

# Introduction

The universe in which the Vorkosigan family exists, as written and defined by Lois McMaster Bujold, is one where human beings are still human -- but where planetary histories have evolved widely different cultures. Technology has made vast strides: cloning, space travel, plasma rifles, wormholes between different parts of the universe, and genetic design are now commonplace. It is a universe that can hold both space opera and high politics, both matters of honor settled by duelling and low farce -- both the normal themes of human behavior, and the high adventure and danger which make roleplaying so much fun.

It's a universe where characters can sacrifice themselves to save empires, fight to preserve their family honor, intrigue to rise to power as the head of a major criminal organization, gamble in dingy spaceports, seek for the scientific advance which will allow terraforming of their planet, and move through complicated systems of etiquette in order to investigate crimes and find the guilty. It's a big universe, and it's still evolving. The players may be the ones who will shape its future.

## What Else You Will Need

For full use of this book, you will need a copy of the *GURPS Basic Set*. This, together with pencils, paper, and three six-sided dice, provides all that you need to play.

***While not immediately necessary, GURPS Compendium I and GURPS Compendium II give further optional rules, advantages and disadvantages, skills, and other useful things which may be helpful in a Vorkosigan campaign. GURPS Space provides useful rules for building spaceships and handling space battles, while GURPS High-Tech and GURPS Ultra-Tech and GURPS Ultra-Tech 2 may be useful in modelling some of the scientific advances -- or interesting weaponry -- that may be involved in a game.***

## Some Warnings

*Spoiler Alert:* This book contains a lot of information about the plots of the *Vorkosigan* books. It's impossible to give a reasonable level of background detail without them, given the impact that Miles Vorkosigan and his family have had on the universe. Plot twists from the books are revealed here; you have been warned.

However, this book is not an attempt to recount the entire history of the *Vorkosigan* universe. Nor is it definitive when compared to the original books: if it is contradicted by past or future Bujold fiction, then the Bujoldiana is definitive. (GMs are encouraged to do as they wish in their private campaigns, of course ...)

## About The Authors

*Genevieve Cogman* has been roleplaying over half her 20 years, and has no intention of stopping any time soon. She is the author of *You Are Here: Around The World In 666 Days* and *In Nomine Anime*, and has also written material for White Wolf's *Exalted* game. She lives in England, and spends far too much time on the Internet.

*Lois McMaster Bujold* is the author of the *Vorkosigan* fantasy novels *The Spirit Ring* and *The Curse of Chalion*, and co-edited the anthology *Women at War*

with Roland Green from Tor Books. She has won four Hugo awards, two Nebulas, one Locus, and a Minnesota Book Award, and been nominated for several more. Her titles have been translated into 17 languages so far.

# CHAPTER 1 -- The Universe

*"It's a delicate situation." The small man looked from one member of the group to another, holding their eyes for that crucial moment until he was certain of their comprehension. "The accountants have traced all the purchases to this sub-branch of the Toscane family -- while they aren't the only stockholders in Galactic Exports, they have 90% of the shares. Our experts say that the only use they can think of for some of those components is in gravitic pulse direction. Given the associations with the cell in Serifosa, we need to be certain. You have been selected either for your scientific expertise," he made a small, precise gesture towards the lanky man with spectacles half off his nose in the corner, "or for the fact that*

*What worries me are the ones we **don't** know about."*

*The stiff-backed young man with ImpSec silver eyes on his collar broke silence for the first time. "Are we to assume we can trust the local ImpSec department there, my lord?"*

*The small man in brown and silver smiled cheerfully. "With everything except the nature of your investigation, the possible links to the Toscane family, and the possibility of another wormhole-collapser. Clear?"*

*"As crystal, my lord," muttered the young man.*

The universe is a big place, and prone to expansion. An understanding of the histories and cultures of the different planets helps provide a basis for their interaction, be it peaceful or military, and allows the GM to choose where in history and geography he would like his campaign to begin.

## Why Here?

This is a universe full of conflict: planetary relationships range from peace to guarded hostility, and occasionally all the way to open war. Inside planetary cultures, various factions battle and intrigue for power. In the Cetagandan Empire, the haut practice genetic design, the ghem-clans struggle for control of the armies, and the servitor classes strive to come to the attention of their superiors. On Barrayar, the Progressives and the Conservatives clash over the future of their planet, while the Emperor Gregor attempts to keep the peace and maintain control. On Jackson's Whole, the planet of piracy, illegality, and clone-slave-trading, the Houses Major and Houses Minor maneuver and stab each other enthusiastically in the back, while providing services to anyone who can pay for them. Beta Colony and Escobar offer scientific advances and extreme democracy. Earth endures, a center of cultural and historical importance. Other planets and populated space stations offer nexi of conflict throughout the galaxy -- wherever there are people, there is the opportunity for conflict, and for roleplay.

A major part of the interest of this universe is that science-fiction cliches and regular tropes are developed to produce interesting consequences, and to examine the personal effects for the protagonists. For example, the concept of cloning is examined, as are the expected results if a group of amoral characters should be able to use such technology. After all, if you *can* clone, and you don't care about any questions of ethics, the possibilities are near-infinite. A cloned slave, grown to your specific instructions, and indoctrinated in loyalty to you from birth? No problem. Genetically modified troops, built as "super-soldiers" and engineered for maximum bloodthirstiness and reflexes? Certainly -- it's just a question of building them. A clone of yourself, so that you can have your brain transplanted into it in order to prolong your life? Easy -- if you don't care what happens to the clone. And what legal rights

does a clone have? (Beta Colony has a long list -- just ask.) Who has a right to ask for a clone to be created, and does he have a right to do so if he's using tissue samples from someone other than himself?

Equally, what sort of changes will such technology have on cultural attitudes? When the uterine replicator was created, it became possible for women to have children without the biological necessities of menstruation and pregnancy -- weakening many of the traditional arguments for discrimination between the sexes. While planets such as Beta Colony showcase the resulting lack of discrimination most clearly, as the use of the uterine replicator spreads it will become more and more difficult for other planets to justify sex-linked discrimination on purely biological grounds. (Tradition is, of course, a different matter.) How long will it take for some people to claim that replicator-born babies are superior to body-born ones -- or vice versa? What effect on planetary societies will new technological changes bring?

But through all of this, human beings are still capable of the same acts of good, evil, kindness, cruelty, or blind obstinacy as they have been at any other time or place. Even though people are shaped to some degree by the cultures where they were raised, they still have potential for growth and change. Nature is a factor, as much as nurture. Nobody has to be trapped in cultural stereotypes. If a player wants to be a heroic Jacksonian, an anarchic Cetagandan, a democratic Barrayaran, or an antisocial Betan, the universe is wide enough to allow it, and the stories are human enough to recognise that there is more to characters than the standard concept of origin and occupation. Characters can -- and will -- become the heroes and villains that role-play demands.

So while this is a universe with the standard space-faring setting tropes -- spaceships, blasters (plasma arcs), stunners, clones, wormhole jumps, and strange cultures -- it's one where these concepts are put together in a logical way, and where effect follows cause. A player can easily come to accept the usual science fiction themes, while also being able to see how a planet's history has shaped its current culture into a plausible model. But ultimately, it's a universe where characters, more than anything else, drive the action. Single people can -- and do -- affect the worlds around them.

@PULLQUOTE:"That's the metaphorical aspect of it. Barrayar is us. It is a culture which has undergone wrenching changes in a very short time, which is, of course, the story of the twentieth century."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Lois McMaster Bujold, *Dreamweaver's Dilemma*

## Character vs Setting

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the Vorkosigan universe is the conflict between character and culture. What will a handicapped man, or a woman, do on a patriarchal world where soldiering is the only truly respected trade? How will a character function on a world based on democracy and openness when she has a military secret that she can't afford to reveal? What does a clone bred on Jackson's Whole and trained for conspiracy do when he tries to be an ethical hero?

The cultures of the different planets -- or even smaller locations, such as space stations with a regular population -- are well-defined and interesting, offering all sorts of hooks for characters. Whether a hero wants to work with the prevailing power structures, or against them, there is plenty of scope for roleplay. Some of the planets have spent centuries evolving codes of law, customs, beliefs, and traditions. As an extreme example, Barrayar spent several centuries isolated from the rest of the galaxy, trying to survive: it now has an extremely idiosyncratic culture, full of unspoken expectations and prejudices which the natives are used to, and which frequently shock outsiders. A native of Barrayar will have grown up with these beliefs, and will have to decide whether to accept or reject them: a galactic outsider will be forced to confront them, and to find some way of dealing with them.

## Wormholes and War

Space travel is based on "wormholes" or "jump points" -- weak points in the fabric of space which allow faster-than-light passage from one system to the next. (There can be more than one wormhole between planets -- a string of them, forcing the pilots to make multiple jumps. In such cases, the planets who control the wormholes often position a jump-point station next to each wormhole exit and entrance, to control the flow of traffic, and assist ships in distress.) Only those systems connected by wormholes can be visited. Who can say how many habitable planets exist off the wormhole routes, never to be discovered? Wormholes are the highways that link planets together for trade and politics . . . and sometimes war. □@TEXT: A planet which controls either side of a wormhole (or a string of wormholes) has a stranglehold on all passage through it. The wormhole exits onto a fixed point in space: such a point can be garrisoned in order to halt or destroy all those coming through. Even a minor planetary power, such as Vervain (which lies between the Hegen Hub and the Cetagandan Empire) could hope to thwart Cetagandan invasions, knowing that they controlled the Cetagandan point of entry into the Vervani system. Forcing a passage through a defended wormhole is costly and chancy. □@TEXT: Control of a wormhole is profitable in peacetime, too. While Komarr was independent, it took a 25% levy on all trade passing through its wormholes. (Such outright banditry is a bad move, in the long term; it makes enemies. Admiral Aral Vorkosigan isolated Komarr from its allies simply by assuring them that Barrayar would charge them lower transit fees once it controlled the wormhole.) □@TEXT: A planet at the junction of several wormholes, such as Escobar or the Hegen Hub, will become immensely important as a supply-point, a meeting place for diplomacy and trade, and so forth. In the early days of interstellar exploration, such planets were rapidly developed to serve as jumping-off points for further missions. This gave them strong economies to start with . . . and, nourished by trade through the wormholes, those economies grew stronger. In the long run, a world's location in the wormhole nexus is as important as its own resources, which is one reason that arid Beta Colony is such an economic and technological powerhouse. If a system has several wormholes but no usable planet, commercial interests will create an artificial world -- a "station," (such as Kline Station, p. 00) -- to serve as a transit point. □@TEXT: While a wormhole leading from a main area of the galaxy to an isolated point (such as the Komarr-Barrayar passage) might seem less useful than one between two heavily populated areas, it is intensely important to the world on the far end. Through the Komarr-Barrayar wormhole, Komarr taxed Barrayar's trade, controlled all imports, and ultimately allowed the Cetagandans to invade. This was a harsh lesson for Barrayar. The Barrayarans were not being paranoid, but realistic, when they decided they had to conquer their wormhole gate in order to survive. Any world on the margins of the inhabited universe is ultimately faced with this situation, and must decide whether to allow other powers to control the wormholes -- or whether to seize control themselves.

However, there are also cultures or groups, such as the Founding Fathers of Athos (p. 00), who actively prefer a dead-end location on the far end of a wormhole, out of touch with the rest of the galaxy. If such a world has the resources to be self-sufficient, it could be extremely desirable to a group who wanted to avoid contact with the rest of the galaxy, whatever their reasons. □@C-HEAD: Campaign Applications □@D-HEAD: Disputed Wormholes □@TEXT: Wormholes may be the subject of vigorous dispute between the planets they connect -- and third parties as well, advancing their own interests. Each world may place space stations or outposts on its own side of the wormhole, and plot to control the other side as well. This may involve spies being sent through to investigate the rival's defenses, trading ships being used to smuggle weapons through (or as a disguise for battleships), trade embargoes, full frontal assaults, mercenaries being hired for additional military strength, political pressure from other interested powers, and much more. Other worlds, or even powerful corporations, may get involved to protect their own interests -- especially if *both* sides are financing their disagreement by charging tolls on passage through the wormhole! This may lead to third, fourth, and fifth-party spies and mercenaries infesting the

area. Such agents will, of course, be expected to keep the identity of their employers secret, and may not even know who they are working for. □@D-HEAD:New Wormholes□@TEXT:The discovery of a new wormhole would be of interest to all the major powers. If the entrance were safely in one empire's territory (such as Cetaganda or Barrayar) then that power would heavily guard its end of the wormhole, just in case, and send ships through to explore the other side. Depending on the size of the investigating power's navy, such a commitment of force might be noticeable to other galactic powers, prompting them to send in their own ships and agents. □@TEXT:Should a new wormhole entrance be discovered in neutral or disputed territory, it would be the scene of an instant power struggle. Information as to its location would be a highly marketable item to all the intelligence services, every Great House on Jackson's Whole, and any private individuals who might want to try and explore on the other side. Ships from every interested empire or planet would crowd the area, inflaming any ongoing border disputes. Neutral powers nearby would be requested -- diplomatically or otherwise -- to allow navies to move through their space, or to add their own forces to the competing factions. □@TEXT: And should a new wormhole be found linking two formerly-distant areas, the whole shape of galactic politics would change! A link between rivals could mean instant war, or a new alliance. Even a link between allies would reroute trade; it might be an economic boon on the whole, but worlds on the "old" route would still suffer from lost traffic. □@PULLQUOTE:"The independents make blind jumps into possible death hoping for a staggering fortune. The Survey . . . makes blind jumps into possible death for a salary, benefits, and a pension."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Lord Miles Vorkosigan, *Komarr*

Mere hints about possible new wormholes could set off a "treasure hunt," with ships quartering that part of space in an attempt to locate the theorized passage -- each, of course, trying to keep its own researches secret. Regular investigators of such rumors include the Betan Astronomical Survey (p. 00), as well as the "wormhole wildcatters," obsessive explorers in search of the one big discovery, the new world which will make their fortunes. It would not only involve agents from all the main powers, but also independents, mercenaries, and thrill-seekers, and would have all the viciousness and throat-slitting deadliness that could possibly be asked for. And once the wormhole is located, what then? Do the discoverers run for home, wait for backup, or try to cross through for some quick exploration? Enemies are gathering, the clock is ticking, and what if someone emerges from the *other side*? □@D-HEAD:Wormhole Science□@TEXT:Nobody has yet established what causes wormholes, or how to predict their opening and closing. Wormholes open and close with time scales and energies beyond the present human capacity to control. A wormhole is a weakness in 5-dimensional space (generally referred to as 5-space.) When a ship travels through it, the Necklin rods which are part of its drive generate Necklin fields: the fields counter-rotate and wrap around the ship to create a 5-space needle of infinitesimal diameter and unlimited length, which punches through the wormhole, and unfolds again to 3-dimensional space on the other side. There is no way of determining where the two sides of a wormhole are, in relation to each other, short of going through it.

The 5-space anomaly which is a wormhole is not detectable by ordinary means from 3-space: an ordinary ship could pass through it without realizing that it was there, and without being affected by it in any way. However, a ship going through a wormhole jump leaves a 5-space trail, which can be observed with suitable detection equipment. A "map" of known wormholes is not congruent to real space. Most of the planets linked by wormholes are so far away from each other that nobody has ever attempted to make the trip by normal space travel. Cases such as Beta Colony, where the planet was originally reached by colony ships sent from Earth, are very much the exception rather than the rule.

It is possible to seal a wormhole temporarily, by having a pilot sacrifice himself and his ship mid-jump. However, the disruption damps out in a short time, and the wormhole is once again traversable. More recently, there was an attempt to close a wormhole by firing a 5-space pulse at a matched frequency to the

wormhole's own 5-space resonance into it. This failed, as the energy was redirected outwards as a gravitational wave, and the wormhole was still operational. The military applications of being able to open or seal wormholes at will are obvious, and a lot of people would be interested in a new method of doing so . . .

## Trade Routes

Currently, there are a number of major trade nexi, or planets which control particularly important wormholes. Jackson's Whole, the Hegen Hub, Kline Station, Escobar, Komarr, Vega Station, Zoave Twilight, and Tau Ceti (for the West Orion Arm) each command wormhole routes to several other planets. Naturally, each of these places has had to develop its own strategies to handle the trade and ships passing through. Some of them, such as Kline Station, develop ferocious quarantine laws; others, such as Jackson's Whole, offer services both legal and illegal, and sell to the highest bidder; and others, like Komarr, pile on the taxes, tariffs, and trade duties. (Taxation should not be taken to excess: when Barrayar attacked Komarr, one of the ways it secured the cooperation of Komarr's neighbors was by promising to lower the tariffs.) Escobar is particularly important because it controls a great deal of the traffic passing through to Tau Ceti and the West Orion Arm. (Of course, one could go through the Cetagandan Empire, but that has its own dangers . . .)

