of alien physical trait, the lineage of the Sanctified has been tainted for so long that it manifests in a consistent and predictable way. Your Character is easy to identify from other Migou and appears to be wasted or sickly. He also suffers penalties to some of his physical abilities (these are built into the Sanctified racial template). Being Sanctified carries no stigma in Migou culture.

SWIFT WINGED (3)

Most Migou are slow flyers in the Earth's atmosphere and gravity. Your Character's physiology, however, has adapted more rapidly than other Migou and he is far better suited to aerial travel than most of his kind. His wings even look a little different, the support spokes a little more robust. Your Character now can fly just as fast as he can move on his legs. This Asset can be purchased in conjunction with the *Fast Asset* for even greater speed.

VIVID GENETIC MEMORY (1-4)

All Migou are born with a genetic memory that makes it so they are already acculturated and capable of utilizing their bodies effectively. There are some, however, that are born with access to more. These Migou carry inside them some vivid memories of those who have come before, perhaps even going back millions of years. These memories are not complete, however, and show up at your Storyguide's whim.

The depth of your Character's vivid genetic memory varies according to cost:

- 1 – The last several generations (hundreds of years).
- 2 – The last few thousand years.
- 3 – The last few tens or hundreds of thousands of years.
- 4 – As far back as the earliest days of the Migou on Earth (millions of years).

In general, the memories your Character has access to are experiences and pictures. They do not provide it with additional skills, but may provide interesting information. However, your Storyguide may choose to give you a bonus to your existing skills in certain situations if your vivid genetic memory applies.

NEW DRAWBACKS

BLANK (4)

Human only

Your Character has undergone the Migou assimilation process, and he has been thoroughly brainwashed and his brain rewired. He is now absolutely and unquestioningly loyal to the Migou in every way. Your Character can never shift loyalties – his first and primary master is the Migou. He cannot refuse an order given to him by a Migou, including one that dictates self-harm or self-termination. This behavior never occurs as odd and he will never rebel against it. It is as if he was shown the light and now serves who he was always meant to serve.



MIGOU

The Migou are a race of creatures from the planet known to the inhabitants of Earth as Pluto. They have existed for millions of years, and lived on and left the Earth, long before the first hominids appeared. The Migou have always viewed the Earth as a second home, one with which they had to unfortunately share with the pesky indigenous lifeforms. Now those pesky lifeforms have become a threat, one that must be put down.

Physically, the Migou, from a Human perspective, are a very alien-looking race. They have an insect-like body that is sort of segmented, with large filmy wings. Their skin is covered by a thin exoskeleton covering a sponge-like flesh underneath, pointing to both a crustacean and fungoid heritage. Tipping their head is a mass of cilia, used for both consumption of nutrients and for communication. Three sets of long legs drape from their bodies, which can change in form and function at will.

- Racial Abilities – Genetic Memory, Mobility, Unique Physiology
- Recommended Skills – a high level of expertise in the Occult skill, others by Profession
- Attribute Modifications – +2 Agility, +2 Intellect, -1 Strength

Genetic Memory

The Migou are capable of passing down a racial memory to their offspring, which enter life far better equipped for survival than most other species. All Migou are born with a memory of the history of their race as well as the basic skills to use their body and fit in their society. Thus, the Migou begin play with a greater number of free skills at their disposal, as detailed on p. 122.

Mobility

Migou are fast on their legs and can move double their normal movement rate. Their wings make them capable of flight, though clumsy in the Earth's gravity and atmosphere – they fly at half speed here. In lower gravity environments, they fly just as fast as they walk.

Unique Physiology

The Migou's rather unique physiology grants them several important benefits over the other mortal races on Earth. The first is that they generate fear in other mortal races with a Fear Factor of 12. Their fungoid nature allows them to form the tips of their limbs into nearly any kind of biological manipulating tool, a process that takes seconds or minutes based on how radical a change it is. This can include a mass of fine digits for delicate manipulation, insulated pincers to grasp hot, cold, or electrical objects, or claws with a damage rating of 0. They can also grow microhooks that allow them to scale sheer surfaces, if flight does not suit their purposes.



SANCTIFIED (TAINTED MIGOU)

Those Migou that have come to be known as Sanctified are those who carry the touch of the higher dimensions in their genetic makeup. They are creatures who have been selectively bred to express the greatest amount of that taint, who have access to tremendous cosmic reservoirs. All Sanctified wield otherworldly power. Those who are not naturally born parapsychics dedicate their lives to the practice of sorcery.

Since taint has been in their lineage for generations, the Sanctified do not manifest it on the outside the way other creatures do. It has come to manifest in a particular way, as if the cosmic energy has sapped some of the Migou vitality to create such a creature. They appear to be wasted or sickly in comparison to others of their own kind, though they have more powerful wills in compensation. Regardless, Sanctified occupy a special place in Migou society and there is no stigma associated with their condition.

- Prerequisite: In order to play a Sanctified, you must purchase the two-point Sanctified Asset during Character Design.
- Racial Abilities – Genetic Memory, Lineage of Taint, Mobility, Unique Physiology
- Recommended Skills – a high level of expertise in the Occult skill, others by Profession
- Attribute Modifications – +1 Agility, +2 Intellect, -2 Strength, +1 Tenacity

Genetic Memory

The Migou are capable of passing down a racial memory to their offspring, which enter life far better equipped for survival than most other species. All Migou are born with a memory of the history of their race as well as the basic skills to use their body and fit in their society. Thus, the Migou begin play with a greater number of free skills at their disposal, as detailed on p. 122.

Lineage of Taint

As part of a lineage that has been selective bred to carry Outsider Taint throughout generations, Sanctified have access to triple the normal amount of Orgone with which to power rituals or para-psychic abilities.

Mobility

Migou are fast on their legs and can move double their normal movement rate. Their wings make them capable of flight, though clumsy in the Earth's gravity and atmosphere – they fly at half speed here. In lower gravity environments, they fly just as fast as they walk.

Unique Physiology

The Migou's rather unique physiology grants them several important benefits over the other mortal races on Earth. The first is that they generate fear in other mortal races with a Fear Factor of 12. Their fungoid nature allows them to form the tips of their limbs into nearly any kind of biological manipulating tool, a process that takes seconds or minutes based on how radical a change it is. This can include a mass of fine digits for delicate manipulation, insulated pincers to grasp hot, cold, or electrical objects, or claws with a damage rating of 0. They can also grow microhooks that allow them to scale sheer surfaces, if flight does not suit their purposes.



BATTLETROOP

Though not necessary for millions of years, Migou with talents for battle have begun to be born again. From the Migou command creating strategic plans for the war, to the specially-trained covert operations battletroops, to those who simply don a suit of armor and carry a rifle out into the warzone, Migou battletroops are the backbone of the invader army. They are fierce, tough, and ready for anything.

Many Migou battletroops are trained to use powered armor. While they are a useful support unit, powered armor units are best used for special operations, to get into places other types of mecha cannot go. They are also useful for patrolling the ruins of cities the Migou conquer and occupy.

Migou battletroops are even more fearsome than their New Earth Government counterparts. They were born with a natural ability to fight and a lifetime of training devoted to the single-minded pursuit of martial prowess. They accept the horrors they must both perpetrate and experience as part of their purpose, and they would gladly lay down their lives for the protection and advancement of the Migou race.

Attributes: Higher than average Perception and Tenacity recommended.

Suggested Skills: Dodge, Fighting, Marksman, Medicine, Survival

Special Gear: A suit of combat armor (either light or heavy), a sidearm (such as a Neurotoxic Handgun), an assault rifle (such as an HPM Rifle), a composite combat knife, and a survival kit.