## Communications

Communications can be beamed through space at the speed of light, but have to go through a wormhole physically: they must be recorded onto some form of media, and then jumped through the wormhole, before being beamed on again on the other side. Most wormholes have scheduled dedicated communications ships serving them, which jump back and forth on a regular schedule to squirt them across the next local space region. On less traveled routes, they're taken through by whatever ship jumps through next. This means that truly secure data usually travels by fast courier: the Jacksonian system of communication links is known to be particularly corrupt.

## Basic History

In the 21st and 22nd centuries, Earth began a push for interstellar colonization. Colony ships were built -- not generation ships, but ones that would take 20 years or more to reach their destinations. A couple of nearby stars were selected to be colonized; nearby, in this case, meaning within 40 light-years of Earth. One of these was Alpha Colony, which looked biologically promising, but which failed utterly. Later traces of the colony were found, but there were no signs of what had happened, or how everyone had died. The second target was Beta Colony, which was a howling desert world, and which looked much less promising; the new colonists lived in caves and underground passages, digging their spaceships into the soil. Oddly enough, this turned out to be more successful. Beta Colony was colonized from the United States.

Several global disasters followed on Earth, which put a temporary halt to interstellar colonization. Beta Colony was cut off for a while -- not that it ever had a great deal of contact after the initial colonization, given the transit time. However, the colony didn't lose its technology or history, and it remained in radio contact. After a hiatus came the discovery of the wormhole jump drive, and exploration began explosively in all directions. Unfortunately, the earlier disasters had hit America particularly badly, and largely put it out of the whole business of space colonization. Almost all the later colonies were descended from more mixed world cultures.

Frenetic colonization and wormhole exploration took place. Planets such as Barrayar, Escobar, Komarr, and Eta Ceta (the capital of the Cetagandan Empire) were discovered and promptly terraformed, settled, or both. The wormhole leading to Barrayar closed, forcing Earth to abandon the colony that had been started there. The Komarran domes and soletta were built to assist in Komarran terraforming. Beta Colony invented the uterine replicator, resulting in an immediate surge of interest in genetic engineering. While laws rapidly came into effect against this (especially after the Nuovo Brasilian cloning fiasco) both hermaphrodites (p. 00) and quaddies (p. 00) were created for the first time -- hermaphrodites as a social experiment on Beta Colony, and quaddies as a labor force for zero-gravity work by GalacTech. However, quaddies never became a large population group: Beta Colony developed artificial gravity, causing the quaddies to become obsolete, and they were forced to escape from GalacTech before they were all forcibly sterilized and confined planetside for the rest of their lives.

Beta Colony's invention of artificial gravity (using the same Necklin field technology which was also part of the wormhole drive) caused a revolution in space travel. It not only drastically increased the speed of local space travel, but it also made it possible to build large-scale isolated space stations. (This had previously been unfeasible, as it was necessary for personnel in zero-gravity to regularly visit planetside, or to spend several hours exercising each day, in order to prevent physical degeneration.) Space stations were promptly built at points which were convenient for several wormholes, but which lacked any habitable planets nearby, such as Kline Station and Dalton Station. Subcultures began to develop on these space stations, as permanent indigenous populations grew up and died there without ever having to go planetside. The Cetagandan Empire expanded, growing to eight satrap worlds, and a number of other allied or subjugated planets. Barrayar was rediscovered, invaded by the Cetagandans with Komarr's connivance, repelled the invaders, invaded Komarr successfully in turn, but failed to conquer Escobar in a later attempt.

@B-BOXHEAD:Barrayar Rediscovered

@TEXT-BOX:The rediscovery of Barrayar came as a surprise to the rest of the galaxy, when it was found that a wormhole local to Komarr opened on space local to Barrayar. The planet had been isolated for several centuries, and had degenerated to patriarchal feudalism. While it began to assimilate galactic technology quickly -- especially weapons and space travel technology -- this was interrupted by a Cetagandan invasion via the Komarran wormhole, with Komarran connivance. The Barrayarans eventually managed to repel the Cetagandan invasion. They followed up (after a planet-local civil war) with an extremely successful invasion of Komarr, taking the planet as part of the Barrayaran Imperium. A few years later, they also attempted to invade Escobar, but were repelled by united Escobaran and Betan forces. Prince Serg of Barrayar died in the battle, leaving his 3-year-old son Gregor as heir to the Imperial throne.

Since then, while there have been a number of military clashes, including both on-planet insurrections and civil wars, and off-planet space battles, there have been no major wars. Pretendships on Barrayar and rebellion on Komarr have both been put down by the legitimate authorities, while a recent Cetagandan attack on Vervain was driven off by combined Barrayaran, Vervani, and mercenary forces. Barrayar is spending its energy on expansion and terraforming on its South Continent, and on the newly-discovered planet of Sergyar -- much to the relief of the rest of the galaxy. The Cetagandan Empire also appears to be currently in a moderately peaceful phase, and has even sent a delegation to attend the wedding of Emperor Gregor of Barrayar.

It remains to be seen how long it will last.



## Current Instabilities

So what could possibly go wrong? Everything. Just because some planets are currently adopting peaceful policies doesn't mean that they're going to stay that way. There are enough places in the Vorkosigan universe where peace is hanging by a thread, or delicately balanced between two opposing forces, to supply half a dozen campaigns. Even with continuous diplomacy and common sense, some of the current political situations are already showing signs of stress. Barrayar doesn't trust Cetaganda, and Cetaganda doesn't trust Barrayar: low-level secret service sniping is continuous, even if open war is currently in abeyance. A number of Komarrans still resent the Barrayaran occupation and rule, and are liable to come up with bloody-minded conspiracies of independence from out of nowhere: aging revolutionaries tend to grow even more desperate as they get older and need to justify themselves. Jackson's Whole continues to offer its cloning services and scientific advances to anybody who wants an assassin, a slave, a lethally engineered virus, black-market weapons, or wholesale money laundering. They will certainly be quick to exploit any emerging situation -- and make it worse.

Besides these danger points, there are numerous situations which could easily prove catastrophic, if things just go that little bit wrong. These range from technically minor matters, which might cause civil war or general destruction on a single planet, to large-scale problems that could cause havoc and destruction across the galaxy.

The peace of the Barrayaran Imperium depends upon the line of succession: the Emperor Gregor has no heir named, and even though he has just married, there is no sign of a child yet. If he were to die, Barrayar would be destabilized: competing factions would present their claims to the throne, or to the Regency (if the new Empress should be pregnant) and the Emperor's peaceful, progressive policies might well be thrown into disarray. Komarr might seize the opportunity to make a bid for independence, or might become an important pawn in the struggle, and a battleground for rival power-seekers.

The Cetagandan Empire is holding to its borders, and only indulging in minor amounts of intimidation and offers of alliance -- for the moment. If the ruling class of the haut should decide that a more Darwinian genetic strategy was necessary, and turn their military servitors, the ghem-lords, loose to expand the Empire, then the entire face of the galaxy might be changed. Other planets could unite to defend themselves against the Cetagandans, or might negotiate private treaties of alliance or neutrality.

If the existence of the telepathy gene on Athos (p. 00) were discovered, it could cause a galactic uproar. Secret services throughout the universe would scramble to get their hands on samples, and to prevent other powers from getting samples. The Star Creche of Cetaganda (p. 00) would be particularly interested, given that they originally developed the genetic complex. Jackson's Whole would also be fascinated. Ultimately, some groups might be so unnerved by the concept of an expanding group of telepaths that they might even attack Athos in an attempt to utterly destroy it . . .

Scientific discoveries and economic pressures can also have a major impact on the universe around them -- for example, consider Beta Colony's invention of artificial gravity, or the uterine replicator. Lord Mark Vorkosigan is currently funding research into methods of life extension that don't involve clone-brain transplants, in an attempt to undercut the Jacksonian Barons and end the practice of selling clones as new bodies to the rich and amoral. Should he succeed in this, the Jacksonian economy will be thrown into chaos: some of the most important Houses Major, such as Bharaputra, depend upon clone-brain transplants as one of their major sources of income. If they fall, other Houses will rise, and the planet will be thrown into turmoil. It could be a very interesting situation, for characters who felt like meddling . . . and a very dangerous one.

Little is mentioned about the Tau Ceti side of the galaxy in the books. Possibly there are things going on there which may impact other worlds, soon enough: wars, rebellions, scientific discoveries, ship design, or assassinations. Miles Vorkosigan undertook more than one mission in the area -- usually anti-Cetagandan operations, but not always. Barrayar is a good example of how a single planet can expand to become a major player in galactic power games. Other planets could do it too.

Even the discovery of a new wormhole might be enough to alter the galactic situation radically. Imagine the possible conflict, should a wormhole be found which linked Barrayaran local space with the Cetagandan Empire . . .

The Vorkosigan universe is a constantly expanding, evolving one. Even if its heroes manage to build a temporary stability, make an alliance, or secure one generation's peace, the next generation will produce just as many problems and difficulties. Alliances will fray, new discoveries will bring new opportunities and ethical difficulties with them, and even a prosperous, thriving world will eventually have to deal with overpopulation, and to decide where and how to expand. Human beings are human beings -- that in itself is enough to create as many interesting situations as any GM could possibly demand.

## CHAPTER 2 -- Barrayar And Imperium

*"We need some sort of cover story," Captain Solone stated firmly. Away from the Auditor's presence, he had allowed himself to relax, and was cradling a bulb of black coffee between his hands. "There are a lot of Barrayaran visitors -- or colonists -- showing up on Komarr these days."*

*"Yes, but none of us are women," pointed out the bland analyst, removing his attention from his emigrating. Better to be tourists."*

*shrine. That gives us an excuse to be wandering around generally."*

*"You're sure you won't be recognized?" Solone queried. "You are supposed to be an authority on wormholes. If someone spots you, it could give the whole game away."*

*suppressed theses which never made it into publication, an offer of tenure which ImpSec requested I turn down, and having to miss every damn interesting conference on the subject. I am an authority, but people don't know about it. Trust me. I wish they did."*

The Barrayaran Imperium comprises three planets, at the moment: Barrayar itself, Komarr, and most recently Sergyar. It has a violent and bloody history, but is currently holding its own as a peaceful galactic power under Emperor Gregor -- albeit with a sizeable fleet of spaceships and a still-functioning military caste. Its three planets each have noticeably different cultures and priorities: however, Gregor's recent marriage to the Komarran Dr. Laisa Toscane will probably do a great deal to improve relations between the worlds. The Imperium is unlikely to expand any further in the near future, as Sergyar and the Barrayaran South Continent are currently absorbing all potential settlers or colonists.

### Barrayar

Barrayar is a planet currently in the throes of change, attempting to cope with the influx of galactic technology and attitudes while at the same time maintaining its own caste structure and values. After being isolated from the rest of the galaxy for several centuries, it was rediscovered, and promptly invaded by the Cetagandans. This assault only reinforced the warrior standards inherent to Barrayaran culture, and resulted (after the Cetagandans had been driven off) in the aggressive conquest of Komarr, and a later attack on Escobar. More recently, Betan influence on the current Emperor in his youth (in the person of the Countess Cordelia Vorkosigan, nee Naismith) has resulted in a ruler with a progressive policy of peaceful expansion.

Even so, the Vor warrior caste still exists, the planet is still profoundly patriarchal, the Service (Barrayar's military forces) is considered the best possible career for a man, and the entire planet is ruled through a feudal system of an Emperor and a Council of 60 Counts. Other planets, such as the profoundly democratic Beta Colony or the scientific Escobar, don't understand how Barrayar can survive, let alone function. The popular galactic image is that of a world of militaristic jackbooted thugs, led by an ornately decorated aristocracy barely a step above barbarism. Emperor Gregor's task is to attempt to integrate the best features of Barrayar's tradition and history with the galactic advances which can improve the quality of life for all of Barrayar, without inspiring the conservative elements of his government to revolution, or losing the Barrayaran traditions of honor, service, and loyalty which are a strong feature of the culture.

## Geography And Climate

Barrayar is a temperate planet, with two moons: its local-space situation is simplified by the fact that there is only one wormhole connecting it to the rest of the galaxy. (Although the Barrayarans regularly inspect the site where the wormhole jump to Earth used to be, there is no sign of it reopening.) There are two main continents: the North Continent, which is largely settled and partly terraformed, and the main center of population on the planet, and the smaller South Continent, which is only partly settled, and has a long way to go before it is anywhere near terraformed. While there are also a few small, scattered inhabited islands, they do not represent a sizeable proportion of the population. The weather is generally temperate, but violent snowstorms can occur at winter, and have been known to make Winterfair memorable.

The South Continent is largely populated by farmers, settlers, and administrators, working to terraform and manage the land. The settling and terraforming only really began after the Time of Isolation ended, and the galactic advances in technology made it possible to communicate between the continents easily -- the North and South Continents are quite a distance apart. While it is generally level country, the notable exception is the Black Escarpment, the continent's main geographical feature, a mountain range (the highest on Barrayar) running north to south, with snow, murderous terrain, and dry air. (Cadet officers are frequently sent there for training in winter maneuvers.)

The Northern Continent is the main populated area of Barrayar. It is divided into 60 Districts, for the 60 Counts. Vorbarr Sultana is the capital of Barrayar, set in the east of the continent, at the head of a river which flows under a set of famous bridges (there's a song about them in four languages) and out to sea. In the south of the continent are the Dendarii Mountains, which forms part of the Vorkosigan District (and contributes to the traditional Vorkosigan poverty -- it's not suited to farming). North of that lie the lowlands, partly green where they have been terraformed to produce earth vegetation, partly red-brown where natural Barrayaran vegetation still flourishes. On the southern coast, south of the Dendarii mountains, there are a number of beach resorts: one of the more famous ones is Borsanklar, an upper-class resort seaside town, with a lot of virgin forest behind it to the north, leading up to the mountains. The occasional irradiated piece of land, a relic of the Cetagandan invasion, mars the planet's surface. Road networks outside cities are still rudimentary, despite attempts to improve them, as they were leapfrogged by the personal air transport which arrived at the end of the Time of Isolation: it is often easier for travellers to use the monorail system which passes through most Districts.

### Vorbarr Sultana

Vorbarr Sultana is the planetary capital, a city which evolved slowly through the Time of Isolation, and is now attempting to adapt itself to regular use by modern technology and transport. (Streets laid down for horse-drawn traffic are not necessarily suited for groundcars.) The city is divided by a river which passes through the town, historically linked to the trade which used to pass through, and crossed by several famous bridges. The rapids and falls upstream of the city are currently handled with dams and locks to allow boat transport. On a bluff above the river rapids stands Vorhartung Castle: opposite it, on the other side, is Vorbretten House, with the Star Bridge between the two. Notable buildings in the capital include the Vorbarra District Agricultural and Engineering Institute (the largest and busiest school in the capital), ImpSec headquarters (p. 00), the Imperial Military Hospital, and the Vorbarr Sultana Company Hall (a location for concerts). There are municipal traffic control schemes and automated air systems (for lightflyers) in preparation: the air system has priority, due to the increase in fatal lightflyer accidents. The Imperial Science Institute and a military shuttleport are just outside the city.

In social terms, the city can be roughly separated into two parts: the old, and the new. The old district shows its age, despite some recent improvements -- the streets are warrens, there are at least three sets of

old tunnels under the area (from old sewage and transport systems), and the buildings are tall and old-fashioned. The caravanserai area that used to be the center of the area's slums has been cleaned up in recent years, and even manages to attract a certain amount of tourist trade; however, it is still a maze of alleys, and can be dangerous to unwary, rich-looking types. Famous shops include Siegling's, one of the top weaponry shops in all Barrayar, which sells both technological weapons such as stunners (with ornamentation, where required) and classical weapons such as sabers, knives, and swordsticks.

Architecturally, in the newer parts of Vorbarr Sultana, the utilitarian style of the building boom that followed Ezar's rise to power is generally common. New skyscrapers and high modern towers are interspersed with the more classical buildings. On the edge of the newer area of town is Vorbarr Sultana University, whose campus is often used as a shortcut through town by traffic. The old residential streets behind it are mostly used by the families of senior professors and staff. They generally represent the architecture of the last unelectrified decade before the end of the Time of Isolation, and have only in the last decade been reclaimed from urban decay.