Sample Attributes:

Agility 8
Intellect 6
Perception 7
Presence 5
Strength 5
Tenacity 7

Sample Skills:

Armed Fighting: Novice
Athletics: Novice
Dodge: Adept, Dive for Cover Focus
Fighting: Adept
Languages (Chinese): Novice
Languages (English): Expert
Languages (German): Novice
Languages (Nazzadi): Expert
Literacy: Novice
Marksman: Adept, Assault Rifle Focus
Medicine: Novice
Observation: Novice
Occult: Novice
Regional Knowledge: Novice
Stealth: Novice
Survival: Novice



MECHA PILOT

It is mecha that have defined the Aeon War and the Migou are no exception. Unlike battletroops, there have never been lineages of mecha pilots, for mecha are a recent invention for the Migou. The super-organism has had to adapt, breeding Migou with talents for both fighting and piloting. Nonetheless, with lives dedicated to training, Migou mecha pilots are vicious. They are prepared for battle in any manifestation on any variety of fronts, functionally wearing a massive mechanical shell bristling with weapons of death.

Migou mecha are very different from the mecha of the New Earth Government. They are designed for creatures with more than one set of functional manipulative limbs, that is also naturally capable of flight. They are also partially bio-mechanical, things that are partly organic. The biology of the Migou mecha pilot interfaces with their machines seamlessly, creating a wildly effective tool.

Like their New Earth Government counterparts, Migou mecha pilots tend to specialize in one overall kind of mech, which helps them hone their skills. Urban combat pilots are more deadly in close quarters combat, while support mecha pilots are more highly trained in support weapons, while powered armor pilots are more agile and crafty. Regardless, they are all eager to climb into the cockpit to unleash hell.

Attributes: Higher than average Agility and Perception recommended.

Suggested Skills: Armed Fighting, Dodge, Fighting, Marksman, Pilot

Special Gear: A suit of concealed armor, a sidearm (such as a Neurotoxic Handgun or HPM Rifle), and a mech to which the Character is normally assigned.

Sample Attributes:

Agility 9
Intellect 5
Perception 9
Presence 5
Strength 4
Tenacity 6

Sample Skills:

Armed Fighting: Adept
Athletics: Novice
Fighting: Novice
Dodge: Adept, Mecha Focus
Languages (English): Expert
Languages (Nazzadi): Expert
Languages (French): Novice
Languages (Japanese): Novice
Literacy: Novice
Marksman: Adept, Mecha Focus
Observation: Novice
Occult: Novice
Pilot: Novice
Regional Knowledge: Novice
Support Weapons: Novice
Survival: Novice



PARA-PSYCHIC

The Sanctified are the sole holders of para-psychic ability among the Migou, lineages that have long held such amazing powers with the kind of cosmic link that makes them far more dangerous than anything the New Earth Government has to offer. They are gifted from birth with the ability to manipulate cosmic power and their abilities are welcomed within Migou society and put to good use for the race as a whole.

Whereas para-psychics are often outcasts in the New Earth Government, Migou para-psychics are a valued part of society. However, any creature that has been bred to carry the taint of the Outsiders in their DNA and to manifest it at birth is likely to have a different outlook than their peers. Migou para-psychics are hardly anti-social, but they most often prefer the company of other Sanctified over others.

Migou para-psychics fulfill many valuable roles in their invasion of Earth. Some are gifted with abilities that allow them to be of use on the field of battle. Others are those whose sensory abilities are best utilized in more quiet environs. Still others are those that sift through the memories and thoughts of the Migou's enemies. One thing is for certain in any case – the primates of this planet have no idea what they are in for.

Attributes: Higher than average Intellect and Tenacity recommended.

Suggested Skills: Parapsychology, Para-Psychic Powers

Required Qualities: Erupted Para-Psychic, Latent Para-Psychic, Sanctified

Special Gear: None

Sample Attributes:

Agility 6

Intellect 8

Perception 6

Presence 5

Strength 4

Tenacity 8

Sample Skills (Environmental Para-Psychic):

Athletics: Novice

Computers: Novice

Cryokinesis: Student

Dodge: Adept

Education: Master

Languages (Arabic): Novice

Languages (Chinese): Novice

Languages (English): Expert

Languages (Hindi): Novice

Languages (Latin): Novice

Languages (Nazzadi): Expert

Languages (R'lyehan): Novice

Literacy: Novice

Observation: Adept

Occult: Novice

Parapsychology: Adept

Regional Knowledge: Novice

Science, Life: Adept

Trivia: Student

Sample Para-Psychic Powers: Cryokinesis

Insanity Points: 1



SORCERER

Among the Migou, the practice of magic is predominantly the domain of the Sanctified, lineages of Migou that carry the taint of the Outsiders within their very genetic structure. They are honored members of society, bringing their power to bear for the good of the Migou as a whole. Their power is the power of traditions where cosmic power has been fully embraced.

Those Sanctified who pursue knowledge of this sort are treading on dangerous ground. The pull of the slippery slope of insanity is no less dangerous for the Migou. Some sorcerers become consumed by their pursuits, walking down roads better left untrod. The Sanctified have an agreement to keep an eye on one another, to send one of their own to cool down if they go too far.

The Migou practice of magic is different from the sorcerers of the New Earth Government. Since the Migou know so much more about the true nature of the universe, they are, most times, more cautious with what they do. One aspect of that is a refusal to intone the higher beings of the universe, despite the fact that such names bring power to the ritual. To fill that gap, Migou sorcerers have gone over to a different ancient form of magic and incorporated blood ritual. The magic of the Migou is visceral – and messy.

Attributes: Higher than average Intellect and Tenacity recommended.

Suggested Skills: Education, History, Languages, Occult, Research

Required Qualities: Sanctified

Special Gear: A small basic occult reference library and a good portable computer.

Sample Attributes:

Agility 6
Intellect 9
Perception 5
Presence 5
Strength 3
Tenacity 8

Sample Skills:

Appraisal: Adept
Artist (Drawing): Novice
Athletics: Novice (free)
Computer: Novice
Dodge: Novice
Education: Expert
History: Novice
Languages (Arabic): Novice (free)
Languages (Chinese): Novice (free)
Languages (English): Expert (free)
Languages (Latin): Novice (free)
Language (Nazadi): Expert (free)
Languages (R'lyehian): Novice (free)
Languages (Tsath-yo): Novice (free)
Literacy: Adept (free)
Occult: Adept (Novice for free)
Regional Knowledge: Novice (free)
Research: Adept
Trivia: Student



SPECIALIST

Among the Migou, there are many different kinds of professions that, as a whole, the practitioners of which are referred to as specialists. They are the keepers of specialized knowledge, typically from lineages that have proudly carried such knowledge throughout generations.

Specialists come in many different breeds. Some work with arcanotech, some are engineers that design and build buildings, others create and manufacture war machines, and so on. Any kind of technical task that requires specific knowledge is undoubtedly represented among the specialist of the Migou.

The world of the specialist is not always safe. Those who manage arcanotechnology face the dangers inherent in playing with mind-bending principles – even to the Migou. Others find themselves creating things in the wake of an invasion or in territory that isn't entirely safe. Others are companions to soldiers, who go out on missions where their specialized knowledge is critical. While the masters of such ability within the New Earth Government would most likely have desk jobs, Migou specialists live a far more exciting existence.

Attributes: Higher than average Intellect and Tenacity recommended.

Suggested Skills (Arcanotech): Arcanotech Engineer, Arcanotechnician, Computers, Education, Literacy, Science (Physical), Technician

Special Gear: Arcanotechnology reference library, a good portable computer, and appropriate professional tools.