Notable buildings in Vorbarr Sultana include:

**The Imperial Residence:** This is an architectural pile which makes the houses of individual Counts look small in comparison. Sprawling wings rise two to four stories high, accented by towers that spike sporadically and randomly. Additions of different ages criss-cross each other, creating both large and small courtyards. After part of it was burned down during the Vordarian Pretendership, it was rebuilt in a more modern style -- and with technological inclusions such as lift-tubes. Naturally, as the home of the Emperor, the place seethes with members of the government, agents of ImpSec, and trained bodyguards flimsily disguised as servants. Gregor's private office is in the (rebuilt) north wing, and is decorated with artwork from rising young artists.

@PULLQUOTE:Cordelia wondered if the eclectic mix of furnishings were priceless antiques, or merely shabby seconds. She couldn't tell.

@PULLQUOTE:-- *Barrayar*

**Vorhartung Castle:** This ancient castle is perched on a bluff above the river rapids that divide Vorbarr Sultana. It hosts the sessions of the Council of Counts, in the huge wood-paneled Council chamber. There is an ornate-railed gallery from which non-Council members can watch the proceedings. Vorhartung Castle also contains a museum of Barrayar's history, which is open to the public when the Council of Counts is not in session: it occupies a whole wing of the castle, and is devoted to the arms and armor of the Vor from the Time of Isolation. (Soldiers in uniform are admitted free, as are Vor.) The museum also contains the tanned and cured scalp of Mad Emperor Yuri, on loan from a private collection. The Emperor Gregor has a private office at Vorhartung Castle, which he often uses for meetings which he doesn't want to come to the public notice of his government.

**Vorkosigan House:** The residence of the Vorkosigans is in the old part of the city. While it was designed and built in the pre-electric Time of Isolation, every original window has been replaced with modern high-grade armor-glass and fitted with automatic shutters. It is surrounded by a stone wall topped with black wrought-iron spikes, with a force screen just inside the wall, scanner beams, and a tangle-field. A concrete kiosk beside the gate houses the ImpSec gate guards. Its great entry hall, with its black-and-white paved floor, gives onto smaller drawing rooms, libraries, and conference rooms. The building also contains a large garage (occupying the whole eastern wing's sub-basement), a huge kitchen on the lower level, a lift-tube (a comparatively recent installation, by the Countess), plenty of bedrooms, and attics filled with curios, mementos, and historical items. Countess-to-be Ekaterin Vorsoisson is preparing a garden of Barrayaran vegetation next to the house, for public enjoyment.

## The Vorkosigan District

The Vorkosigan District is a moderately famous District on the east side of the north continent, with a Count and his heir in notably high positions: it is also notorious for being the home of rustic, ignorant Dendarii back-country hillmen, and for producing maple mead, "the deadliest alcoholic beverage ever brewed by man." The district itself is a squashed, irregular parallelogram, some 350 kilometers from the northern strip of lowland to the southern mountain passes, and about 500 kilometers east to west, skirting the mountain chain along its highest ranges. It has always been agricultural, and is landlocked away from any chance at the coastal trade. Only about the northern fifth is flat fertile plains, and of that, only about half is usable -- either because it still needs terraforming, or because of the Cetagandan bombing. The District has lagged behind many others in development, and still bears the scars from the Cetagandan invasion.

Going south from Vorbarr Sultana in a lightflyer, one enters the Vorkosigan District when the Dendarii Mountains are in sight. Hassadar, the new District capital, lies in the fertile area: it has been mostly built in the last 30 years, and is laid out like a developed galactic city, around newer methods of transport than horse-carts. To the southeast are the remains of Vorkosigan Vashnoi, the old District capital, surrounded by a large area of irradiated land. The area should begin to be usable again in 50 years or so. A few squatters and bandits live there, desperate men who don't expect to live long enough to have cancer or children -- they are regularly rounded up and run off the area by the District rangers. West of the irradiated lands is a forested area, which was begun by General Piotr Vorkosigan about 50 years ago, and has been cultivated carefully since, with an eye to a future wood trade. It contains many Earth trees, including oak, maple, elm, hickory, vesper-birch, and also the new strain of winter-hardy ebony.

Further west is the lake and village of Vorkosigan Surleau, the favorite private retreat of the Vorkosigan Counts for centuries. While the old castle which used to stand there is long since ruined and burned out (again, by the Cetagandans) the old stone guard barracks has been converted into the Vorkosigan summer residence. (The new guard barracks are concealed in the trees downslope.) There has been a minor population explosion in the neighborhood, with perhaps a hundred new families from Hassadar or Vorbarr Sultana moving down there each year, or buying summer homes in the area: this has provoked corresponding growth in the local village. The Vorkosigan graveyard, for family and retainers, is next to the residence, and holds the graves of both General Piotr Vorkosigan and Sergeant Konstantin Bothari.

While many parts of the Dendarii Mountains are still primitive when compared to the rest of Barrayar, the whole District is moving slowly towards greater industrialization and education, with several villages collaborating to build local hydroelectric dams or to arrange education for their children. The medical network in the Vorkosigan District is one of Countess Cordelia Vorkosigan's pet projects; half the personnel there are oath-sworn to serve her in exchange for their schooling. The Vorkosigan District also includes Tanery Base Shuttleport, though this is some distance from Vorkosigan Surleau. Villages in the mountains include Silvy Vale, Seligrad, and Dos'tovar. The caves in the mountains have played a strategic part in the District's defense more than once: they were used as shelter during Mad Yuri's Rebellion, and during the Cetagandan invasion and the Vordarian Pretendship.

## Kyрил Island

One of the larger islands is Kyril Island, up near the planet's arctic circle, which houses Lazkowski Base -- a winter training base for infantry, referred to as "Camp Permafrost" by those unfortunate enough to have anything to do with it. Camp Permafrost is a frequent destination for officers who have managed to offend someone in the government. It's 500 kilometers from anywhere and anyone, including the nearest women. The water will freeze a swimmer in minutes, the bogs are lethal, and the winds can blow away groundcars. The trainees come and go, but the permanent staff is stuck there.

## Barrayaran Vegetation and Terraforming

@PULLQUOTE: The only Barrayaran vegetation he could identify and name offhand was that to which he was violently allergic.

@PULLQUOTE: *Komarr*

Native Barrayaran vegetation is most often poisonous to Earth-descended animals -- or humans. It is usually various shades of red-brown, ranging from scarlet to chestnut. The original settlers' affection for their new native vegetation can be seen in some of the names that they gave the plants. Bloody puffwad (from the South Continent, on the western slopes of the Black Escarpment); deerslayer vine, skellytum (five meters tall and an ugly brown, with tendrils, though bright red when bonsai'd); love-lies-itching (a low carmine mass); razor-grass (tall and billowing blond); strangle-vines (a major problem for South Continent farmers); scrubwire, chuffgrass, zipweed, damnweed, henbloat, goatbane . . .

For a long time, the only way to terraform the soil on Barrayar was by burning and composting, and there was never enough Earth-life-based compost to both keep old ground fertile and break in new lands. The native poisonous scrub was burned off, and the soil was treated with organic waste of Earth-DNA origin, and Earth stock was planted on it. These days, modern technology has taken great strides forward in producing chemicals and compost to speed the process -- though, in the more backward country areas, the old procedures are still followed. In the Time of Isolation, there was actually a minor war over horse manure (an admirable fertilizer), when a financially pressed Emperor stopped giving away the product of the Imperial cavalry stables and started selling it.

## History

Several hundred years ago, a group of 50,000 colonists -- the Firsters, as they are referred to -- reached Barrayar via a wormhole jump from near Earth. They discovered that the planet could be settled by humans, but would require extensive terraforming: most of the native vegetation was inedible, not to say downright dangerous. This group, composed mainly of Russian, Greek, French, and British settlers, was intended to be the spearhead of Barrayar's colonization. Unfortunately, through some still unexplained gravitational anomaly, the wormhole between Earth and Barrayar closed, trapping the Firsters on the far side, and emitting waves of radiation that bathed the planet. (No explanation has ever been discovered for the wormhole's closing, although the inevitable conspiracy theories were put forward. However, wormholes operate on galactic cycles of time, and such unexpected openings or closings have been known to occur.) The Firsters lowered their priorities to simple survival, cut off from technical and cultural resources.

Thus began the Time of Isolation. Society rapidly degenerated to the feudal level, and science vanished as the technological items present wore out or were destroyed. Terraforming dropped to the most basic level: slash, burn, fertilize, and replant. While the process worked, and still continues today, it was and is slow and tedious. Mutations caused by the radiation from the wormhole's closing began to occur, with children born deformed; there was no proper medicine to deal with it, and the technological level sank too quickly for the colonists to be able to perform genetic corrections. Allergies to the native flora and fauna and extra radiation exposure during the colonization process only exacerbated the matter, and it soon became part of life. Infanticide became an accepted procedure for clearly misshapen children, usually performed by the mother, or by a female relative. "Mutie" became a deadly insult.

@PULLQUOTE: "We must be sure he gets a thorough grounding in the history of the mutagen disasters, so he'll understand where the violence is coming from. How deeply the agony and the fear are embedded,

which drive the visible anxieties, and, ah, as you Betans would see it, bad manners."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Aral Vorkosigan, *Mirror Dance*

The first Counts emerged -- they were in fact accountants, tax collectors for Varadar Tau, a figure of authority by force of arms, and a highly successful bandit. Auditors (p. 00) were appointed to keep track of the flow of the money -- and, ultimately, of the loyalty of the Counts. The Vor caste was also created during the Time of Isolation; a family could only be ennobled to Vor rank by the Emperor's special decree, and usually only in reward for military service. Naturally, the Counts were all Vor.

The Emperor was theoretically the supreme authority, but in practice the Counts held a great deal of independent power, and were able to ignore his orders where necessary. Emperor Dorca Vorbarra the Just was the first Emperor to gain true and absolute control over Barrayar. He is a notable figure in Barrayaran history, both for breaking the power of the independent Counts, and for overseeing the end of the Time of Isolation and the beginning of Barrayar's transition into galactic society. With the aid of his trusted right hand man (or, according to some sources, head thug) Count Pierre "Le Sanguinaire" Vorrutyer, he wiped out the Counts' private armies, enacted legislation to prevent them from raising forces of such a size again, and settled true power in the hands of Emperors to come. Counts were limited to 20 armed followers, known as Armsmen. (Count Pierre "Le Sanguinaire" died during the Cetagandan Invasion, falling in defence of Vorrutyer House in a particularly infamous and costly siege. His name is still a byword in Barrayaran society for barbaric bloodthirstiness.)

@B-BOXHEAD:Lord Vorloupulous and the 2,000 Cooks

@TEXT-BOX:At the end of the Time of Isolation, Emperor Dorca Vorbarra was centralizing the government and breaking the power of the Counts as separate governing entities. Lord Vorloupulous was feuding with several neighbors, and found his new allotment of 20 armsmen quite inadequate for his needs. He therefore hired 2,000 "cooks" and sent them out to carve up his enemies. In an attempt to stick to the letter of the law, he was most ingenious about arming them with butcher knives instead of swords, and so on. The Emperor was not amused, and arrested Vorloupulous for treason -- for which the penalty was, and still is, public exposure and death by starvation. The man with 2,000 cooks was condemned to starve to death in the Great Square of Vorbarr Sultana. (In a comparatively happy Barrayaran ending to the story, the Cetagandans invaded at that point: Vorloupulous' sentence was temporarily suspended so he could fight them, and he died honorably on the battlefield.)

The end of the Time of Isolation came when the Komarrans discovered a wormhole leading from their system to Barrayar. They were, naturally, astonished to discover this lost colony -- and somewhat stunned by what Barrayaran culture had become. Unfortunately, in a betrayal that will never be forgotten by the Barrayarans, the Komarrans then permitted the Cetagandans to move forces through their wormhole and to invade Barrayar.

@B-BOXHEAD:Cetagandan Motivations □ @TEXT-BOX:It has never been fully established precisely why the Cetagandans chose Barrayar as a target, though there are several possible answers. The planet would certainly have *looked* like an easy target, at first glance: isolated from galactic society, little to no technology, only partly colonized, and with no galactic allies. Other authorities point out that Barrayar is in a galactic cul-de-sac, with the only wormhole access being via Komarr: could the Cetagandans have been planning an eventual attack on the *Komarrans*

Or did they have plans to attempt to find and reopen the old wormhole to Earth, if such a thing were feasible? They might even have hoped that it would reopen of its own accord: a wormhole that had closed by itself might open again. There is also the possibility that certain highly-placed geneticists in Cetagandan society -- such as the Star Creche (p. 00) -- had an interest in the Barrayaran genetic stock,



which had descended directly from Earth, and had been conveniently isolated for the last few hundred years. As matters stand, however, the Cetagandans are not interested in discussing the matter, and the generals who were in command of the invasion have all since expiated their failure by death or suicide.

The Cetagandans began with nuclear strikes, taking out several of the recently built shuttleport fields, including the one at Vorkosigan Vashnoi, the capital city of the Vorkosigan District. This casual use of atomic weaponry caused an increased incidence of mutations in unborn Barrayaran children, and the custom of family infanticide continued. It also goes a long way to explain the utter hatred felt by the Barrayarans towards the Cetagandans -- a hatred that largely continues to this day.

The Barrayarans fought back, surprising the Cetagandans with their ability and with their refusal to surrender. They took to the mountains and wilderness, launching commando strikes on the invaders, and practising guerrilla warfare from the shadows. The young Count Piotr Pierre Vorkosigan was a notable figure in the Barrayaran resistance, and proved adept at grasping and mastering modern technology -- at least, as far as it related to killing Cetagandans. An important social change also occurred, which had a major impact on future Barrayaran history: talent, not birth, became the major criterion for entry and promotion in the Service. It was now possible for a non-Vor with suitable abilities and skills to train and serve as an officer, to "launder his origins" to the point that he could be accepted among Vor and in society, and even to achieve high command.

Eventually, the costs became too high for the Cetagandans: after 20 years, they retreated back past Komarr, leaving the Barrayarans in possession of their planet. The invasion embittered Barrayar, convincing the natives that they needed to be able to defend themselves against the rest of the galaxy. It also gave them a technical boost -- the Cetagandans left behind a lot of equipment and infrastructure, which helped Barrayar bootstrap itself up towards higher levels of technology, particularly weapons and spaceflight. Most importantly, Barrayar became aware that it couldn't trust Komarr to guard the wormhole which linked Barrayar to the rest of the universe -- which would later be the cause of another war.

But internal Barrayaran affairs rapidly took precedence. Dorca was succeeded by Emperor Yuri Vorbarra, generally referred to in later years as "Yuri the Mad." Yuri was paranoid, dangerous, and even worse than history paints him. One of the most famous incidents of his career was "Yuri Vorbarra's Massacre", where he sent out death squads against all of his relations one night. In a way, this was the deciding moment of his career: Yuri's niece by his brother Prince Xav (notable for marrying a Betan diplomat) was married to Count Piotr Vorkosigan. While Yuri's men were successful in killing his niece and her two elder children, they failed to kill young Aral Vorkosigan -- and Yuri failed to include any orders to dispose of Count Piotr.

@PULLQUOTE: "I can't imagine what old Yuri thought he was about, to kill my mother and leave my father alive. That was when my father threw his corps behind Ezar Vorbarra, in the civil war that followed."

@PULLQUOTE: -- Aral Vorkosigan, *Shards of Honor*

That night, Count Piotr Vorkosigan and Prince Xav came to see Ezar Vorbarra, who had survived Mad Yuri's Massacre, and who had a claim on the throne. (Whether it was the *best* claim on the throne is arguable -- Aral Vorkosigan and other candidates also had some right to the throne by descent, and there are enough contradictory laws in the Barrayaran canon to raise half a dozen rebellions for the "true heir.") Count Piotr and Prince Xav offered their support to Ezar Vorbarra, and in doing so, began Yuri Vorbarra's Civil War. The fighting ended 2 years later, when Yuri was captured and killed in Vorhartung

Ezar Vorbarra, the new Emperor, had to balance the Vor warrior aristocrats against the rising new men of the bureaucracy. Ezar tried to strengthen the Ministries at the expense of the Counts, but he went too far; the Counts were severely weakened, and the Ministries became corrupt. The Ministry of Political Education grew to become an important political factor, run by Minister Grishnov -- the third most powerful man on Barrayar, after the Emperor and Captain Negri (the head of ImpSec, the Barrayaran secret service.) However, another matter was brewing: the Komarrans were charging 25% tariffs on all trade through their wormholes, crippling Barrayaran trade, and Barrayar had not forgotten that Komarr had let the Cetagandans in to invade. Admiral Aral Vorkosigan led the invasion, which is still studied as a textbook example of military planning. With a minimum of casualties (see **The Solstice Massacre**, p. 00) Komarr was subdued and added to the Barrayaran Imperium.