Sample Attributes:

Agility 5
Intellect 8
Perception 6
Presence 5
Strength 5
Tenacity 7

Sample Skills (Arcanotech):

Arcanotech Engineering: Novice
Arcanotechnician: Novice
Athletics: Novice (free)
Computers: Student
Education: Adept
Languages (English): Expert (free)
Languages (Latin): Novice (free)
Languages (Nazzadi): Expert (free)
Languages (Tsath-yo): Novice (free)
Literacy: Adept (Novice for free)
Munitions: Adept
Observation: Student
Occult: Novice (free)
Regional Knowledge: Novice (free)
Research: Student
Science (Physical): Adept
Technician: Adept



VANGUARD

Every military needs its scouts, daring beings who will seek out the enemy and even go behind lines to bring back information that can only be gleaned from first-hand observation. Some might say that they have one of the hardest jobs in the entire Aeon War, but it is a job that Migou vanguards take on with pride.

Vanguards are trained to operate on their own, though groups of them are very effective. They can keep themselves hidden and survive in the most hostile of territories or climates. They learn how to break through New Earth Government Security and how to crack their computers. They are capable of utilizing many different kinds of electronic surveillance, keeping their enemy under watchful eye. Others are specially trained to hunt for lost things and places long forgotten.

Like battleroops, vanguards are a recent addition to the Migou. There was little need for such beings during the last few millennia, though there were some in small numbers. Now there are many to complement the battleroops, fierce creatures ready to take on any challenge.

Attributes: Higher than average Intellect and Perception recommended.

Suggested Skills: Observation, Security, Stealth, Surveillance

Special Gear: A suit of combat armor (such as light or heavy), a sidearm (such as a Neurotoxic Handgun or HPM Rifle), surveillance gear, and a good portable computer.

Sample Attributes:

Agility 7

Intellect 9

Perception 7

Presence 5

Strength 4

Tenacity 6

Sample Skills:

Athletics: Novice (free)

Communications: Novice

Computers: Novice

Criminal: Student

Dodge: Novice

Languages (Dutch): Novice (free)

Languages (English): Expert (free)

Languages (Nazadi): Expert (free)

Languages (Portuguese): Novice (free)

Literacy: Novice (free)

Marksman: Student

Observation: Adept

Occult: Novice (free)

Regional Knowledge: Novice (free)

Security: Novice

Stealth: Novice

Surveillance: Novice

Survival: Novice

Trivia: Student

STORYGUIDE

Telling Migou stories is not going to be the easiest task in the world. After all, we're Human and we look at things from a Human perspective and empathize with Human concerns. Putting yourself and your players into a world where fundamentally alien beings are the protagonists is going to take a little work.

If you are a Storyguide who doesn't have a whole lot of experience or are new to *CthulhuTech*, you might want to cut your teeth running a more normal kind of story first. Jumping into the setting from a fundamentally alien angle may not be as easy as you think, even if you find it fascinating.

PORTRAYING MIGOU

It's pretty easy to fake playing a Human or even a Nazzadi. After all, they function and think in a manner similar if not identical to us. A few adaptations for the setting and you're good to go.

Not so with a Migou game. If you are telling a story featuring these honest-to-goodness alien creatures, you may want to spend a little time before each occasion you play getting yourself into the proper mind-set. If everyone portrays the Migou as Humans who look different, so much will be lost. Here are a few key things to remember any time the Migou come out to play:

- *The Migou are an ancient species who view Humans as barely evolved simians.* They had risen to a level of societal and technological advancement millennia before anything resembling mammals crawled on the Earth. There is no reason they should look at the current stewards of the planet as equals.

- *The Migou do not have the same needs and desires as Humans.* They function differently, they think differently, and they live differently. They are born with the knowledge they need to survive.

- *The Migou have an alien physiology and shape.* They do not walk, they skitter – when they cannot glide or fly. They do not have normal sensory appendages. They can form their manipulative digits into whatever they want. They don't sleep or eat the same way. They are an alien lifeform.

- *The Migou live in perfect equilibrium with each other.* They do what they do for the good of the whole. Nothing a Migou does involves ego.

- *The Migou are not evil.* They are a mortal race just like Humans or Nazzadi. In fact, they view themselves as the good guys.

If you keep these few fundamental things in mind, they should help prepare you to portray a creature that is very different from you or anything you know.

PLAY STYLES

As with standard New Earth Government stories, there are several different ways in which you can play Migou games. However, all Migou stories are in some way going to revolve around the military as the reason they are here is to invade and enslave

the Earth. Typically, most Migou Characters are going to have some role to play with the military, even if they are not soldiers or pilots.

WAR STORIES

In this type of game, your Characters are embroiled in fighting the Aeon War openly. One of the great parts of a game like this is the way you can vary the foes the Migou fight. For a time, such a group could be fighting against the New Earth Government on any of the many fronts across the world. Then, they could be fighting against the Disciples of the Rapine Storm, or against both the Rapine Storm and the NEG at the same time. Later, they could fight against the Esoteric Order of Dagon anywhere where the two meet.

Even on the surface, such a style of game has many different possibilities. The key thing to differentiate in this style of game is whether to center the action around the exploits of ground-based troop actions or mecha-based actions.

Nearly any kind of Migou Character will work with this type of game. In mecha-based games, obviously the mecha pilots are going to see the most use. However, in other games, battletroops can be groups with para-psychics, sorcerers, or specialists. It all depends upon where you want to go.

SPECIAL OPS

The Migou, like the New Earth Government, have need for groups that will take on special assignments that call for highly-trained, small-unit tactics-based squads. Sometimes they must infiltrate behind enemy lines to build outposts, destroy outposts, assassinate important commanders, extract technology, and the like. Their missions are daring and they have little support once they are deployed.

Again, some units may be mecha-based while some may be ground-based. Mecha units usually revolve around stealth units such as the Dragonfly, the Earwig, the Mosquito, or the Silverfish. Ground-based units allow for more Character diversity, as nearly any kind of Character can apply. However, it will be battletroops and para-psychics (those gifted with environmental or somatic primary talents) that will be the most prevalent.

SCOUTING

There are lots of places in the world where the Migou are scouting to invade, or just in the process of gaining footholds. The need for accurate intelligence in these places is essential. Furthermore, the Migou are fighting on several fronts and continuous scouting of those fronts to assess enemy capabilities and weaknesses is key to victory. Sometimes, there are ruins or lost places which hold things of interest to the Migou and scouting parties are the first to set foot in such amazing locations.

This kind of game takes Characters out into the wild or behind enemy lines where they must survive on their own skill and wits. Sometimes such Characters will be the pilots of recon or stealth mecha like the Dragonfly, the Earwig, the Mosquito, or the Sil-

verfish, but many will be ground-based troops. Vanguard are obviously the lead kinds of Characters for this type of story, but that does not leave out battletroops, para-psychics, or sorcerers.

NEG INFILTRATION STORIES

One option that might help cut down on the alien factor of Migou games would be to portray servants of the Migou sent to infiltrate the New Earth Government. The Migou have need for Human or Nazzadi agents to infiltrate the New Earth Government, as well as to fight against the predations of the Children of Chaos, the Disciples of Death's Shadow, and even the Esoteric Order of Dagon. Each of these cults is up to nefarious things inside the New Earth Government. While the Migou could care less what they are doing to harm or destabilize the NEG, they do care how each of these cults are up to things that would bring about the end of things as we know them. That is what they wage their own quiet wars against, all the while looking for ways to harm the New Earth Government while they're at it.

In this type of game, the Migou are supporting characters who are your Characters' bosses. They will supply and support the Characters, but there is really no place for Migou in the group. The most fitting kinds of Characters are Human blanks or Nazzadi loyalists, who have been conditioned and trained infiltrators, spies, and saboteurs.