Unfortunately, Prince Serg, the heir to Emperor Ezar, was insane -- or if not clinically insane, a weak, perverse character, with no notion of political service, encouraged in unhealthy interests by the licentious Admiral Ges Vorrutyer, controlled by Minister Grishnov, and unfit to take power after Ezar's death. (He directed more than one assassination attempt against his own father.) However, he had a son by the Princess Kareen -- a child only a few years old, named Gregor. Ezar was an old, sick man, and knew that he had only a few years left. Even if Serg were removed, Grishnov and his party would slide into the power vacuum left by a regency for Gregor, when Ezar died. It would be necessary to destroy the whole war party, and so thoroughly that it wouldn't rise again for another generation. Ezar took action to secure the Imperium.

The planet Sergyar (though then unnamed) had recently been discovered by Barrayaran Service explorers, via a wormhole jump from Komarr, and linked by another wormhole to Escobar. (While a Betan Astronomical Survey ship, led by Captain Cordelia Naismith, had also discovered the planet, it was claimed by the Barrayarans, by force of arms.) The Emperor Ezar allowed the militarist faction of the Council of Counts and the Ministries, led by Prince Serg and Admiral Vorrutyer, to demand an invasion of Escobar. He concealed his knowledge that the Betans had recently developed a shield technique which would lead to a revolution in space combat -- plasma mirror shields (p. 00) -- which they would supply to Escobar, given their treaty of alliance. Admiral Vorkosigan was his tool and catspaw, sacrificing his personal honor, but goading Prince Serg and the war party into throwing themselves into the operation.

The operation worked perfectly. Prince Serg died nobly in battle, destroyed by reflected fire from the plasma mirror shields. Admiral Vorrutyer was killed on his ship by Sergeant Konstantin Bothari, who cut his throat when the Admiral attempted to rape Captain Cordelia Naismith, a prisoner of war at the time. (It is generally accepted that Cordelia Naismith killed the Admiral: Bothari's guilt was concealed, and he was assigned as an Armsman to Count Piotr Vorkosigan to keep him out of circulation.) The Barrayaran fleet was forced to retreat in disarray, though Admiral Vorkosigan was able to minimize losses. Conveniently orchestrated riots on Barrayar burned down the Ministry of Political Education when the news about the defeat reached Barrayar. When Ezar died, he left Admiral Vorkosigan as Regent for the infant Gregor, with the war party thoroughly crushed -- for the moment.

@B-BOXHEAD:Secrets

@TEXT-BOX:Very few of the actual motives and events behind the Escobar War are generally known. It is a matter of public record that Prince Serg and Admiral Vorrutyer were heroes who perished on the battlefield. The planet Sergyar received its name in glorious memory of the dead Prince. Only a handful of those still alive know the truth -- Count Aral and Countess Cordelia Vorkosigan, and maybe a couple of other high Vor or ImpSec who were implicated in the conspiracy. Some people may doubt the stories of Prince Serg's heroism and virtue. However, it is one of the best kept secrets on Barrayar that Emperor Ezar willingly killed his own son and deliberately permitted the doomed attack on Escobar.

Aral Vorkosigan's Regency did not remain peaceful for long. The next year, Count Vidal Vordarian (a rejected candidate for the Regency) made a bid for power. Although Vordarian failed to capture Gregor, he seized Gregor's mother, the Princess Kareen, and proposed marriage to her -- and then finally claimed the Imperium in his own right, declaring that Gregor had been killed by Regent Aral Vorkosigan. However, Gregor had been delivered safely to Aral Vorkosigan's custody by the dying Captain Negri, and Vorkosigan assembled forces for a counter-attack. The matter was ultimately settled when Cordelia Vorkosigan entered Vorbarr Sultana (under occupation by Vordarian's men) by stealth to rescue her unborn son Miles, still in his uterine replicator, and being held hostage by Vordarian. Cordelia was able to tell Princess Kareen that Gregor was still alive, causing Kareen to attempt to shoot Vordarian. In the ensuing bloodbath, Cordelia had Sergeant Bothari execute Vordarian, and they fled the capital with his head, effectively crushing the Vordarian Pretendership. The young Emperor was given over to Cordelia Vorkosigan to raise until he should be of age to attend public school and military academy. (Naturally, the Countess took advantage of this to expose him to certain Betan and galactic opinions, and give him a broader perspective than the average Vor.)

Three years later came the Komarran Revolt (p. 00): while this was confined to Komarr, the repercussions were felt on Barrayar, in terms of public prejudice towards Komarr, and increased tension from the Conservative party. There was also another dispute with the Cetagandans, referred to as the Second Cetagandan War -- however, the battles were between spaceships or space stations, and didn't involve any of the inhabited planets, or come close to Barrayar. Matters continued more or less on an even keel, barring minor crises, until Gregor reached the age of maturity, and the Regent handed over the reins of power.

@PULLQUOTE:"Between justice and genocide there is, in the long run, no middle ground." -- Aral Vorkosigan

Naturally, a number of powerful men immediately began to attempt to gain Gregor's confidence, and to influence him. This came to a head when Count Vordrozda and Admiral Hessman took advantage of reports that Lord Miles Vorkosigan had accumulated 5,000 mercenaries offplanet (in violation of Vorloupulous' Law), and of a discrepancy of 275,000 marks in Count Aral Vorkosigan's personal accounts. The resulting charges of treason were fortunately disproved by Miles Vorkosigan, and the Dendarii Mercenaries became a Crown Troop.

Shortly afterwards, the Emperor Gregor temporarily abandoned his position, after discovering precisely what sort of person the late Prince Serg had been, and vanished from the ken of ImpSec, ending up in the Hegen Hub. Fortunately, he ran into Miles Vorkosigan, who was now assigned to ImpSec, and who was investigating the area. Between them, the two Vorkosigans dealt with a Cetagandan attack on the planet Vervain: Miles held the Cetagandans off with the Dendarii Mercenaries, while Gregor brought in Barrayaran backup, and then negotiated various new treaties in the Hegen Hub area. The whole affair put a temporary stop to Cetagandan aggression, and improved relations between Barrayar and most of the Hegen Hub.

Matters on Barrayar resumed a more even keel, and the Emperor became more settled in his role, finding an acceptable balance between self-assertion and attention to the advice of his Council. Peace was the general rule, marred only by minor matters handled by ImpSec, such as the *Yarrow* incident.

@B-BOXHEAD:The Yarrow Incident

@TEXT-BOX:A hyperisolationist faction, aligned with Count Vortifrani, intended to pack an old jump-freighter named the *Yarrow* with explosives, and suicide-drop it on the Imperial Residence.

Fortunately, Colonel Haroche of ImpSec discovered the plot: while the details were never revealed to the general populace, it is a textbook case in counter-terrorism, and studied by all new ImpSec analysts.

Even the affair of the broken Komarran soletta (p. 00) did little to disturb Barrayaran tranquility. What *did* come as a shock to the planet was the Emperor falling in love with a well-born Komarran woman -- Dr. Laisa Toscane. Their marriage was the occasion for planet-wide festivities, and many hope that it will augur better relations between Barrayar and Komarr.

## Barrayaran Culture

Barrayar is a patriarchal culture with Victorian warrior values, a world where the Vor are born to serve the Imperium, and where war is the highest career that a man can aspire to. It is a world where women are barred by their gender from most legal oaths, most positions of power, and any hope of military service. The world is still hostile and far from fully terraformed: farmers eke out their lives while slowly transforming the land, seeding it with Earth DNA. The world's culture is being seeded by galactic attitudes, but with the same slowness: the Progressive and Conservative factions clash in the Council of Counts, struggling for the future of the planet.

@PULLQUOTE:"Anything done twice on Barrayar is a tradition."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Simon Illyan, *Memory*

An occasional, though infrequent, factor in Barrayaran politics is the race issue. Although the population is more or less heterogenous, after several hundred years, odd enclaves of minority population groups still exist, such as "backcountry Greekie hicks." There are political separatist parties for each of the minority groups: the Russian faction is led by Count Vortugalov, while the French-speaking party head is Count Vorville. While these parties lack any major political power, the average man in the street has been known to riot over particularly public cases of racial prejudice against them, and cultural enclaves do form in unexpected places -- even in the Service.

Theoretically ultimate power is held by the Emperor, and descends from him to the 60 Counts, who administer their Districts in his name. The Counts meet at the Council of Counts, held at Vorhartung Castle, when called together by the Emperor, or to give approval to a particular Count's choice of heir, or for state occasions. Counts attend dressed either in their house colors, or in parade uniform of red and blue. Votes are settled by a simple majority. The Emperor may cast a vote in his capacity as Count Vorbarra, as well as having the right to veto petitions, or refuse to hear appeals. Interruptions from the balcony are discouraged, but have been known to occur, to great dramatic effect.

@PULLQUOTE:"But it was one of the zoological high points of the Council's varied political history, right up there with the infamous Incendiary Cat Plot."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Count Aral Vorkosigan, *Mirror Dance*

Each Count has the right to run his District as he wants: to a certain degree he can create local laws to suit his wishes, structure his District government in a way that suits him, impose taxes, provide public services, and so forth. One of Count Aral Vorkosigan's reforms, as Regent, was to impose uniform simplified rules for ordinary subjects who wanted to change Districts and switch their oaths to their new District Count. (Since every Count was trying to increase the size of his own District at the expense of his brother Counts, the Regent barely managed to slide this reform past the Council -- though it was a close thing.) Effectively, this law gives every Imperial subject the right to vote with their feet: if they dislike

Districts themselves vary from the more-or-less modern, such as Vorbarr Sultana, to the ones with large backcountry populations, such as the Vorkosigan District. Some provide a good selection of social services, such as medical networks, primary and higher education, and reasonable standards of taxation; others are more restrictive or old-fashioned. The degree of industrialization may also vary widely: some Districts got a boost in this area from the Cetagandans, who built shuttleports and heavy industry during their occupation, and were forced to leave them behind on their departure. Almost all Districts have a shuttleport somewhere in their territory.

### **Rights of Succession**

A Count has the right to choose his heir, who need not necessarily be his eldest living son -- although this is usually the case. The heir must be presented to the Council of Counts formally, and approved by a simple majority vote, to inherit the Countship. (Personal property is a separate matter.) Normally such approval is routine for the eldest son. In the case of a choice between possible heirs after the Count's death, the Council will, again, settle the matter by a majority vote. (A legal precedent often brought up in such situations is that of Count Vortala's horse -- and heir -- Lord Midnight. Young Lord Vortala had fallen out with his father, who promptly disinherited him and managed to maneuver a rump session of the Counts into approving his horse, Midnight, as his heir, claiming that the horse was just as bright and had never betrayed him. Given that the horse's confirmation as heir was later revoked, this precedent is often brought up on *both sides* of such cases.)

A Count's heir speaks with his Voice, and can cast the Count's vote (in the Count's absence) at the Council of Counts, or pronounce justice in the Count's District. A woman cannot be named as a Count's heir, though she may act as guardian (with voting rights) for an infant heir, if there are *no* other male relations to do so. The heir to a Count -- or his eldest child, in the case of an heir not being named -- is addressed as Lord or Lady Vorwhoever, while younger children are titled Lord or Lady (Name) Vorwhoever. (Thus Miles, as the named heir to Count Aral Vorkosigan, is Lord Vorkosigan, while his younger brother Mark is Lord Mark Vorkosigan.)

@B-BOXHEAD: The Imperial Auditors

@TEXT-BOX: The nine Auditors hold a special place in Barrayaran society: they operate as the Emperor's personal agents to keep the Counts in line, or to sort out any other problem that the Emperor may currently have. In all matters pertaining to their investigations, they speak with the Emperor's Voice. Their name comes from the fact that the original Counts were tax collectors -- thus, the Emperor appointed Auditors to police the Counts for him. There are traditionally nine Auditors: usually only eight hold office at any time, with the ninth position being kept open for emergencies, and most often appointed on a case-by-case basis. They literally have authority to command any course of action in an investigation that they want, all the way up to and including forcible fast-penta, arrests, and executions. Auditors can only be removed by the Emperor's own Voice, or by a three-quarters vote of impeachment by the Council of Counts and the Council of Ministers in full joint session assembled. An Auditor's token of office is a heavy golden chain worn around the neck, chased with the Vorbarra arms, with an electronic seal that can open any Barrayaran lock. For an Auditor to investigate something is proof of the Emperor's personal interest -- something likely to unnerve everyone in the neighborhood.

### **Clothing**

Clothing on Barrayar has its own complexities, at least for formal occasions. Counts and their heirs wear full house colors for ceremonial occasions, such as the Emperor's Birthday, or meetings of the Council of Counts. (Known colors include Vorbarra's black and silver, Vordarian's gold and scarlet, Vorkosigan's brown and silver, Vorpatril's dark blue and gold, and Vorharopulos' chartreuse and scarlet.) Proper full

mourning for Vor is black silk, with any military decorations embroidered on in black, although this depth of ceremony is only expected on state occasions. A Vor widow begins her mourning in black, but can then change to dark colors such as gray or dark blue. Basic dress for Vor is trousers, shirt, and jacket for men, and dress and bolero or skirt, blouse and bolero, for women. (Non-Vor wear similar clothing, but not of such good quality.) At balls and parties, it is usual for women to wear flowers in their hair, while men wear their house colors -- or uniform, if they are serving officers.

### Customs and Public Festivals

While there is little religion on Barrayar, there are traditions, and one of the most important of these is burning death-offerings. This is done on the grave of the departed, or the site where he died, by his children or close friends. Most families have a metal brazier and tripod for such occasions. The person performing the rite always burns a lock of his hair, and often adds some juniper bark, a lock of hair from other people concerned, and occasionally other items of significance, such as a document or a piece of cloth. People fast before burning death-offerings: they are often dawn events.

The two main holidays in the Barrayaran year are Winterfair and the Emperor's Birthday. While there may also be celebrations on midsummer day, it doesn't have quite the same degree of importance -- though it acquires more if the Emperor's Birthday is nowhere near the summer, as some sort of party is due. Winterfair is celebrated at midwinter, with parties, balls, fireworks, bonfires, and gifts to friends and family from the semi-mythical "Father Frost." It is customary to wear shades of red and green to Winterfair parties.

The Emperor's Birthday is the traditional end of the fiscal year for each Count's District. However, the Vor are not taxed -- that would imply too subordinate a relationship. Instead, they "give the Emperor a present" -- and hand over a small purse of gold in a pouch with their colors and symbol, as a token. (The actual funds, assessed from each District, are sent by electronic transfer.) After the Counts have ritually handed over their purses of gold (this task is traditionally done by the Count himself, or by the Count's heir) there are more parties, fireworks, dancing, and a great deal of drinking.

### Marriage, Love, and Sex

The time of arranged marriages is (mostly) past, though many of today's younger generation might be horrified to know how many of their parents had their marriages negotiated by *their* parents, and how little love came into it. However, for those people who are old-fashioned, and who respect the old traditions, whether they are Vor or non-Vor, it is still considered proper to hire a **Baba**, or go-between, to arrange matters. (Of course, in these degenerate modern times, either the man *or* the woman can just propose to the would-be spouse outright.) The would-be husband hires the Baba (an elderly woman, experienced in such matters) to present his proposal to his prospective wife's parents, or to her oldest male relative if her parents are dead. The prospective wife may not be aware of the man's interest in her until she is informed of the proposal! While the woman can reject the man's proposal, family pressure may be exerted to force her to accept it. The Baba may be asked to present evidence of the would-be husband's future career prospects, character, and absence of head-lice, and she may have to visit both sides more than once. She may also act as a chaperone, for private meetings between the man and woman. In the event of the woman refusing the man's suit, it's up to the Baba to present the answer diplomatically.

Once the woman has accepted the proposal, matters are put in train for the wedding. Again, the Baba is qualified to arrange all the technical aspects, including finding a location, organizing the guest lists, checking the text of the marriage vows, and so forth. The bride and groom need only show up on the day and repeat the vows.

In some cases, an official betrothal may take place before the wedding. The bride and groom are both escorted by their parents and Seconds, and the go-between stands between the two groups. Certain symbolic gifts are exchanged: money from the bride's parents, food from the groom's, and other items with their roots in old tradition. (It is no longer customary for the bride's mother to present a small blunted knife as pledge of her daughter's genetic cleanliness, as was the case during the Time of Isolation.) The groom's Second then reads the traditional Admonishments to the Bride -- although these days they will probably be somewhat edited from their old-fashioned form. Finally, both bride and groom clasp the go-between's hands, and exchange betrothal vows.

A Barrayaran wedding is a civil procedure, and largely traditional. Although weddings among those of very high rank may have certain preliminaries, such as the groom and his Second ritually fetching the bride from her house, the basic fundamentals are the same in all cases. Groats, the standard Barrayaran grain (often colored), are used to form several patterns on the floor: a small central circle for the marrying couple, surrounded by a star with a point for each of the principal witnesses (parents for both sides, both Seconds, and possibly the couple's liegelords), and a series of concentric rings for guests. The bride and groom's Seconds pour further groats to close the circles after the bride and groom have entered. The couple marry themselves, speaking their vows within the circle, requiring neither priest nor magistrate. (They are no longer required to strip naked to demonstrate they have no hidden mutations, although this procedure is still followed in some backcountry Greek groups.) In practice, a coach -- called, appropriately enough, the Coach -- stands outside the circle and reads out the vows for the couple to repeat. The senior witness then breaks the circle of groats to let the married couple out, and the partying starts. Many people keep a handful of the groats after the wedding, as a souvenir -- or use them to fill the newly married couple's bed.

Childbirth is becoming a less hazardous procedure, as more and more couples have begun to use uterine replicators. However, the poor and the lower middle class are unlikely to be able to afford such a thing, or to have access to hospitals with such facilities: and even among the Vor and Counts, there are still many who believe that natural childbirth is the proper order of things.

A divorce can be obtained by an appeal to the ruling Count of the District in which you live. This may be a mere formality, in a case where both partners want to separate, and when the Count (or his Voice) is prepared to make matters easy -- or it can be an awkward, tangled matter. Any sons from the marriage stay with the father, while any daughters go with the mother. A divorced wife still has rights to her dower properties and goods, but otherwise she is dependent on the generosity of her husband in the settlement, unless the Count adjudicating the matter decides to intervene to her benefit. Both husband and wife are free to marry again, should they so choose.

Although premarital sex is frowned upon, the availability of modern contraceptives (or classical herbal ones, in the case of backcountry villages) means that it happens. It's quite accepted for a dashing young Vor lord to have a string of affairs, a steady mistress, and a romantic history. (A Vor lady can get away with such behavior, if she has sufficient rank or connections, but the reputation she acquires will be *much* more dubious.) A couple who are to be married may well get away with quiet liaisons, assuming that their families haven't arranged for their meetings to be chaperoned. Extra-marital affairs during marriage may cause a scandal, if word gets out, and used to be grounds for a duel among Vor men.

### **Gender Roles on Barrayar**

Most galactics view the position of women on Barrayar with horrified disbelief. Women are legally unable to accept most oaths, or to hold official positions, and cannot under any circumstances join the Service. A woman's rights over her sons extend only so far as her husband, or her male relations (in the

case of widowhood or divorce) permit -- if they want to take her sons away from her, she has *no* legal recourse, short of a personal appeal to the Count of her district. A Countess lacks the powers or rights of a Count: the only situation under which she might exercise such rights would be in the case of a temporary regency for a male heir too young to hold the position. A woman's duties are to preserve the genetic purity of her bloodline, as in the Time of Isolation (though this is admittedly less important these days) and to support her husband and family.

Of course, women have a great deal of unspoken social power in their influence on the men around them. The concept of "guardian of the genome" has, in many cases, broadened to authority over social tradition and custom: if the female Conservatives accept something, such as the Emperor's marriage to a Komarran, the men will often follow suit. The women in a man's family are unlikely to react well if he attempts to exercise custody claims to some male child unreasonably. It is also largely women who network and introduce young people, arrange marriages, and keep up the links between families. However, this doesn't alter the main position of women in Barrayan society: they don't hold the basic power that the men do.

Matters are changing for women: they can obtain education, hold professional positions (scientists, professors, attorneys, teachers) and even leave Barrayar for Komarr or Sergyar, or even further afield. The advent of the uterine replicator is also making changes in a woman's role in society: as its use spreads, and women no longer need to bear children in their own bodies, widespread questions about a woman's role in life will begin to follow. Countess Cordelia Vorkosigan, for one, can't wait to see the results.

A recent galactic innovation which has altered life for Vor society was the ability to choose the sex of one's child. When this reached Barrayar, 20-30 years ago, there was a sudden proliferation of male births at the expense of female births, among the Vor class -- the only people who could really afford it. However, this is now boomeranging with a vengeance: there simply aren't enough Vor women around for all the Vor men to marry. (This doesn't even count the Vor women who are marrying galactics, or non-Vor men who've managed to rise in status, thus reducing the matrimonially available population even further.) It remains to be seen whether the Emperor's example will set off a flurry of Barrayan-Komarran marriages.

## Join The Service

The Service comprises the military forces of Barrayar, from its space warships to its aircraft and sea patrol, down to the foot infantry and local constabulary. It also includes the civil service (though this gains rather less respect than the military branches) and extends into the government. Any physically capable man can join the Service. For many people born into the underclass, such as the children of prostitutes, criminals, and peasants, it can be a literal escape to paradise. In the Service, advancement is through merit, and when a man finally leaves -- unless he's physically disabled or has acquired a criminal record -- he does so with an honorable reputation, and knowing that he has achieved the pinnacle of Barrayan manhood. It's a tough life, and quite possibly lethal for those serving on the front lines, but it's the life that a lot of Barrayan children idolize and dream about as they grow up. Soldiers are, after all, *real* men -- scientists, politicians, and merchants don't have quite the same worth or dignity. Although this attitude is changing in more recent times, it still largely persists. Officer's training is felt in many circles to be the only *proper* path for a young Vor, or for an upwardly-mobile young man. Thousands of young men throng the recruiting offices every year, lying about their age in order to sign up and join the Service.

A comparatively recent change in Service procedures means that Komarrans can now serve in the Barrayan forces, both as enlisted men and as officers. Naturally, the first few to do so have suffered from a certain amount of prejudice, but the example set by men like Duv Galeni (p. 00) has done a great



deal to open the way for others. Sergyarans are eligible to join the Service, but most of the inhabitants of that planet have gone there in order to settle and terraform, rather than for a career in the military. Another comparatively recent change -- a mere 27 years ago -- took place when the Regent Aral Vorkosigan and the General Staff updated the army regulations. Many of the old discipline parades and lead-lined hoses are now things of the past.

### **Advancement**

Any man who can pass the physical, and who can convince the recruiter that he's over 18, can sign up as an enlisted man. Promotion is through merit, most of the time. (While there are occasional cases of favoritism, such NCOs rarely last long in the field. It is not unknown for unpopular officers to be found dead after a battle, with the enemy having managed to somehow target the back of their head.) Another aspect of experience is length of service: while this does not strictly equate to rank, a 20-year-man, twice-20-years, or even a three-times-20-year-man will have significant authority and influence among his peers. (He may also be able to look forward to a comfortable career as a Count's Armsman or a private guard after leaving the Service.)

All officers start off as ensigns, freshly out of one of the Service Academies, and hoping for assignment to ship duty -- although most of them end up posted planetside, by sheer weight of numbers. Most ensigns get promotion to a lieutenancy, sooner or later, unless they are truly unfit for the position. Officers can dream of the dizzy heights of generalships, colonelships, admiralships -- or maybe just comfortable positions as majors or captains, with postings somewhere interesting, and a generous budget. More practically, non-Vor officers can be sure that whatever else may happen, they will now have guaranteed status in society, and may even hope to marry into Vor families.

@B-BOXHEAD: Military Academy

@TEXT-BOX: There are numerous military academies on Barrayar, but the most famous and prestigious -- and the hardest to get into -- is the Imperial Military Academy. There is a week's worth of eliminatory examinations for would-be officers: 5 days of written and oral exams, and 2 days of physical exams (including a 100-kilometer run). The standard training period is 3 years. While the youngest age at which an ensign can enter the Academy is 17, there is technically no upper limit: any man with sufficient ability and talent can apply, and may well get in. (Duv Galeni (p. 00) is a good example of this: he was a grown man, with a Ph.D and a possible faculty position at the Imperial University at Vorbarr Sultana, but he gave it up in order to apply to the Academy.) Ensigns find out that they haven't left their studies behind them: they are trained in a wide variety of subjects, including 5-space math, xenobotany, geology, terrain evaluation, aviation weather, chemical and biological warfare, and a lot more . . . They also, naturally, get full training in the use of weapons, the handling of groundcars and lightflyers, and everything which the upper ranks think could be of use to them. (The ensigns may disagree on this point.) One lecture which is compulsory for the final-year candidates is the famous seminar -- part of the Academy's standard course, as ordered by the Regent Aral Vorkosigan, and frequently delivered by him in person -- on what exactly constitutes a criminal order, and when and how to disobey them. It includes vid evidence from various historical test cases, including the infamous Solstice Massacre (p. 00) and tends to leave the students distracted for weeks afterward.

### **Rank**

Admirals and vice-admirals usually have an area of command that involves spaceships, while generals and colonels are planet-based. It is possible for officers to jump from one "track" to another: an ensign may earn a lieutenancy in space, then be assigned to a captaincy with ground-based forces, rise to a majorship in the same area, and then transferred back and given the captaincy of his own ship on the naval track. Some of the confusion of this system can be blamed on the Barrayarans having to rapidly

assemble a spacefaring navy and a system of rank to go with it, while already having an established ground-based army, after the Cetagandan invasion. Outsiders frequently have trouble understanding the intricacy of the Barrayaran Service officer grades. (Fortunately, the Political Officers of the later years of Emperor Ezar, serving the Ministry of Political Education, are no longer part of the system.)

@PULLQUOTE:"I could take over the universe with this army if I could ever get all their weapons pointed in the same direction."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Aral Vorkosigan, *Shards of Honor*

Unusual juxtapositions of rank can exist inside subsidiary organizations such as ImpSec -- which has staff from both the army and navy tracks -- where the Head of ImpSec has authority over all agents, whatever their rank. This meant that during the tenures of Captain Negri and Captain Illyan, admirals and colonels were reporting to a mere captain . . .

((table here))

### **Navy Ranks Army Ranks**

Admiral General

Vice-Admiral Colonel

Commodore Major

Captain Captain

Commander

Lieutenant Lieutenant

Ensign Ensign

Sergeant Sergeant

Corporal Corporal

Enlisted Man Enlisted Man

((end table))

The ordinary Barrayaran Service uniform is a plain shade of green, with black boots. Dress uniform is a more elegant form of the same uniform, also in green, with riding boots (a hangover of the period when horse cavalry was used.) Parade uniform is scarlet and blue. Academy cadets wear white cloth rectangles on their collars: ensigns wear light blue plastic rectangles, lieutenants wear red rectangles, captains wear dark blue. Officers in higher positions have more exotic marks of rank. Members of ImpSec wear silver Eye-of-Horus pins on their collars (generally referred to as "ImpSec eyes" or "silver eyes"), while officers serving in Ops have bronze collar pins.

### **Social Recognition**

On Barrayar, everyone respects a soldier, and even an enemy soldier will receive a level of recognition

and acceptance that an enemy civilian couldn't hope to match. By the converse argument, a fit man is liable to attract curiosity and disdain from more old-fashioned Vor (or even non-Vor) because he's *not* in the Service. While it may be true that the economy needs scientists, farmers, professionals, clerks, and other such trades, real men -- on Barrayar -- are soldiers. That is how it's been for the last few hundred years, and even under the progressive Emperor Gregor, change is slow to arrive.

## Imperial Security

Imperial Security -- or, more commonly, ImpSec -- is one of the most dreaded and most respected organizations on Barrayar. The Head of ImpSec (currently General Guy Allegre, previously Captain Simon Illyan) reports directly to the Emperor, and is responsible for assembling and filtering information to give the Emperor an accurate picture of the Imperium's current status and needs. The Emperor's safety is ImpSec's sworn duty, and every ImpSec man knows it to be his ultimate concern. All ImpSec agents are issued silver Eye-of-Horus pins for their collar: each soldier only gets one set, with his name and serial number engraved on the back. They are as hard to counterfeit as money, and more powerful.

There are several subsidiary divisions of ImpSec. Domestic Affairs tracks would-be treason plots and antigovernment groups, strictly on the Barrayaran side. Galactic Affairs handles matters elsewhere in the galaxy, while Komarran Affairs (headed by Commodore Duv Galeni) and Sergyaran Affairs (headed by Colonel Olshansky) deal with the other Barrayaran planets. On Cetaganda, Lord Vorreedi (actually a full ImpSec colonel) is the local chief of ImpSec, although on the embassy records he is listed as a protocol officer. ImpSec Communications is responsible for all Imperial Couriers: they report to Commodore Boothe, the head of ImpSec Communications, who is stationed on Komarr. Other departments include Cryptography, Finance, Forensics, Housekeeping and Physical Plant, and Analysis.

ImpSec analysts form the Analysis department, though they may be found anywhere in the building, and assigned to any investigation. The analysts tend not to have a great deal of respect for anyone whose measured IQ is lower than their own, which includes most of the rest of the Imperial Service. Inside ImpSec HQ, they even have a recognizable salute: a vague wave of two fingers in the general vicinity of one's temple. However, they compensate for their lack of respect for authority and of hierarchy by being very, very good at their job. (Outside ImpSec HQ, they behave -- and salute -- appropriately for officers of their rank.) The analysts filter and process information, looking for patterns -- or changes in patterns --

@PULLQUOTE: The driver took Miles past the daunting facade, and around to the discreet side entrance reserved for couriers, spies, informers, analysts, secretaries, janitors, and others with real business in the place.

@PULLQUOTE:-- *Memory*

ImpSec Headquarters (or ImpSec HQ, or Cockroach Central to insiders) is one of the ugliest buildings in Vorbarr Sultana. Tourists from the backcountry, who might otherwise have been expected to avoid the place, drive by just to look at it. The building is windowless, a vast utilitarian concrete block with enormous gates and doors, with stylized granite monsters carved in low relief on the door lintels. There is a big main entrance with oversized steps, but everyone actually goes in through a little door round at the left end on the ground level.

Inside the entrance, there is a security check area, where IDs are checked, and where coats are left in the cloakroom. (Everyone leaves their coats, except the Emperor or his Auditors.) Inside, the building is a maze of corridors and lift-tubes: outsiders can expect to be assigned an escort, for purposes of security and navigation. The area where the analysts work is nothing *but* long, bare corridors lined with tiny,

cubicle-like rooms, with frequent coffee dispensers. A clinic and forensic laboratories occupy a full floor of ImpSec HQ. There is also an infirmary, small but complete, with a couple of examining rooms, private rooms, cells for treating prisoners and guarded witnesses, a surgery, and an interrogation chemistry laboratory. Secured apartments are available for housing protected witnesses. The new detention area (since the old dungeon cells are now used for different purposes) is located in an inner quadrant of the second floor.

In the sub-sub-basement are the Evidence Rooms, occupying the chambers of the old prison block. (While Mad Emperor Yuri used the dungeons freely, Emperor Ezar used them sparingly for political prisoners: under Regent Aral Vorkosigan, they were converted into evidence storage rooms.) These rooms contain all the most interesting items and artifacts which ImpSec has collected in the course of its many investigations. They are packed full of documentation, weapons, biological curios (such as viruses), drugs, and even more bizarre items -- things confiscated from the evil and the unlucky, awaiting prosecutions, further investigations, or reclassification and disposal. All visitors have a palm and retina scan taken at the entrance, and have the date and time of their visit recorded. A physical inventory of all contents is taken once a month: the process takes a week. (It's not a popular chore, and is rotated among the regular staff.)

The entire building was designed by a paranoid -- and *well* designed -- and has had the benefit of security-conscious ImpSec heads ever since. Many of the walls and floors are steel-reinforced. Every room in ImpSec HQ has its own biolab grade filtration system, in addition to the central unit which filters and flash-cooks all returning air to destroy possible poison gases or microbes, and distills all water with the spare heat generated. Even the janitorial staff is made up of serving soldiers, veterans of at least 10 years standing. Vid monitors view all the ducts and piping. The computer file system is super-secure, and data can't be transferred out of it except through a coded filter-cable that must be physically attached. This means that the internal system can't be connected to any external system for a data dump, except by such a cable -- which requires due authorization and permissions.

## **Non-Vor Characters**

The military Vor caste has ruled Barrayar for hundreds of years; Vor have many privileges denied to others. A quick check of the Barrayaran population will show that the non-Vor vastly outnumber the Vor. These days, this distinction is coming to mean less than it once did. A non-Vor man can raise his status through the Service, and though he will never be in the Council of Counts, he can hope for an admiralty or generalcy, or even a Ministry and the Emperor's ear. In the current political climate, scientists, industrialists, academics, and financiers can also achieve high status and personal power, even though the old Vor and the Conservatives may consider them upstarts. This trend in society is likely to continue: as more non-Vor reach the higher levels of society, and fill the higher positions in the army, Barrayar may be forced to review certain of its key assumptions. While it is possible for the Emperor to declare a person Vor, it hasn't been done for centuries.