The interesting thing about this kind of game, as noted earlier, is that it is a way to mix Characters loyal to the Migou with other kinds of Human or Nazzadi Characters. Perhaps they team up with agents of the Eldritch Society to fight the Children of Chaos, or perhaps they team up with arcane investigators against the Esoteric Order. It can be an interesting and effective way to mix Characters from radically different worlds.

THEMES

Needless to say, the thematics of a Migou story are going to be different than those of a more conventional game. The themes presented here provide a better view of Migou games.

Desperation

The Migou were more than prepared to take on the New Earth Government. Unfortunately, the mortal races of Earth turned out to not be the Migou's only enemies here. The Migou were not expecting the return of the Old Ones so soon and their carefully crafted invasion plans did not incorporate going to war with the Esoteric Order of Dagon or the Disciples of the Rapine Storm. It also did not include having to thwart the Children of Chaos, hiding inside the New Earth Government and doing everything they can to hasten the end. Also, the Migou know far better than the citizens of the New Earth Government what is actually coming should the Cult's achieve their goals – and the Migou will suffer greatly.

If the Cults win, this galaxy will be engulfed in darkness. If the New Earth Government wins, it will only be a matter of time

before they bring about a similar result. Both sides need to be eliminated before they can do too much damage.

Efficiency

Humans are used to having feelings and opinions about everything. The Migou simply do what needs to be done, without their emotions or egos getting involved. Rank, standing, expertise – none of these matter in the end. If something needs doing, the Migou don't hang around and wait for somebody else to do it.

They also don't waste time and are very intentional with everything they do. Playing in a Migou world means giving up the things that get in the way in favor of performance.

The Group vs. the Individual

We as Humans live in a world where we are primarily focused on the individual, usually ourselves, though this varies according to culture. The Migou are not. They are focused on the success and prosperity of their communities and the species as a whole. It's not that a Migou will lay down its life for no reason, but one may if it is the best course of action and will benefit the whole. Everything the Migou do is in service of the species, something of which they are proud.

The Plan

Migou are not cowboys, like many Humans. They do not fly by the seat of their pants or go with their guts. They are creatures that believe in the efficiency of a well-thought out and carefully executed plan. This does not mean the Migou cannot improvise, but given the chance they are going to think things through first and work to implement a coordinated plan.

They are also patient. They will not let circumstances force their hand if there is a way around it. The Migou have no problem aborting a plan if retreat would give them a better chance another day.

Righteousness

To the Migou, what they are doing is completely justified and there should be no question that what they are doing is right. They are an ancient race who has seem much in this solar system. Since the final retreat of the Elder Race, the Migou have been the undisputed masters here. Now, the hairless primates that just recently developed a language beyond grunts and started walking upright is messing around with cosmic power and technology far beyond their years. These creatures are a threat to the Migou, themselves, and honestly the rest of the universe. Who knows what horrors they could unleash next? Look at what they've already unleashed.

This also applies to the minions of the Old Ones, who the Migou know full well are no friends to anyone else. Though they arrived in this galaxy after the Old Ones had gone, the Migou are not unfamiliar with their predations and have no desire to see such creatures return.

TIPS

The tips that are in the *Core Book* apply to every kind of game, but here are a few that apply specifically to the challenge of telling Migou stories.

1. KEEP CHECKING IN

The world of the Migou is fundamentally alien and it is not likely to be the kind of thing that you're going to keep alive in your head during the off-hours very well. Your best bet is to come back to this book and snack on the Migou sections regularly. If, before every time to sit down to play, you refresh your memory with regards to one aspect of Migou existence, you'll run a more effective and flavorful game, no doubt.

2. A LITTLE GUIDANCE NEVER HURT

The best way for your players to get how to portray Migou Characters is for you to provide feedback. If you're telling a Migou story, you've done the extra work already to be an expert. Stop them when they are thinking or playing in too Human of a fashion and invite them to take a look at the situation from a more Migou angle. Likewise, point out and acknowledge when a player is taking on truly Migou behavior. Not only do people like to be patted on the back for doing something well, it can serve as an example for players that might be struggling.

3. IT'S THE SAME, BUT DIFFERENT

Sometimes it can be a challenge coming up with stories for Migou games. Maybe you're a little burned out on the alien mind-set or you're just drawing a blank. Try taking a look at some of your favorite shows or movies and see if you can be inspired by the high-level details of the piece. Perhaps a war movie is appropriate and you can use the broad strokes, twisting the rest to fit. This technique requires more work than it might for more traditional games, but if you stick to the big picture, it might help you out of a jam.

HOOKS

Here are a few story hooks to help get you started in your own Migou games. If you are looking for a more fully fleshed out starter story, one is provided on p. 136-140.

ASSIMILATE THIS

A ground unit-based open war story

The Migou have the assimilation of Humans down. They could easily also assimilate the Nazzadi, if they cared to. But how would such a process work with some of the giant horrors that make up the Rapine Storm? If such creatures could be in some way controlled, then the Migou would have another asset that could help tip the Aeon War in their favor.

This story works best if your Characters are somewhere near the Rapine Storm, whether it be to the east or west. Since the Migou rule most of the territory north of the Storm, it shouldn't be too difficult to place them. This mission would go well with the chaos of the fronts of Eastern Europe and Western India, or even Northern Australia.

The Characters are sent on an unusual mission, to capture several of the beasts that are part of the Rapine Storm – a Shabus Morgo and a Gug. They are given a transport that will carry them and their prizes, along with any other supplies they need, and then sent out to hunt. Tracking and capturing Shabus Morgo and Gugs that are not part of a horde or near other Rapine Storm forces will be a challenge. The Shabus Morgo should be easier than the Gug, as they are stupid creatures that often wander off. The Gug, on the other hand, is fiendishly intelligent and most likely more than a match for any unit. What makes things all the more complicated is that these creatures are to be taken alive and unharmed, so the heavy firepower has to stay stowed.

If you wish to add a twist to this story, you could have a Desolate One watching the Characters and enjoying the game. It could easily have a warband hanging back, just waiting for the sign to attack. Then, the Migou will have to fight their way to safety.

DEEP TROUBLE

A mecha-based open war story

The Migou know well what the Esoteric Order of Dagon is really up to, and they fight the cult of the fish-god on a regular basis. Unlike the New Earth Government, this warfare is open and bloody.

This story can take place anywhere, as long as your Characters are near one of the places the Esoteric Order raids. The basic deal is this – the Esoteric Order has been raiding manufacturing facilities near the coasts. They blaze in inside powered armor, steal important manufacturing materials, and disappear under the waves. Any research into this shows that the material the Esoteric Order is stealing is all related to the manufacturing of mecha. The Cult is stocking one of their factories, most likely. The Characters are sent to catch the Esoteric Order raiding, but not to stop them. Instead, they are to follow the Esoteric Order quietly back down underwater so that the Migou can locate the manufacturing facility. The Characters will have to be careful to avoid detection, as well as the nasty beasts the Esoteric Order uses as pets.

If the Characters can identify the manufacturing facility and survive, then they can be a part of an all-out Migou assault to destroy the place. It will be the Migou versus the Esoteric Order of Dagon in an exciting and deadly fight. The twist here is the arrival of Spawn, who bring with them enchanted items and the equivalent of hand-held mecha weapons.

This story gives you the chance to utilize the amphibious mecha presented in Chapter Seven of *Vade Mecum: the CthulhuTech Companion*. The updated Hydra and Mudskipper can be found on p. 82 of *Damnation View*.

NOT GIVING UP JUST YET

A special ops story

For the most part, the Migou have given up on trying to create synthorgs of their own. They have met with failure after failure in this arena, usually with disastrous results. However, there are

small groups of Migou specialists who are continuing to press on, believing that if something as lowly as the New Earth Government can create such creatures, it's only a matter of time before the Migou will have the necessary breakthroughs to have them as well.

The biggest hang-up for the Migou has been in the creation of their own version of an Engel Synthesis Interface, something developed by Dr. Anton Miyakame and the Ashcroft Foundation. The Migou don't have any idea where Miyakame's secret labs are and the Foundation headquarters in Chicago is so well-guarded that there is really no way the Migou could raid it.

However, Migou vanguards have just discovered something interesting and useful. Apparently as part of their initiative to create a defensive perimeter to protect Chicago against the gradual encroachment of the Migou in North America, the New Earth Government has set up a small Engel training facility in Winnipeg. This facility also implants ESI chips into newly trained pilots and their Engels. The Migou have so far only been able to acquire chips removed from pilots' heads, never unadulterated chips or diagnostic tools. This is their chance.

Your Characters are being sent behind enemy lines to steal this technology. Winnipeg may not be Chicago, but it is a line of defense for the NEG and it is very well defended. It will be a challenge to avoid recon and patrols to sneak onto the base where the ESI lab is contained. Then, they'll have to cover their tracks well enough that they aren't chased out of town by the full force of the Armed Forces.

There's no need for a twist in this story. The Characters are going up against difficult odds right out of the gate.

THE OLD WORLD

A scouting story

The Migou remember many things that the Humans of Earth never even knew. One of those things are the Great Race, the legends of whom the New Earth Government has had to try and piece together from cryptic and disparate accounts. They were a race of beings that inhabited the southern hemisphere ages ago, who had the ability to transfer their consciousness through space and time. The Great Race has been gone for a long time.

The Migou have had an eye on finding and plundering ancient Great Race cities since they first arrived on Earth. However, their patient strategy would not allow them to push forward until now. One of the primary places where there are Great Race ruins left is in the deserts of central Australia. They are mostly lost to the sands, but there is a chance there is knowledge or enduring things there still.

Your Characters are sent to infiltrate past the New Earth Government, who is plenty busy with the Disciples of the Rapine Storm in Northern Australia. A likely place for such scouting Characters to embark is from the Migou foot-hold in New Zealand. Either way, they have a set of coordinates given to them by Migou sur-

veillance teams. They are only approximate, giving the Characters a place to focus their efforts instead of coming all of the miles of unfriendly desert. They will be given the supplies they need, along with some excavating tools, and sent out in stealth mecha.

Getting past the New Earth Government patrols is going to be the first hurdle, but one that shouldn't be too difficult. After searching for a while, they will find the remains of a Great Race city - they must see it with their own eyes as sensors fail them. With a little excavation, it is clear this city has secrets to be gathered. If you want to disturb them during all this, wandering Shabus Morgo might be a good choice.

The twist is that the city sits atop one of the Great Race's subterranean prisons. The stories say that these are where they imprisoned the powerful Polypous Race. Too much excavation will disturb this prison and whatever is left inside it. The stories also say the majority of the Polypous Race escaped eons ago. The question is, did they escape from this one?

You may want to re-read the story on p. 118-119 for inspiration.

THROUGH THE CRACKS

An infiltration story

The Children of Chaos are doing all kinds of things around the world to hasten the return and reign of the Old Ones. Some of those things happen in New Earth Government territory, where they are opposed by the Eldritch Society. However, the Eldritch Society must work undercover and, as such, sometimes misses things they could have prevented.

Your Characters are a group of Human blanks and Nazzadi loyalists who have been trained to operate undercover inside the New Earth Government. They have access to Migou tools, but more importantly access to Migou intelligence. They are informed that the Chrysalis Corporation is quietly sponsoring a travelling museum exhibit of primitive art. That in itself isn't terribly odd. The Corporation sponsors things like that all the time. However, this time, the primitive art is all masks and totems of supernatural creatures and gods, not all of which are benign. Many of them are dedicated to some manifestation of Nyarlathotep and carry great and dangerous power. Add to that heavy security and Dhohanoid teams, and the mission is now a challenge.

Once complete, the Characters are to ship the items to the closest town nearest a Migou front. It will be picked up by Migou vanguards from there, where the items will be locked carefully and safely away.

This is the kind of game where your Characters could make contacts with or wind up assisting the Eldritch Society. It is also the kind of game where they could run afoul of the Federal Security Bureau or the Office of Internal Security. If caught, Nazzadi loyalists will be prosecuted, but Human blanks will be identified as such and promptly shipped off for experimentation.

NOT YOUR ISLAND ANYMORE

Presented here is a ready to run story for a Migou game. It should require little effort on your part to prepare and is designed to give you someplace to start a new story. It follows a group of Migou who have been assigned to infiltrate Iceland, a place taken from the Migou by the forces of the Esoteric Order of Dagon. It gives new Migou players a chance to fight against a familiar threat, instead of turning the tables right off the bat. This way, you can ease them into battling the New Earth Government, who up until now have most likely been heroes for your players.

For purposes of this story, Migou will be given numbers to designate them as individuals. You can feel free to substitute whatever representative naming conventions you'd like to use in your game.

Characters can be of any sort, including Blank or Loyalist, but those whose primary vocation is as a mecha pilot may feel under-utilized. This is a mission of infiltration and sabotage, and straight up fights will be discouraged – and dangerous.

ACT I: IN THE LAND OF LUTEFISK

Goals: To introduce the players to portraying Migou Characters. To get them involved in the events of the story. To prepare them for their mission and send them on their way to Iceland.

Setting: The former city of Bergen, Norway (or similar location); a Migou briefing room; a Migou arms depot; a BG-07 Stalker Migou stealth insertion transport.

Cast: 116 – Experienced, Migou, mature, a military special operations commander. It is a thing that is known for taking young Migou under its wings and guiding them through the rocky days of their first missions.

224 – Experienced, Migou, mature, a transport pilot for special operations. It is magic at the wheel, but a being of few words.

The Migou residents of Bergen, Norway – various levels of experience, Migou, various ages. There are many other Migou that could be part of your Characters' lives.

A Day In The Life

The Characters should begin someplace in the same part of the world as Iceland, like Bergen on the southwestern side of Norway. This was once the second largest city in Norway, but is now host to a large population of Migou. Bergen is a cold city, getting up to the mid-60's (°F) in the height of summer and below freezing in the winter – someplace that suits the Migou nicely.

The city is now home to a wrecked arcology that has been opted and rebuilt by the Migou in their usual fashion. It is home to hundreds of thousands of Migou, along with tens of thousands assimilated Humans and a small cadre of Loyalist Nazadi. It is part of the supply chain that keeps the Migou forces fighting in the northern British Isles, so there is always something going on. Furthermore, Bergen must also endure the occasional

recon or raiding attack from the Esoteric Order of Dagon, which keeps troops ready and waiting. With the Esoteric Order's possession of Iceland, some of these raids are daring, with heavy firepower.

Here is a good place to create the routine of your Characters' lives. What is the average everyday run of their vocations? Where do they live and what kind of recreational activities do they enjoy? Migou lives aren't all work and no play, but they will be dedicated to an efficient routine.

If you are already playing a game, or you aren't particularly interested in having Characters in this part of the world, then Bergen might not be convenient for you. The important thing is that there is some kind of good reason for the Characters to be asked to go to Iceland. Perhaps they could be on their way through Bergen for other parts of the world or perhaps they could have some kind of tie to Iceland that works. A particularly good reason might be that the Characters (or a couple of them) are survivors of the Esoteric Order's attack and ultimate occupation of Iceland, who know the island and who may have a personal reason for wanting it back. Remember that such Characters won't be vengeful, but their Migou pride may have been bruised.

The Call

Once you've had a chance to establish the Characters in the setting, they will receive a call. Inside their living quarters, the communications screen flickers to life. 116 has a message for them – it is a special operations military commander, and someone from whom the Characters take orders. The Characters are requested to meet in a briefing chamber in less than an hour.