Female non-Vor can have a career of their own, even though they are legally unable to take certain oaths by reason of their gender. Even though they are unlikely to reach the heights of male non-Vor, given Barrayaran society, they can be self-supporting, and even prestigious in their field. It is also possible for female non-Vor to marry into Vor society -- something that is becoming more common these days, given the lack of Vor women of marriageable age (p. 00). While non-Vor men can marry Vor women, the woman takes her husband's name: although the married couple may still move in upper-class society, it doesn't have the same social lift for a non-Vor man as it would do for a woman.

## **What It Means To Be Vor**

Historically, the Vor are a warrior caste, their ancestors ennobled by some past Emperor for excellence or zeal on the field of battle. In practical terms, the Vor are the "upper class" of Barrayaran society -- all Counts are Vor, and a high proportion of ranking military officers or Ministers are Vor. The Vor have been described in certain high-flown laws and histories as "The Sinews of the Imperium, the Emperor's Right Arm."

@B-BOXHEAD:Known Counts and Vor Names

@TEXT-BOX:Counts who have been named in the books include: Vorbarra (the Imperial line), Voraronberg, Vorbohn, Vorbretten, Vordarian, Vordrozda, Vorfolse, Vorgarin, Vorgustafson, Vorhalas, Vorharopulos, Vorhovis, Vorinnis, Vorkeres, Vorkosigan, Vorlakail, Vorlightly, Vormoncrief, Vormuir, Vormurtos, Vorob'yev, Vorpatril, Vorreedi, Vorrutyer, Vorsmythe, Vortaine, Vortala, Vortienne, Vortifrani, Vortugalov, Vorvayne, Vorville, Vorvolk, Vorwyn.

@TEXT-BOX:Vor (but non-Count) names which have occurred in the books include: Vorberg, Vorgier, Vorgorov, Vorkalloner, Vorlaisner, Vorlakial, Vorparadijs, Vorsoisson, Vortashpula, Vorthys, Vortorren, Vorvane, Vorventa, Vorzohn.

Socially, things have changed: strictures on the Vor class are becoming less absolute, and some of the traditional Vor obligations are being forgotten with them. Arranged marriages, common in Aral Vorkosigan's youth 50 years ago, are no longer the rule -- although many of the more old-fashioned families still feel it proper to send a Baba (p. 00) to negotiate details.) Certainly it is no longer the case that, as in the Time of Isolation, a man taking a Vor woman as lover is regarded as stealing her honor -- or that a Vor woman is expected to choose suicide before rape, or "guard the genome" by killing imperfect babies at birth.

@PULLQUOTE:"I'm glad for the sake of the Vor that you haven't just abandoned your father's liegeman. There's not many of us left who care enough to, enough to . . . I don't know how to say it."

@PULLQUOTE:"Who care enough to make Vor real," suggested Miles.

@PULLQUOTE:"Yes," said Vorberg gratefully. "That's right."

@PULLQUOTE:-- *Memory*

The obligations of the Vor still exist, however, and are remembered by those Vor who believe in honor, duty, and responsibility. A true Vor -- male or female -- remembers the duty owed to the Emperor, to family, and to liegemen, and preserves certain standards of courage, decorum, and style. With modern changes in society, some Vor families have found excuses to forget these things, casting them aside along with other traditions that have been discarded for better reason. They call the old codes of behavior old-fashioned (which is true, in some cases) and are quick to forget them: some take up more modern galactic principles, while others fail to adopt any guiding principle at all. However, many Vor remember, and still serve as their forefathers did. Ideally, the Vor provide backbone and structure to the Imperium, preserving chains of responsibility and duty, and prepared to sacrifice themselves if necessary for the good of Barrayar.

## The Emperor Gregor

The Emperor is a blend of traditional Barrayar and modern galactic: although he has lived most of his life on Barrayar, and went through the standard schools and military academy, he is also a product of Betan psychology, via Cordelia Vorkosigan, his guardian from an early age. He makes no secret of favoring the Progressive Party, although he also works to keep the Conservatives reasonably happy and cooperative,

and he certainly wants to keep the best traditions of Barrayar. In this modern age, galactic innovations and new attitudes are entering Barrayar through every nook and cranny. Gregor has to persuade his Council -- and his planet -- to accept the better ones, while at the same time ensuring that the more dangerous ones don't cause too much damage. If a Count uses new galactic fertilizers which may give a faster growth rate, but have consequences in terms of pollution or a later drop in fertility, it's up to Gregor (or those he appoints to the job) to find a legal way of handling the Count -- or the consequences.

@PULLQUOTE:Gregor had grown so neutral as to seem almost gray. *So, that's what rage looks like on him.*

@PULLQUOTE:-- *Memory*

Gregor has been through as much psychological trauma as could be wished on anybody -- an insane father from whom he was separated at an early age, a rebellion which killed his mother when he was only four, the discovery of his father's madness and possible hereditary insanity, and all the stress of ruling the Imperium. His marriage to an off-planet woman, besides being a true love match, was also prompted by an urge to avoid further Vor intermarriage and interbreeding. He is a genuine progressive, and is prepared to tolerate such innovations as Lady Donna Vorrutyer's recent physical transformation (on Beta Colony) into the male Lord Dono Vorrutyer, in order to claim the title of Count Vorrutyer. He is a tall, quiet man with the traditional Vor dark hair and eyes: his catchphrase, known very well to all who work closely with him, is, "Let's see what happens." He is an intelligent, decisive ruler, and wields near-absolute power with a gentle but precise touch.

## Honor and Obligation

On Barrayar, bonds of honor bind liegelord and liegeman together in a chain of obligation, and form the bedrock of society. The most basic type of oath, that of armsman simple, expresses a concept which occurs throughout: the liegeman offers loyalty and service, the liegelord offers protection and patronage. Ultimately, this goes all the way to the top of Barrayaran society, to where the Counts place their hands between the Emperor's, and swear allegiance to him. Barrayar holds together for as long as these chains of obligation remain intact -- and if they fail, then the planet's social structure comes apart. Barrayar was -- and still is -- a place where a man's word on his name is accepted as truth, and where Counts give justice in return for service. Instead of a system of laws and constitution, there is a structure of honor and obligation, which both high and low can depend upon.

Many oath-bound relationships are an accepted part of Barrayaran society. An armsman takes oath to his Count; a Count to his Emperor; and every citizen of a Count's District has an oath of loyalty to the Count of that District. The most simple oath is that of armsman to liegelord, where the armsman swears loyalty to the Count. This binds the armsman to serve the Count's interest and obey his every order: tradition involves the Count's right to strike off his liegeman's head if disobeyed in the heat of battle, though such a situation -- or attitude -- is unlikely these days. The armsman must also ask permission for such life-changing activities as marriage. This relationship can never be totally dissolved, though it can be shifted to another family member (for instance, the armsman could be reassigned to the Count's son or wife) or temporarily placed in abeyance, if the armsman wishes to resign and raise a family. In return, the liegelord owes a duty of protection, justice, and support.

But is there a place for honor -- whether the character is Vor or non-Vor -- in a changing world, where new laws and new scientific discoveries threaten to make old customs seem unnecessary, or even futile? Those conservatives who want to see Barrayar remain as it has always been, or as they remember it always having been, cling desperately to the old structures, refusing to countenance any change in them. Sometimes, however, they betray the spirit of honor while holding firm to their word . . .

Others seize on new fragments of technology and loopholes in both law and morality, looking for advantage for themselves. Count Vormuir recently attempted to increase the female population of his District, with the help of spare female ovarian tissue samples from the local clinic, his own sperm, and a lot of uterine replicators. While this didn't contravene any Barrayaran law, and there was no related precedent to judge it either legal or illegal, it was clearly against the spirit of a liegeland's relationship with his liegemen. (In the end, he was ordered by Imperial fiat to pay dowries for every single female child, as county-palatine bastards. It is unlikely that he or any other Count will try that trick in the near future.)

But the true substructure of Barrayar, both Vor and non-Vor, is the network of people who still hold true to the obligations which they were born into, or which they have acquired. These people -- like the Emperor Gregor, or Lord Miles Vorkosigan, or the peasants of places like Silvy Dale in the Vorkosigan district -- work to try to incorporate the new advances and the corresponding societal checks and balances, without losing the best aspects of the old. They imagine a Barrayar with modern technology, schooling, life outside the military (and maybe even some advances for women) but with each man still having his own honor, and able to give his name's word -- and mean it. They want a Barrayar where mutual obligation will help support society, and where it means improving the quality of life for all those fealty-bound to you. A world where the words honor and obligation still mean something, and always will.

## Barrayaran Characters

The most obvious distinction for a Barrayaran character is whether he is Vor or non-Vor. Vor men and women will have Status of at least 3, and should take the disadvantage Code of Honor (Vor) (p. 00), or have a correspondingly bad Reputation. Non-Vor need not take the disadvantage, but will have a lower Status, unless they've got some Military Rank to make up for it. Women will all suffer from the 10-point *cannot* take Military Rank in the Service as an advantage. (Any woman taking Military Rank in an off-world group will need an Unusual Background to explain her history.) Almost any career is feasible, given Barrayar's current expansion: Barrayaran students may also be found at many centers of excellence on other planets, such as Beta Colony and Escobar.

Many older Barrayarans suffer from Intolerance (Cetagandans), and backcountry immigrants may be Primitive (though not more than 10 points worth). Fanaticism (Barrayar) and Overconfidence are common among officers in the Service -- particularly young ones. However, Longevity is a frequent advantage among Barrayarans, possibly a result of the cruel Darwinian selection of the Time of Isolation.

## Changing Opportunities

@PULLQUOTE: "The Cetagandans are quiescent for the first time in a decade. Pol is not aggressive, and anyway, we're in good odor in the whole Hegen Hub these days. Jackson's Whole is nasty enough, but they're too disunited to be a military threat at this distance. The worst menace in the neighborhood is us, and Sergyar is absorbing *our* energies . . ."

@PULLQUOTE: -- Miles Vorkosigan, *Memory*

Even if Barrayar is not currently expanding militarily, it is expanding peacefully across Sergyar, and across its own South Continent. Enthusiastic settlers and terraformers are needed -- as are miners, surveyors, bureaucrats to manage them, scientists to analyze the results, the Service to guard them all, and ImpSec to report back to the Emperor. Gregor is trying to keep things this way: he wants peace and peaceful change, rather than the wars of previous generations. He is supported in this by his Auditors,

and by the Progressives, and resisted by the isolationists and Conservatives (currently headed by Count Boriz Vormoncrief, after the fall of Count Vortifrani).

At present, Barrayar offers more opportunities to young careerists than in any previous period. The Service still have a role in space actions against pirates, or against offensives by other powers -- such as the Cetagandans -- and in the administration of Barrayar. ImpSec is busier than ever. Science is blossoming on Barrayar: even though it still doesn't produce scientists of the quality of Beta Colony or Escobar, institutions are being founded and improved which may produce such scientists in later generations, and young students are being encouraged to gain a galactic education, and to return to help Barrayar with their knowledge. Industrialization proceeds apace: new monorails are needed to improve transport across the planet, new road systems to handle the increased traffic in groundcars, new factories and power plants to help the more remote areas of Barrayar emerge from the peasant farming level. Women can get as good an education as any man (apart from in military areas) and can hold professional jobs; even if her legal rights are limited, a woman can hope, these days, to find a husband who will respect her as an equal, and treat her as such. Barrayar is moving towards a future that will be profoundly different from the centuries of the Time of Isolation: it is up to the people alive today to decide what that future will be.

## **Komarr**

Komarr is the trade gateway to the Barrayaran Imperium. Proud owner of six wormholes, the planet itself is a cold, near-airless lump of rock whose ecosystem is barely established, and needs further centuries of terraforming before any human beings can live outside its domes. A hexagonal soletta in orbit around the planet, consisting of six huge solar mirrors surrounding a central one, provides additional solar power and heat. (It is to be doubled in size soon, as a gift to the people of Komarr to commemorate the wedding of the Emperor Gregor and Dr Laisa Toscane.)

Komarr is part of the Barrayaran Imperium, by conquest. Shortly after the rediscovery of a route to Barrayar (ending the Time of Isolation), the Komarran oligarchs took a bribe from the Cetagandan Empire to allow a Cetagandan invasion of Barrayar. When the Barrayarans had finished throwing the Cetagandans off their planet, they invaded and conquered Komarr in order to protect their gateway to the rest of the galaxy. The conquest of Komarr made Barrayar a galactic power. Now, 36 years later, Komarrans and Barrayarans have intermarried, much of the civil administration has passed back into Komarran hands, Barrayaran warships protect Komarran trade fleets, and most Komarrans are, if not wildly enthusiastic about the situation, resigned to it -- and even, occasionally, happy with it. While the odd rebel or conspiracy may occur, things are mostly stable, most of the time.

## **Geography & Climate**

Since the atmosphere of Komarr is not yet capable of supporting life, the planet is studded with transparent domes, their geometric symmetries marred by the random and unmatching spurts of architectural improvement added over the last 400 years. The planet is divided into Sectors, neat geometric slices equally dividing the globe. Each Sector contains a domed city, and may also have several smaller domes for terraforming work. The main city in each Sector has the same name as the Sector (Serifosa City in Serifosa Sector, for instance.) Known Sectors include Solstice (home of the planetary capital Solstice City, Solstice University, and the Imperial Science Institute), Equinox, and Serifosa (Serifosa City is known for being one of the least politically active Domes.) A city is also often referred to as a Dome, by locals: thus Serifosa City may also be called Serifosa Dome, or simply Serifosa, if the context of City rather than Sector is obvious.



The atmosphere of Komarr is, quite literally, unbreathable -- for the moment. The air has too high a proportion of carbon dioxide, too low a proportion of oxygen, and several poisonous trace elements. In 400 years or so, it may be safe to go outside the domes without breath masks, but for the moment they are a necessity. There are a number of lakes on the south of the planet, the result of directed low-impact ice comet crashes by the earliest Komarrans, who needed more water for terraforming. (The process was eventually stopped, partly because such comets were needed to supply water and volatiles to the orbital and wormhole stations, and partly because of the early settlers' justified fears of poorly controlled trajectories.) For the moment, the highest forms of vegetation outside the Komarran domes are peat bogs, and weeds (in areas where the domes release waste heat.) It will probably be centuries before the oxygen and heat levels rise high enough to allow trees. The gravity is almost point-nine-standard, close enough to the norm to be comfortable for most visitors.

What with space stations and with the soletta, the space around Komarr is quite busy. The soletta has a regular six-man crew, and hosts occasional VIP tours. It is the greatest technical achievement of the early Komarrans (after the domes), and Admiral Vorkosigan's capture of it during the conquest of Komarr had a huge psychological impact on the Komarrans. It has only recently been returned to Komarran civilian control. A dozen more deep-space stations orbit the planet, three more orbit the star, while each of the six wormhole exits has both a military and a commercial station. The wormholes include routes to Barrayar, Sergyar (which gives onto the Escobar nexus), Pol (which allows access to the Hegel Hub), and Rho Ceta (and from there to the Cetagandan Empire). However, one of the wormholes is sadly unprofitable: while it is navigable, there are no known inhabitable planets or economically recoverable system resources within range of its exit point.

### **In The Domes**

The domes are transparent, to let in free solar energy: this means, given the current lack of cloud cover, that the Komarrans can always see the stars by night, and the sun and soletta by day. Actual living space tends to be on the minimal side, with only the wealthy -- or the oligarchy -- able to own large rooms and apartments, but there are wide public parks, and small woodlands. Of course, these also help contribute to the terraforming and the nascent ecosystem, as do the market gardens (Serifosa's are among Komarr's best) which provide a wide variety of vegetables, fruits, and flowers.

Vent shafts across the domes take in Komarr's air, filter out the excess carbon dioxide and trace poisons, leave the nitrogen, and concentrate the oxygen to a humanly-breathable atmosphere. There is a pressure differential between the interior and exterior of the dome, but not as dramatic as air-to-vacuum: some atmosphere would be lost if a hole were broken in the dome wall, but the dome itself would not be significantly endangered. The Domes all have their own civilian security forces, which are independent of Barrayaran ImpSec, though can be required to cooperate with it if necessary. (The reverse, sadly for Dome Security, is not true.) The standard title for a base-level Security worker is "Group Patroller."