Briefing

Utilizing Migou transportation, usually in the form of the reconditioned New Earth Government mass transit system, the Characters make their way through the busy city to a briefing room near one of the primary mecha depots.

116 is waiting for them, a mature Migou who to Migou sensory organs has a strong presence. It has a gentle way about it, apparently sensitive to the fact that the Characters don't have a whole lot of experience yet. It treats the Characters with respect, but also expects to be treated with deference in return. It is here that the Characters should begin to feel the strong Migou community. Where new soldiers in the New Earth Government are likely to be barked at or even insulted, new Migou soldiers are cared for and properly guided.

116 will begin by giving them background on the situation, just to make sure that your Characters are familiar with the landscape before them.

The Migou did not anticipate the Esoteric Order of Dagon to attack Iceland, much less in such force that they could oust the Migou and take the island for themselves. In a feat of tactics, the Esoteric Order caught the Migou unawares under cover of night, killing many Migou and forcing the rest to retreat and

regroup elsewhere. This forced the Migou to leave some things behind they didn't want to leave behind. There are many things left in Iceland that wouldn't do the Esoteric Order any good, as it is impossible to gather useful intelligence from Migou records. However, there are those things that require little interpretation and it is one of these things about which the Migou are now concerned.

The Migou are, in general, far more concerned about the Esoteric Order than the New Earth Government – most likely because the Migou actually understand the Cult's power and what they're really up to. Iceland particularly, just outside the city of Reykjavik, was a place where the Migou were testing new amphibious weapons systems. One of the primary areas of research at this facility was to figure out how to make their infamous null rays (which work on anti-matter principles) function in an aquatic environment. Currently, the weapons are useless underwater, focusing their energy on destroying the water particles and burning out the devices. This particular Migou research facility wasn't really any closer to solving the problem, but the facility does have several working null rays, something the Migou have not let fall into enemy hands. If the Esoteric Order finds this facility, they will have access to this technology, giving them the opportunity to pull it apart to figure out how it works. It might be the first step in giving the Esoteric Order null ray weapons, something the Migou would much rather see not happen.

This is what the Characters are being assigned to do – infiltrate the Esoteric Order's Icelandic defensive perimeter, penetrate the secret facility outside of Reykjavik, destroy the null ray technology and records there, and escape to return home. Intelligence reports show that the Esoteric Order has settled in, but it is unknown how much military might they might be hiding underwater – Iceland is part of the Mid-Atlantic Shelf, after all, so they have a great amount of real estate with which to play. Fortunately, this is an infiltration mission only, and engaging the enemy is not advised unless no other options are present.

Once the Characters understand the mission, 116 will be available to answer any questions they may have. Unlike New Earth Government briefings, the young Migou are encouraged to ask questions so that they are fully armed with the knowledge they need. This is an excellent opportunity for the Characters, who may need to ask a lot of questions. This is a new world and new side of the fight for them, so much may be unfamiliar. 116 wants them to succeed and understands some extra care may be required to make sure that happens.

One of the questions you personally might have is why would the Migou send inexperienced Characters on such a mission? Desperate times call for desperate measures and right now all the Migou who would be better qualified for the mission are deployed in the British Isles or along the European front. The Characters are in the right place at the right time and are needed.

The Characters are to board a transport in four hours, leaving from very near where they are now.

Gathering Forces

Once the Characters have completed their briefing with 116, they must now go off to gather the equipment and arms they'll need to complete their mission. Depots are nearby and any reasonable request will be honored. They will need to requisition weapons (probably HPM firearms), armor, some grenades, and they should also take satchel charges. After all, they're going to have to destroy some things, so they'll need explosives. If your Characters get a little nutty, remind them that this is an infiltration mission and they'll need to travel light.

224 is the pilot of the BG-07 Stalker stealth insertion transport that will quietly take them to Iceland. It is not unfriendly, but it is certainly not chatty. It communicates only as much as is necessary, making sure the Characters get strapped in before it takes off towards the drop point.

ACT II: IN THE LAND OF ICE

Goals: To get past the Esoteric Order of Dagon's defenses and infiltrate Iceland. To infiltrate the city of Reykjavik. To discover the horrors the Esoteric Order has perpetrated. To destroy secret Migou experiments before they fall into the hands of the Esoteric Order, as well as other abominations.

Setting: The Atlantic island of Iceland; the former Icelandic capital city of Reykjavik; the basement of a bombed out bank that is the Migou experimental facility.

Cast: 224 – from Act I.

Il'eran – veteran, Deep One, mature, experimental doctor. He is the aquatic equivalent of Josef Mengele, being sick, cruel, and unrepentant. He is the kind of thing that cuts open other living beings for enjoyment, without giving them anesthesia.

The Esoteric Order of Dagon – various levels of experience, Deep Ones, Hybrids, and mortal cultists, all dwelling on captured Iceland.

Background

Iceland, being part of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, is warmer than it might otherwise be, due to the influence of the Gulf Stream. This is what made the cold island habitable by Humans for so many years. It is also volcanically and geologically active. The interior is mostly a large plateau of mountains and glaciers, with large rivers running to the ocean. Though the people that lived there in the past were quite fond of the island, Iceland was a perfect place for the Migou.

Unfortunately for them, the Esoteric Order of Dagon performed a wildly effective sneak attack on Iceland, seizing it from the Migou in the late winter of 2085. Though it seems obvious why the Esoteric Order would want Iceland, as it fits as a tactical point for the Cult, the Order broke their normal pattern by capturing as many Migou as they could get their hands on. They're up to something that isn't part of their normal something.

Iceland, as part of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, is an ideal place for the Esoteric Order of Dagon to occupy. There are miles of underwater mountains around, plenty of place for the Esoteric Order to build aquatic bases and house troops. Since the Cult is notorious for using magic to conceal their numbers, reconnaissance missions to Esoteric Order territory are only so reliable.

Getting to Iceland

The problem with stealth transportation is that, while the transport can fly at almost mach speed for a while, it must eventually slow to less than 200 mph in order to remain unnoticed. It's about 900 miles from one city to the other, but the route must be circuitous to avoid heavy Esoteric Order patrols. Also, since the Esoteric Order has an intelligence web set up all through these parts, it will take six to eight hours to get to Reykjavik from Bergen. It's a good thing Migou are naturally patient.

If this is your first go with a Migou game, this could give your Characters the opportunity to explore what Migou talk about on long trips. There may be a certain amount of mission review, which would be an effective use of their time, but they will have to get to something more personal eventually. Even if it's awkward, it's worth an attempt.

When they finally get there, they'll most likely realize that Reykjavik will not be an easy nut to crack. It was the biggest city in Iceland, home to a couple hundred thousand residents and the only arcology on the island. There's a lot of ground to run into trouble on and who knows how the Esoteric Order has moved in.

Moving Around

The advantage, of course, of a stealth insertion vehicle is that it can drop the Characters close to the city. If you want to make it tense, feel free to add in Esoteric Order patrols or a flying Spawn or two, or sea serpents coming out of the water near them. Be sure to have them make Fear Tests for anything monstrous. However, the Characters are in no real danger at this point, but that will quickly change.

Once they have landed outside the Reykjavik arcology, they are to follow their orders and head towards the hidden facility. On foot and keeping to the shadows, it will take them more than an hour to reach it. Along the way, you may want to expose them to some of the reality that is Esoteric Order of Dagon occupation.