The usual form of transport inside the dome is bubble-cars. These are hired from public stations: a traveler programs in his required destination, and the Dome computer network automatically takes him there by the fastest route. At certain times of day, on certain routes, the system gets overloaded, and can be delayed from 20 to 40 minutes. The government is currently attempting to compensate for this by a "Share The Ride" campaign. Local political groups disagree about how best to resolve the problems. The current main proposals -- to shorten the safety margins between cars, build more routes, or ration access -- have been under debate for the last 5 years. Transport outside the domes is by private lightflyers (which

Over time, the Domes have developed their own interior ecologies, despite the best efforts of Patrollers. Most notable among the feral animals are the wild rats, hamsters, and gerbils which live in the Dome tunnels, and which children catch for pets. (There are also numerous varieties of roaches, but these are less appealing.) In Equinox Dome, there are also wild cockatoos -- a couple of pairs escaped, or were let loose, and a breeding population has now formed. The sanitation crews would very much like to get rid of them, but the Dome shareholders voted them down.

## History

Komarr was discovered approximately 400 years ago: while it was not especially promising, it was the best candidate for terraforming near the system's wormholes. Its near-standard gravity, plentiful supply of gaseous nitrogen, and sufficient amount of water-ice made it a feasible project, rather than a near-impossible one. The early Komarrans built the domes, crashed a number of ice asteroids into the planet to provide more water, built the soletta, and began the long, slow process of terraforming. They also -- and more essentially to galactic trade and exploration -- built the space stations next to the wormholes, and began charging a 25% cut on all passage. A number of wealthy and powerful families formed an oligarchy, which provided the ruling Council.

Nearly a century ago, fresh explorations of one of the Komarran wormholes led to the rediscovery of Barrayar. The lost colony, mired for centuries in its Time of Isolation, was found at the end of a complex multijump route entirely different from the one through which it had originally been settled. Shortly after this, Komarr granted the ghem-lords of Cetaganda right of passage through their wormholes to Barrayar, in exchange for massive trade concessions throughout the Cetagandan Empire, and a slice of the projected profits of the conquest.

A relatively short while after *that* came the Barrayaran invasion of Komarr, organized and led by Admiral Aral Vorkosigan. It was a textbook case, and is frequently cited as such in military histories. Komarr had a small population, all concentrated in the Domes: there were no places for guerrillas to fall back and regroup. Komarr had no allies -- their 25% tariffs had seen to that. Admiral Vorkosigan let it be known that Barrayar would be dropping all tariffs to 15%, resulting in galactic support for Barrayar, or at least non-interference in the war. Komarr had no heavy industry, apart from what was required for the terraforming: their defense forces consisted mostly of underpaid mercenaries, who were quick enough to desert when they had the opportunity. Komarr fell to Barrayar, and became a subject world of the Barrayaran Imperium.

@B-BOXHEAD: The Solstice Massacre □ @TEXT-BOX: One of the most bitterly remembered events of Barrayar's conquest of Komarr is what is known as the Solstice Massacre. 200 Komarran Counsellors, the then-ruling senate, had surrendered on terms, but were gunned down together in a gymnasium in Solstice, the capital of Komarr. The killings were performed by Barrayaran Security forces under the command of Admiral Vorkosigan, leading to his nickname of "the Butcher of Komarr." (The truth of the matter is that the Admiral's Political Officer ordered the massacre -- against Vorkosigan's wishes -- and that Vorkosigan later killed the man with his own hands.) There is a Massacre Shrine in Solstice, on the site of the gymnasium.

In the fourth year of Aral Vorkosigan's Regency of Barrayar, a minor revolution took place on Komarr. The Komarran Revolt was not an overly violent revolution (though parts were certainly bloody), but it lasted for several years, and caused the breakdown or closing of several public sector services. Solstice University in particular was shut down for 2 years, possibly due to the large number of students who were involved. (About half the younger population of Komarr was part of some student protest or revolutionary group then, and have it on their records.) The Revolt was treated as a civil crime by Regent

Vorkosigan, not as an act of war: there was an amnesty afterwards, and a general loyalty oath. However, despite the amnesty, organizations such as the Imperial Science Institute have been known to refuse jobs to people involved in the Revolt. Ser Galen (p. 00) was involved in the Revolt, as was his son Duv Galeni.

The two most recent major events for Komarr are the accident to the great soletta -- which damaged four of the seven mirrors -- and the marriage of Laisa Toscane to Emperor Gregor Vorbarra of Barrayar. Laisa Toscane is the principal heiress of *the* Toscane family. The Toscanes were one of the families to begin cooperating with the Barrayaran conquerors sooner rather than later, and are extremely wealthy, owning a major transshipping concern. Some Komarrans object to the marriage on idealistic or political grounds, while others find it romantic. But the general view is that it's sharp business practice on the Emperor's part, which, coming from a Komarran, is a warm compliment.

## **Komarran Culture**

Komarrans have two priorities: trade and terraforming. The first provides the money for the second. While not as unremittingly mercenary as Jackson's Whole, Komarr is oriented around money -- even the lowest-paid citizen has shares in the trade fleets, and the ruling oligarchy are unabashedly the wealthiest families. There are no specific gender roles on Komarr, which can come as quite a shock to Barrayaran female visitors -- indeed, half of the Barrayaran women who come to study on Komarr never return to Barrayar. Male and female Komarrans are addressed as Ser and Madame respectively.

As a shareholding economy, much of Komarran society is structured in terms of committees and the division of shares. Even a revolutionary conspiracy may have its course decided by the person who is judged to hold the most "stock" in it. Barrayarans in particular, being used to a more feudal system of authority, can find this rather unsettling.

@PULLQUOTE:"Without the value-added, from our trade, labor, transport, banking, and remanufacturing, Komarr would dwindle again to the desperate subsistence -- and less-than-subsistence -- level from which it rose. And seven out of ten of us would die, one way or another."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Laisa Toscane, *Memory*

## **Post-Invasion Rebuilding**

Komarr's civilian facilities are gradually, like the soletta, being released back into Komarran control. Komarr is also benefiting from an influx of Barrayaran settlers -- Barrayaran women in particular are taking the opportunity to study off-planet. In a similar vein, Komarrans are actually starting to get important jobs on Barrayar, especially in the Service or ImpSec, where talent is a more important criterion than origin.

Physically speaking, there was very little structural damage to the domes or the space stations, as Admiral Vorkosigan staged the attack with the intention of minimizing damage. What did take time was reorganizing the government and the shipping to fit in with the new Barrayaran controls. Barrayar had no wish to be overly oppressive -- Komarr was to be a useful part of the Imperium, not a slave state. These days, with the Emperor's marriage to a Komarran, Komarr may actually be beginning to believe that. (Apart from the inevitable cynics, of course, who merely see it as another example of Barrayar taking advantage of Komarr.)

## **Attitudes Towards Barrayar**

The current situation is accepted, if not loved. There have been many Barrayaran-Komarran marriages, and the Komarran fleets are doing good business with Barrayaran warships to guard them. Anti-Barrayaran feeling is mostly confined to snide remarks and bad jokes, though provocative behavior in the rougher areas of Domes would be a mistake.

While there is a stubborn Komarran underground which still harbors revolutionary intentions, it has been losing momentum for a while now: the children of expatriates have been growing up as citizens of other planets, while older rebels have died. What is left of the underground has several radical splinters, which don't necessarily communicate. Any anti-Barrayaran plots -- which do crop up from time to time, as in the recent attempt to close the wormhole to Barrayar -- are likely to be small. While this reduces the danger, it also makes them all the harder for ImpSec to spot.

@B-BOXHEAD:Barrayaran Trade Escorts

@TEXT-BOX:Overtly, Barrayaran military escorts accompany the Komarran trade fleets to repel hijackers, and to give the Barrayarans valuable experience in piloting and maneuvering. More subtly, the escorts have the opportunity for all sorts of intelligence-gathering -- economic, political, and social, as well as military. It also gives young provincial Barrayaran men some exposure to the wider galactic culture, as well as to the Komarrans, their fellow subjects in the Imperium.

@TEXT-BOX:Each Komarran ship has a Barrayaran security liaison officer aboard, whose official job is to watch for any illegal or threatening activities or suspicious persons. He is also tasked with watching for disaffection among the Komarrans. He is obliged to render all necessary assistance to the ship in physical emergencies, and coordinate evacuations or rescues with the military escort.

### **Barrayaran Presence**

The Barrayaran Viceroy of Komarr is styled "The Imperial Counsellor." Private Barrayaran schools and shops are available, if expensive, for those Barrayarans who have come to Komarr in the line of duty, and who do not want to mix with local Komarrans -- or who would rather do some social networking with any resident Vors.

There is an ImpSec presence in every Dome, with a staff of varying size depending on that Dome's reputation for trouble-making. ImpSec doesn't keep files on every Komarran citizen, but its search programs can pull good records from the public information net very quickly -- and will certainly note such interesting points as recorded participation in the Komarran Revolt. General Rathjens is the current Chief of Imperial Security on Komarr, and reports directly to Duv Galeni on Barrayar. ImpSec also has men on each of the military stations in local space, and can call upon both the Service and the local Komarran civilian security for assistance. Most local ImpSec officers also have a budget for paid Komarran informers -- tactfully referred to as "civilian analysts."

### **Terraforming**

The Komarrans are extremely proud of what they've already managed to accomplish, to the point of techno-snobbery. Lesser terraforming, such as Barrayar's slow Earth-vegetation development, is viewed as mere "soil conditioning." However, it's also a lifelong occupation: it takes 10 years to study the basics of terraforming, and another 10 years as an intern to have any idea what's going on.

The primary aim of the terraformers is to bring heat and light to Komarr, and to *keep* it there. The soletta provides enough heat to allow liquid water (rather than frozen icecaps) and to permit the beginnings of vegetation. Artificial greenhouse gases have been released into the upper atmosphere to help trap the new

energy. (Any serious damage to the soletta would, within the year, cause a destructive cooling curve which would rise rapidly to catastrophe level over approximately 5 years. Fortunately the new soletta, a wedding gift from the Emperor Gregor, should prevent the current situation from progressing that far.) Waste heat from the domes is used to encourage plant growth outside.

By now, every Earth type of bacteria has been imported -- or has arrived and escaped. The terraformers need to grow more vegetation, so that it will lay down carbon and other compounds, which will in turn enable the growth of bigger plants, and finally make the atmosphere humanly breathable. Their greatest success so far is with hardy peat bogs, which acclimate quite well to cold, low-oxygen situations. These bogs -- sited around areas with liquid water, rather than ice -- will provide suitable environments for larger plants, eventually. As matters stand, terraforming is a job for patient people who are prepared to wait a few hundred years for results.

### **Breath Masks**

Breath masks (p. 00) are necessary for trips outside the domes: most inhabitants with regular business outside have masks engraved with their names. As a regular safety precaution, boxes of breath-masks are available in most public places. Komarran mask-check procedures are ingrained by the time children are 3 years old -- no Komarran would ever imagine an adult going outside the domes with deficient equipment. Visitors to Komarr are subjected to a vid on breath mask procedures as soon as they arrive, however many times they may have seen it before. Many Komarrans are so conditioned by their domes that they actively dislike the open air, even when it is breathable, and develop psychosomatic asthma symptoms.

@B-BOXHEAD:Fleet Shares □ @TEXT-BOX: The Komarran trade fleets are famous throughout the galaxy. Some are closely linked to the famous family corporations, while others sell shares on the public market to any Komarran who wants to place a bet. Almost all Komarrans do have a few shares riding on the fleets: it may explain the surprisingly low incidence of other forms of gambling in the Komarran populace. Some fleets return two for one to their investors, though the average is closer to 10 per cent. The Golden Voyage of Marat Galen in the previous century is famous for having returned 100 marks for every 1 invested, and founding at least two new oligarchic clans in the process. Organizations such as the Rialto Sharemarket Agency are ready to assist in the processes of buying shares, lending money to buy shares, and collecting on their debts should the fleet fail to pay off. Drastic losses are quite possible: events such as wormhole mishaps, delays, pirates, unexpected taxes, or simple changes in the market can all result in lowered payoffs.

### **Komarran Characters**

Two obvious professions for young Komarran characters are trader or terraformer: however, there are plenty of laboring and government jobs available (engineers, technicians, shipworker, Dome Patroller, customs official, clerk.) There is also the possibility that the character wishes to leave Komarr *because* their ideal career is unavailable or impractical on their home planet. Scientists might wish to study elsewhere (Beta Colony, Escobar, Jackson's Whole) in fields other than terraforming or five-space mathematics. Others might want a career in the military, on Barrayar -- or as far away from Barrayar as possible. Young Komarrans might be out to see the galaxy, to visit friends and relatives on other planets (especially if someone from the family has married a Barrayaran), and to experience atmospheres which aren't bounded by domes. There is also the possibility that a character was involved in the Komarran Revolt -- or even the original fighting against the Barrayarans, when they invaded -- and that they're on the run from ImpSec, or struggling against a criminal reputation. (Such characters should have the Reputation disadvantage. This could vary from -1 for a student radical during the Komarran Revolt who did nothing except chant slogans, and who is now on ImpSec's permanent files, to -10 for an active

resistance fighter during the original Barrayaran takeover, whose name is still honored by most of the planet.)

## Sergyar

Sergyar is Barrayar's newest acquisition, a vigorous frontier planet which is currently absorbing a lot of Barrayar's excess population and energy. It was been named after the late Prince Serg, father of the Emperor Gregor, and is currently ruled by the Viceroy Aral Vorkosigan and Vicereine Cordelia Vorkosigan. Together with Barrayar's South Continent, it provides space for colonization, which may well make it unnecessary for Barrayar to consider military expansion for a few generations -- something that would please Emperor Gregor greatly. There are two known wormholes in the Sergyaran system, one of which leads to Komarr (with a journey time of approximately 3 days), and the other to Escobar.

### Geography & Climate

The climate of the settled part of Sergyar resembles that of North Africa on Earth, with dry and rainy seasons. It is a land of mountains and rocky badlands, and red-soiled plains cut and channelled by watercourses. In the dry season, the plains are near-desert, and the spindly trees are bare and leafless. When the weather is more temperate, it is a verdant and beautiful world, with turquoise skies and golden grasslands. The local lifeforms all appear to be creatures of radial symmetry, usually hexapods of some description. They range from browser hexapods which grow from the size of large dogs to as large as cows, to creatures dubbed "fuzzy crabs" which are the size of pigs, scavenger carnivores with razor-sharp beaks, to floating jellyfish radials with hydrogen sacs and acidic tendrils which they use to drain blood from their victims. Some of the browser hexapods are edible; the settlers may some day farm them for food. Another common lifeform is the local equivalent of fire ants -- small radial insects, whose nests are distinctive light yellow cones of sand, and who have an irritating bite. (Sergyaran locals can often be distinguished from visitors by their skill in noticing and avoiding these nests.)

### History

Sergyar was actually discovered 32 years ago by a team from Beta Colony, led by Commander Cordelia Naismith. However, the Barrayarans (who arrived shortly afterwards) swiftly established a military base there and drove the Betans away. They later used the planet as a staging-post for their attack on Escobar, and as the site of a prison camp for captured Escobaran prisoners of war. After the war, the planet was formally named in honor of the dead Prince, and settling began. There were a number of unexpected biological hazards for the new colonists, such as the infamous "worm plague" (a nasty but non-lethal parasite problem), as well as the logistics of frontier life. When Aral Vorkosigan resigned from his position as Prime Minister of Barrayar after his near-fatal heart attack, the Emperor offered him the Viceroyalty of Sergyar. Since then, with the help of his wife, the Viceroy has been developing the colony and administering a growing number of settlers. Many recent arrivals come from the Vorkosigan District on Barrayar, having chosen to follow their Count to his new home.

### Future Prospects

Sergyar is a thriving colony, but is unlikely to do much more than establish an infrastructure and build up an economy for the next few decades. While there is much less terraforming to be done than on Barrayar -- and certainly far less than on Komarr -- there are many new species of animal and plant to be introduced to the local ecosystem, and the basic task of farming requires hard work from all the new settlers. There is also a great deal more to be discovered about the ecology, a matter which interests the Vicereine in particular. The Barrayaran colonists have not always acted with the prudence that, say,

Betans might have done, resulting in incidents such as the worm plague. (The Vicereine has been known to comment on this at length.) Other ecological disasters may be waiting in the wings: only time will show whether or not Sergyar really is a safe haven for her new citizens. However, between the Viceroy's competence in administration, the Vicereine's scientific experience, and the personal honor and integrity of the co-rulers, Sergyar is in good hands for the moment.

Characters from Sergyar are likely to have backgrounds in farming, basic engineering, terraforming, or administration. While there is a small but growing population of native-born Sergyarans, most citizens are immigrants from Barrayar or Komarr. Native-born Sergyarans are unlikely to have had much education in the arts or sciences, or formal military training, although the Vicereine is doing her best to establish adequate schooling and medical facilities. Immigrants from other planets further afield should have a reason for seeking a new future on an agrarian outpost. This may involve being on the run from the law, trying to find long-lost Barrayaran relatives, or other interesting motives. It is also possible that Sergyar has as-yet-unsuspected mineral or biological wealth of some kind. This would interest both the Barrayaran authorities, and any illegal would-be-exploiters -- Jackson's Whole in particular might finance a strictly anonymous expedition . . .