Horrific, Even to a Bug

The usual horrors of Esoteric Order occupation are well-known to the Migou, but this is most likely the first time the Characters will be exposed to it first-hand. The arcology has endured two major sieges, so there is no longer a tidy differentiation from where the arcology ends and where the rest of the city begins. Don't be afraid to expose them to bizarre cult rituals, ritual cannibalism, and the ever-popular rape camps. You might even throw in a dirty, disgusting hospital converted to the birthing of Hybrids. Play up the dark nature of the Cult in comparison to

the world of the Migou they just left. Perhaps for the first time, your players may realize that the Migou, from the right perspective, aren't such bad guys.

In that vein, the Esoteric Order of Dagon has been experimenting on Migou. The Order's army captured as many of the bugs as they could and have thousands of test subjects in several prison camps around the island. This is what you want your Characters to see, as it will be the first thing that will really disturb them as Migou. These experimental facilities are what Migou facilities must look like to the New Earth Government. Esoteric Order scientists are dissecting and vivisectioning Migou, experimenting on them, and attempting to see if what makes up the Migou can be added to what makes up the Deep Ones.

This is the reason the Esoteric Order seized Iceland. It was their first real opportunity to capture a Migou settlement. The Cult has something new and sinister in mind. They're trying to make Deep One/Migou hybrids.

The Migou know for a fact that there is no way the Esoteric Order is going to crack or manipulate Migou genes – it's something the bugs themselves gave up on centuries ago. The problem is that the Esoteric Order doesn't know that. Some rather radical scientists within the Cult have suggested that if Deep One DNA is compatible with Humans and Nazzadi, there may be some level of compatibility with Migou DNA (as they are technically another mortal species). The Migou, after all, do have some coveted traits, not the least of which is genetic memory. Imagine what it would be like to have Deep Ones with genetic memory? The abilities of the Esoteric Order would advance dramatically in a short amount of time.

The Migou might be patient, efficient creatures, but there is a point. Such lesser creatures should not be carving up their fallen siblings in this way. Whatever they witness, it should on some level incite the Characters to a distinct desire to put a permanent end to such travesties. Deviating from the mission in this regard is acceptable, as these conditions could not have been discovered previously, but any such action will require a plan.

If they choose to observe the proceedings for any length of time, they will be able to gather some useful intelligence. The facilities they see where the experiments are held are loosely secured at best. For the most part, security boils down to Deep One and Hybrid patrols, with the occasional pass of powered armor. However, if they watch carefully and succeed at a Challenging Observation Test, they may overhear that the lead researcher in this experiment is a Deep One male named Il'eran, who appears to be the underseas equivalent of Josef Mengele. He will hopefully become a target for later violence.

A Complication

The biggest unknown of this mission is that Iceland is the perfect place for the Esoteric Order to hide an army in and among the underwater mountains. The bad news for the Characters is that since Reykjavik is a coastal town, it wouldn't take much for

such forces to respond if there were trouble. Anyone operating in Esoteric Order territory should always expect that there are more enemies than intelligence suggests.

As the Characters make their way through this horror show, they will eventually hear the sounds of something arriving. On the coast, something is afoot. The Characters may be in a position to witness it, or they may have to backtrack to discover what the commotion's all about. As it turns out, they picked the exact window to infiltrate the island during which time the Esoteric Order is being reinforced.

Out of the ocean begin to climb fresh troops, including Deep Ones, Spawn, powered armor, mecha, and the like. Furthermore, these are only the reinforcements they can see, the ones that are moving into the area on land. There are undoubtedly more hiding below on the Mid-Atlantic Ridge. If the Characters didn't have the idea that they shouldn't engage in any kind of conflict before, they most certainly should have it now. The island has officially become a death-trap should they be discovered. The Characters will have to tread even more carefully than they did before.

A Path of Destruction

Once the Characters are past all the Esoteric Order craziness, should they be able to restrain themselves from violence, they can make their way to the facility. As patrols will at least double after the arrival of fresh reinforcements, you may want to call for Stealth Tests at regular intervals.

The facility itself is nothing special from the outside. It is a former bank building that was bombarded during the Migou invasion and subsequently rebuilt. The new Migou construction is also ruined from Esoteric Order attacks. The experiment itself was set up in the basement of the building, in the vault to be precise. It appears that the Migou wanted some level of shielding while dealing with the kind of forces they were playing with here – after all, anti-matter is very dangerous. The building is plain and uninteresting, which is why the Esoteric Order of Dagon has not found it. Besides, the Order is clever, but not necessarily smart.

Getting in is a snap for the Characters, who have the computer access codes that will allow them to take the seemingly disused elevator downstairs. The facility waits for them, coming to life now that it senses a Migou presence. There it is before them, a whole lab worth of experimental data on the possibility of underwater anti-matter. The Migou aren't worried about retrieving anything, so unless the Characters want to dally, it's time to set some explosives and get back to the rendezvous. This part shouldn't be too difficult as they are hidden underground.

Now they need to make their way out, so that they can be extracted by 224. However, they should have enough of a desire to destroy as many Esoteric Order research facilities as possible on their way out. They hopefully will have the luck to take out Il'eran while they are at it. However, the landscape is now crawling with enemies.

More Complications

As the Characters are making their way back to the pick-up point, and as they set up explosives to provide the Esoteric Order with a bad day, things heat up. The Characters may not have been as careful as they thought they were, or perhaps one of the mystically capable creatures that has arrived as reinforcements sensed something was amiss. There's an energy in the air that should let the Characters know that all is not well.

Without any sort of audible or visible alarm, the Esoteric Order seems aware that someone is here. Squads of Deep Ones, Hybrids, and mortal cultists spread out into the city, clearly looking for something. It doesn't take much of a leap for the Characters to realize that it's them.

Now is the time for violence, but with a twist. Have your Characters encounter small groups with just enough power to make the fight worthwhile. They should feel like they're having to fight for their lives, as well as make their way through great stretches in a stealthy fashion, in order to get to the rendezvous point. If they didn't plant explosives before and want to now, it will be doubly hard. In any case, things should be dangerous, but not lethal, for the Esoteric Order is herding them into a trap.

One of your players might ask why they can't just fly up into the air and be retrieved mid-flight? They do have wings, after all. The reason is that Migou are slow-flyers and the Esoteric Order of Dagon would see and kill them before they had a chance to breach 200 feet.

ACT III: IN HARM'S WAY

Goals: To escape the forces of the Esoteric Order of Dagon and return home.

Setting: The Atlantic island of Iceland; the former Icelandic capital city of Reykjavik; the Migou-occupied city of Bergen.

Cast: 224 – from Act I.

Il'eran – from Act II. Hopefully, just his remains.

The Esoteric Order of Dagon – various levels of experience, Deep Ones, Hybrids, and mortal cultists, all dwelling on captured Iceland.

By The Skin Of Our Cilia

Eventually, they will get within sight of the rendezvous point. If the Characters are careful, as Migou most always are, they will take a moment to assess the area. Unless they succeed at a Very Hard Observation Test, they won't notice anything amiss. If they do, however, they should get the sense that the Esoteric Order of Dagon has set a trap for them.

Hopefully they'll take this opportunity to radio 224 for pick-up, in any case. It's not like they can fall back, because the Esoteric Order has herded them here and there is no easy out.

Not So Easy

All of the avoided patrols and all the light resistance has been the Esoteric Order of Dagon putting the Characters exactly where the Cult wants them. There is a cadre of Deep One and Hybrid special forces hiding in waiting. If the Characters make themselves know, it's surrender or it's a fight.

If they choose to surrender, you've got a whole other ball of wax on your hands. The mission changes from one of retreat to one of escape before they are cruelly tortured and dissected.

Of course, if they set explosives, now would be an excellent time to trigger them. The explosions wracking the city will be exactly the kind of thing the Characters need as a distraction.

Things will most likely move into violence. The number and strength of the Deep One and Hybrid forces should be just to a point where the Characters can fight, but know that a prolonged conflict will result in their capture or deaths. Be sure to arm and armor your antagonists appropriately, possibly drawing on the Esoteric Order weapons and armor presented on p. 81 of the *Damnation View* (though too much s'pranth toxin may take the Characters down too quickly). Keep powered armor out of most of the fight, but if you want to add some towards the end just to make the Characters soil themselves, feel free.

Just when things look their darkest, a Migou Stalker comes out from under its stealth field to blast the forces attacking the Characters. It's 224 to the rescue. It lays down heavy covering fire, hopefully allowing the Characters to fly into the vehicle. Then it flies away at top speed.

Return

Just as in any good horror movie, the last gasp comes after everyone thinks the action is over. As the Stalker turns to fly away, something bursts out of the water into the air. Several somethings, in fact – two very upset Spawn. Remember to have everyone, including 224, make Fear Tests, as these are creatures that scare the daylight out of just about anything.

If 224 and at least one of the Characters can keep their cool, they'll want to fire on the things. If not, the Stalker will be batted about like a mouse on a string. Now is the time the Characters should panic.

Or maybe not just yet. Perhaps when the Leviathan, followed by two Hydras, fly up to join the battle is a better time. The Characters are terribly outnumbered and outgunned.

At this point, the scene can only go in so many ways. It could become a chase, pitting 224's piloting abilities (or one of the other Characters', if 224 is out of the picture) to the test. In these cases, have one of the players roll for 224's Expert Piloting skill against the enemies Adept Athletics skills. Every turn the Characters succeed, it's a close call. Every turn they fail, the Stalker takes 3 dice of damage as it is batted at. If the Characters fail three turns in a row, the Stalker is hurled back towards

the ground and must endure one full turn of being shot at by the mecha. The Characters, of course, can fire back each turn – though you will determine their targets for them. They can use their own Support Weapons skills, or someone can use 224's Adept Support Weapons skill.

If the Characters can manage to win this harrowing Contest for five consecutive turns, they will finally break free. The Stalker's top speed is way beyond anything they've been dealing with here, so they should be able to get away quickly. However, give the Leviathan and the two Hydras one turn of shooting at them first.

However, in any event, don't let them get away unscathed. Bat them around at least once or twice, in addition to a turn of shooting at them, or the ending will be anti-climactic.

Once this final battle for escape is gone, the rest of the journey is clear sailing. The ride back to Bergen may give the Characters something to talk about, or they could just pass out as the excitement wears off.

When they finally reach Bergen, they are met by 116. Depending upon the outcome of their actions, they will either be praised for their effectiveness, or they will be assigned as guides for a more powerful team. The Characters will be subject-matter experts on Reykjavik for another mission – regardless of the situation, the Migou will not stop until the facility is destroyed.

Insanity Tests may be in order. The following Tests may apply:

- Enduring Fear – Challenging (1 Point)
- Witness Death of Friend – Average (1 Point)
- Having Reality Turned Upside Down – Hard (1 Point)

What's Next?

The Characters have distinguished themselves as successful, and hopefully efficient. This marks them as a resource to be utilized and most likely as soon as possible. It's up to you if you want to stay in this part of the world or if you want them to be reassigned elsewhere. There's plenty to do here with the Migou fronts in Europe and the British Isles, as well as the remaining threat of the Esoteric Order of Dagon.

In terms of Iceland, the Esoteric Order will not miss what they didn't know was there. They will increase patrols and security for the time being, now knowing that the Migou have their eye on the island. The Migou are planners, though, and they are now interested in what the EOD is up to. It will only be a matter of time until the Cult relaxes and then the Migou will be back.

Of course, there is the possibility that the Characters did not succeed in their mission and now the Esoteric Order knows they missed something in their occupation of Reykjavik. The Cult will now be searching and the clock is ticking. The Migou don't have the resources at this time to mount a full-scale assault, so their response will be to gather a more highly-trained strike force to accompany the Characters so that they can go at it again.

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Time waits for no one. The Disciples of the Rapine Storm throw themselves with renewed fervor against the beleaguered troops holding the lines of the far east. The New Earth Government desperately searches for a plan to drive the alien insects from their last bastion of safety. Deep within dark places something ancient and primal stirs, ready to gift the world with its unspeakable presence once again. And somewhere, the children of the fish god find lost things that were better left lost.

This is how the end begins. Welcome to 2086.

Discover new breakthroughs that might give humanity a much needed edge - but at what cost? Suffer a plague of street crime, eroding the places where people once felt safe. Watch in shock at the lengths the Nazzadi are willing to go to police their own kind. And quietly, something new is born within the darkest pits of the Chrysalis Corporation. Explore a year in the Strange Aeon or lose yourself in the lies and pretend it isn't happening.

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ANCIENT ENEMIES

Thicker Than Blood

Underneath the carefully crafted world of the New Earth Government, a sickness festers. The Children of Chaos hide within the mighty Chrysalis Corporation, agents of the end. Intent on bringing back the lost days of terrible old gods, they are a hidden tumor that soon will be too malignant to excise. Only one force has the power and the secrets to fight the enemy within. Legacy of the Forgotten Ones, the Eldritch Society secretly hunts the Children of Chaos. Holy warriors, monsters with the hearts of men, struggle desperately to save humanity. And to the New Earth Government, its saviors are monsters and its destroyers heroes.

This is the Shadow War so few know the truth.

Peel back the layers of secrecy to explore the mysterious Eldritch Society. Discover what joining in symbiosis with a thing from beyond time and space really means. Undergo mystical metamorphosis to join more deeply with your otherworldly symbiont and feel the pull of its wild power. Pull back the veil to stare into the dark eyes of the true Chrysalis Corporation. Give yourself over to the power of the Old Ones and endure the infamous Rite of Transfiguration, sacrificing your humanity for something greater.

144 pages. November 2009.



USES THE NEW GAME SYSTEM

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The Enemy Of My Enemy Is Still My Enemy

The New Earth Government. A place of progress and hope. A world carefully crafted by the powers that be to give lives to those it protects. The last hope of humanity in a time when it seems as if our light will be extinguished forever. The Migou. Beings who have always viewed the Earth as their backyard, to be used and abused as they will. Creatures caught unaware by what we have become and intent on destroying us because of it.

Enemies bound to the mortal coil, perhaps soon to be consumed by it – and each other.

Live in the world of the NEG, exploring society from the streets on up. Walk within the worlds of politics, religion, and mainstream society. Discover what the growing identity of the Nazzadi is all about. Explore the dark end of the streets where vice and crime dwell. Or discover the world of the alien insects from Pluto and even explore it as one of them. Peel back the veil and see the Migou for what they truly are – and maybe even admire them for it.

Nowhere else will you find a setting like this.

Inside this book you will find:

- seven pieces of provocative short fiction to help portray the feel of the setting.
- a detailed exploration of the New Earth Government, to give you a real idea of what it's like to live in the setting on a daily basis.
- explore in detail why the Nazzadi were made, who they thought they were, and who they have become.
- new Character options, including new Nazzadi Qualities and playing Nephilim handlers.
- an introduction to new technology, including new mecha tech, four new mecha, ten new vehicles of war, and the mysterious Nephilim.
- a detailed exploration of the hidden world of the Migou, pulling back the curtain to show you who they really are and why they're here.
- full rules for designing Migou Characters and telling Migou stories, including two Migou races and six professions.
- a ready-to-play starter story for Migou games, as well as several Migou story hooks, to start you off right away.

This book is meant to be used with the *CthulhuTech* storytelling game and requires the *Core Book*.

FOR MATURE AUDIENCES ONLY

This book is intended for mature readers. It contains dark and disturbing content and images. Reader discretion is advised.

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