## CHAPTER 3 -- Other Planets and Cultures

*Solone tried to eke out his coffee a little longer, waiting for the bland analyst Dancer to return from his mission into the offices opposite. "So tell me," he asked the woman sitting next to him, "is this quite like Beta? You have domed cities there as well, don't you?"*

*homey than here, and much more underground -- our ancestors built the domes over the cavern structures, rather than deliberately positioning them in sectors round the planet. But I fear I'm boring you."*

*"Not at all," Solone lied, and let a hint of a yawn slip through. **Let her classify me as a typical skirt-chaser and forget about me.**" Though actually, I was wondering if you were doing anything this evening. There's this very nice little club I know . . ."*

*She smiled a sweet and glassy smile with an edge sharp enough to cut through a tanglefield. "Why, how cosmopolitan you are! Most Barrayarans get all nervous and twitchy when I tell them that I'm a herm."*

*Solone spilled his coffee.*

There are no aliens to be found in the galaxy -- only the varied cultures which humanity has created, and which are evolving in their separate directions with every passing year. Some of these are major galactic powers, famous or notorious for their own specialties, while others are tiny backwater worlds, only known to students of history or to particularly wide-ranging traders. Some worlds have brought along their culture and traditions wholesale from Earth, while others -- such as the Cetagandan Empire -- have invented their own. Some worlds, founded long ago by early colonists, might have been lost for centuries (as Barrayar was) and still await discovery. Maps are constantly being updated, political situations recalculated, and accurate intelligence is vital . . .

### Beta Colony

Beta Colony is the second, and oldest surviving, colony from Earth, famous (if not notorious) galaxy-wide for its liberal attitudes towards sex and democracy, and a source of high technology ranging from the latest weapons to the uterine replicator. It is a world of deserts, domes, and underground cities, where social courtesy and government control are an accepted part of life. Democracy is also fundamental to Betan thinking, to an unrealistic degree (according to planets such as Barrayar), and causing the phrase "a Betan vote" to pass into popular slang. The Mental Health Board does its best to ensure social stability, whether individual members of society feel that they need treatment or not. The entire world is a haven for liberty and freedom of choice -- but with certain hidden illiberalties.

Beta Colony has a Tech Level of 9, with frequent flashes of 10, as in such particulars as artificial gravity, tractor beams, and so on. It is likely to be the first planet in the Vorkosigan universe to advance to further Tech Levels, given its high R&D capabilities.

Betan Security is under the control of the Betan State Department, and liaises closely with the Mental Health Department (the M.H.D.) -- they can be identified by their dark blue uniforms. The Betan Expeditionary Force is a recent development, in the last 30 years, prompted by the war between Escobar and Barrayar. Members wear light blue uniforms and (widely disliked) black leather boots. They are



charged with the defense of Beta Colony: given that there are no current wars, it's more of a precautionary job than a protective one at the moment. More popular is the Betan Astronomical Survey, whose uniforms are tan, and who have the duty of exploring new wormholes and new areas of space.

## Geography And Climate

On Beta Colony, the geography is either covered by domes or safely underground, and the climate is to be avoided. Cheerfully referred to by locals as "the old sandbox," outside the domes it is a planet of deserts, with dry desert air, endless flat distances, and flat saline puddles that pass for lakes. It is possible to travel outside with the use of nose filters, rebreathers, and heat shields in summer -- desert-trekking is a popular sport among the young. Sandstorms are a frequent occurrence, and occasionally manage to penetrate the domes or cities. All Betan citizens are trained from childhood in drills for such procedures: everyone knows where to go in the case of a sandstorm alarm or a power outage. It is standard procedure for the shuttleport to be shielded during storms, which can delay shuttles from arriving or leaving.

The cities are plunged down inside shafts and tunnels, many-layered and complex, cozy and safe. Beta Colony does not have architecture so much as it has interior design. While parts of it have spilled out onto the surface, now that the domes make such building possible, the bulk of the cities are underground. Two known cities are Quartz and Silica. Quartz houses Beta Colony's principal hermaphrodite community, while Silica is next to the main shuttleport, and is also home to Silica University, a center of excellence. There are public gardens for general enjoyment -- and to increase oxygen production -- but they are palpably artificial to visiting galactics. For Betans who want indoor greenery, a common choice is bonsai'd mesquites or acacias.

Beta Colony has two known wormholes. One of these leads to Escobar, which handles half of Beta Colony's interstellar trade, while the other one goes to an area of space served by Dalton Station, which gives access to Tau Ceti and the whole West Orion arm of the galaxy. It is also possible to reach Beta Colony from Earth by direct travel -- this was, in fact, the way by which the first colonists arrived, but it took them 20 subjective years at lightspeed, and 160 objective years.

## The Orb of Unearthly Delights

The Orb is one of Beta Colony's most famous, or notorious, pleasure domes, with a galactic reputation. If a pleasure-seeker's tastes are relatively normal, a range of licensed, medically supervised pleasures can be purchased at the Orb which is enough to astonish most Betans, let alone off-worlders. (Those with viler enthusiasms are advised to visit Jackson's Whole, where everything is available -- for a price.) Patients undergoing sexual therapy at Betan clinics can often obtain a discount for certain Orb services. The Orb also serves as a meeting-place for wheelers and dealers, mercenaries, less than legal traders, and other interesting characters.

## History

Beta Colony was Earth's second attempt at interstellar colonization. It was a howling desert world, and the colonists had to live in the caves to survive -- but it was a success. The colonists were largely from the United States, and mostly scientists: they were carefully chosen through psychological profiles, as the organizers knew that the colony ships would be in transit for at least 20 years, and isolated after that.

Beta Colony remained isolated for a long time before wormhole technology was invented, and during that time, certain cultural habits became strictures. The carefully psych-profiled colonists, chosen for the ability to live and work together, had to cooperate absolutely in order to *survive* the hostile climate and to develop the colony. The harsh physical conditions, the lack of space to expand, and the fact that the

colony was composed of idealistic scientists, all worked together to give rise to the Betan laws on parentage, children, and public freedoms. Babies would only be born to loving parents, who could be relied upon to raise them properly and sanely. Children would be raised from birth to respect the freedoms of others, to act democratically, to hold no prejudice on the grounds of sex or race, and to be fully informed about any given situation. The first article in the new Betan constitution was, **Access to information shall not be abridged.**

With the discovery of the wormhole drive, communication between Beta Colony and other planets became much faster. Beta Colony rapidly became known throughout the galaxy as the place to buy advanced technology -- including weapons and weapon systems. Beta Colony produced artificial gravity systems, uterine replicators, plasma mirror fields, and many other groundbreaking inventions. What's more, unlike Jackson's Whole, Beta Colony did it *ethically*. (Of course, Jackson's Whole is cheaper . . .)

Beta Colony became rich and famous. Sensibly, the inhabitants only advertised their second or third latest inventions, thus managing to stay several steps ahead of everyone else in R&D. While there are rumors of a Betan rejuvenation treatment, as far as anybody knows, they are only rumors. (Very attractive rumors, however, and ones that most of Jackson's Whole would like to investigate more closely . . .) In keeping with the colony's tradition of scientific curiosity, the Betan Astronomical Survey (in baggy tan fatigues) became one of the best-known faces of Beta Colony to the galaxy at large. The Survey was responsible for investigating new wormholes -- mostly by going through them to see what was on the other side -- and searching for habitable planets and usable resources.

The most dramatic event in recent Betan history was the war between Barrayar and Escobar, in which Beta Colony sided with Escobar and provided its latest invention, plasma mirror shields, which helped turn the tide in the fighting. Captain Cordelia Naismith of the Betan Astronomical Survey also became a popular heroine when she was credited with assassinating Admiral Ges Vorrutyer, despite being a prisoner of the Barrayarans at the time. The whole story has been immortalized for public viewing in the famous docudrama, *The Thin Blue Line*.

@PULLQUOTE:"How could they permit such horrible slanders on Admiral Vorkosigan, and Prince Serg, and our forces? I think the producer should be taken out and shot! And the actors -- and the scriptwriter -- we would at home, by God . . ."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Elena Bothari, *The Warrior's Apprentice*

((BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:The Thin Blue Line

@TEXT-BOX:This docudrama is an extremely popular (on Beta Colony) recreation of the main events in the Escobar war. As it is filmed from the Betan point of view, Prince Serg and Admiral Vorrutyer are portrayed as sadistic, vicious, and thoroughly insane. Barrayarans watching the vid for the first time usually find it something of a culture shock. It's also historically inaccurate -- the light blue uniforms worn by the Expeditionary Force didn't actually get into full production till after the war, so most of it was fought by Betans wearing the tan of the Astronomical Survey.

((END BOX))

## Betan Culture

Beta Colony is a world built on deliberate idealism and forced cooperation. Each citizen is at total liberty

to do as he wishes, without hindrance or constraint, as long as his actions cause no physical or psychological damage to other citizens. On the other hand, the Mental Health Board and the administration have the authority to take away a citizen's rights over his own body and actions, for the public good. Enforced contraception is a way of life: the right to have children is a matter of privilege and merit, not natural biology. Citizens judged to be a danger to the public safety can be detained against their will for psychological treatment. While this is technically illegal, it is considered ethical so long as permission is eventually obtained from the patient after his treatment . . .

@PULLQUOTE: Beta Colony . . . very politically correct, very liberal, but with certain hidden illiberalities.

@PULLQUOTE:-- *Dreamweaver's Dilemma*

Beta Colony strives to be free of sexual prejudice, and generally succeeds. Men, women, and hermaphrodites all serve in the armed forces, and in all areas of society: assignment is strictly by aptitude test. The more physical jobs are skewed to the men (slightly embarrassing those Betans who believe in total equality) but there is no additional status attached. There is also a strong tradition of positive "affirmative action." Certain quotas hold open places specifically for non-Betans in the Betan Survey ranks, from scientist to commander.

Betan psychotherapy is famous across the galaxy, and is a common reason for off-worlders to be visiting Beta Colony. Therapists are *extremely* well-trained, non-prejudiced, and willing to spend a lot of time and effort on their patients: some work for private fees, others for the public hospitals and clinics. With a combination of suitable drugs and techniques, they can restore buried memories, help a person come to terms with traumatic events, and reconcile split personalities. According to popular rumor, they can brainwash, brainwipe, and personality sculpt, if given sufficient time and reason to do so . . .

This leads to the main instrument of social stability on Beta Colony -- the Mental Health Board. Most Betans ignore it, or assume that it only deals with people who *need* help -- until it comes knocking on their door. The less secure, or immigrants down on their luck, actively fear the patrols with stun-nets and dart guns, commenting that, "you're always smiling after the MHB gets done with you . . ." The Mental Health Board can be a genuinely frightening presence if someone attracts their attention. The course of psychotherapy can force a patient to reveal dangerous secrets. When Cordelia Naismith returned from the Escobar war, she found that her erratic behavior and the gaps in her story caused the MHB to assume that she had been brainwashed. She was forced to escape before she could be compelled to tell the full truth about Admiral Vorrutyer and Prince Serg's death.

Beta Colony offers employment to all residents, and even to immigrants. All that needs doing is to report to a Shelter, and get Carded. This will result in free food and the offer of work opportunities. (In practical terms, it puts you on the Betan System; all your details go on the computers, including blood samples, retinal prints, fingerprints . . .) Beta Colony has efficient protein vats: nobody has to starve, and very few people are even poor by the standards of most other galactics. In a world where the first article of the Constitution requires that information is available, most families have viewscreens as a fundamental piece of furniture. Real poverty is hard for most Betans to envisage: it's completely outside their experience.

Betan clothing is influenced by the climate (hot, even inside the domes and underground in the cities) and by the local open-mindedness. This has made sarongs (usually worn waist-high) one of the most popular clothing styles, together with body paint. Betan Security (supervised by JusDep, or the Justice Department) and military forces wear uniforms, of course, as do the agents of the MHB when on duty.

Entering Beta Colony comes as a shock to galactics used to carrying weapons regularly: all weapons must be turned in at the shuttleport on arrival, and Customs checks involve high-tech scans. Stunners may be carried, if the wearer has obtained a government license. Any other weapons are strictly illegal, and grounds for instant arrest. Galactic visitors will also find it annoying that the shuttleport fees are stiff, and the authorities don't take credit or foreign currency.

Vat-grown protein is widely available for food. Given this luxury, many Betans find the concept of killing things to eat to be utterly foreign to them. When on other planets, if vat-grown protein is unavailable, Betans often resort to vegetarianism or artificial rations.

### **Scientific Progress and Consequences**

The uterine replicator brought certain fundamental changes to Betan society. It was now possible to have children without any effect whatsoever on the health of the mother. It was also possible for a child to be "born" from two parents of the same sex, and for creations such as hermaphrodites to be brought to term. It became abruptly easy to declare total equality of the sexes, since now women didn't have to go through childbirth or nursing (unless they wanted to.)

The Constitution had to be rewritten, with new laws added to cover all the potentialities of children born from cell samples taken without the owner's consent, legal clones, illegal clones, unauthorized procreation . . . Beta Colony can justly boast of having one of the most complete legal codes in the galaxy, with clauses covering almost all conceivable results of cloning technology and uterine replicators. Worlds that don't have such biological science as a regular part of life, such as Barrayar, generally haven't had to formulate legal codes to handle them yet. (Importing the Betan laws wholesale is unlikely to be a workable answer, given how closely they are based on Betan morality.)

By Betan law, if a citizen orders a clone created from his own body tissues (assuming he's obtained a license) then the clone is his younger sibling. If he has a clone made using a sample from his child's tissues, then the clone is also his child, and is a brother or sister to the original. When a legal adult has a clone of himself created, then the adult's parents have the claims and obligations of grandparents towards the clone. The clone himself is in every way a full human being, by Betan law and opinion, and has full rights under the law, together with full independence at the age of maturity (21). Whatever the final network of relationships, certainly nobody can claim to *own* him.

Being the galaxy's premier producers of high technology has caused some Betans to develop a certain techno-snobbery. It has also given rise to the common attitude that given sufficient technology, democracy, common sense, and open-mindedness, *anything* can be fixed. This mindset has led Betans into many dangerous situations over the centuries.

Given the high standard of medical care available on Beta Colony, most Betans tend to live to 120 years or more. This has, of course, contributed to the rumors about the Betan rejuvenation treatment.

### **Attitudes on Sexuality**

Beta Colony draws a very definite line between sexuality and procreation. The law emphasizes this, with every female (and hermaphrodite) Betan having her hymen cut, and being given a contraceptive implant, at puberty. They also customarily have their ears pierced and attend a coming-out party. Menstruation is biologically "turned off" until it should be required. After that, anything goes: any liaison between consenting adults, whatever the sex of the parties involved, is acceptable. Betans view this as a sensible, practical, and sane approach to sexuality and personal freedom. They consider more restrictive galactic cultures to range from the pitifully ignorant to the positively insane. A double standard of sexual behavior

is, from the Betan point of view, a logical impossibility. (Other galactics, particularly those from cultures such as Barrayar or Athos, would use terms such as "exotic degenerates" for the Betans.) Some Betans like to hang around the shuttleports, "trolling for galactics," but this is really only common among the younger, immature set.

While a marriage can involve any number, the most frequent grouping is two (of any sex, whether male, female, or hermaphrodite). Marriage, and co-parents' licenses, are formal requirements for having children, whether through biological birth or by uterine replicator. A woman's contraceptive implant cannot be removed without a license from the government. Likewise, use of a uterine replicator (only available at government-run hospitals) requires a license. On Beta Colony, the term "bastard" has no objective meaning: unlicensed children are so rare that they're dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Licensed Practical Sexuality Therapists are available for personal assistance: they can provide marriage counselling, lessons in erotic behaviour, sexual therapy for the traumatized, and similar services. It's considered a lower-middle-class job, personal service with a touch of style, much like a hairdresser or masseur: practitioners require a license from the government and at least an associate degree in psychotherapy. Many hermaphrodites work as LPSTs, and are extremely popular with off-worlders.

Betans can usually avoid unwanted approaches by means of the "earring code" -- there are a dozen or more different styles of earrings, each of which conveys a different message about the wearer. One style, for instance, means: *Yes, I'm a consenting and contraceptive-protected adult, but I am presently in an exclusive relationship, so please do not embarrass us both by asking.* While it would be easy to falsify such signals by wearing an inappropriate style of earring, most Betans don't even consider it. After all, the whole idea is to eliminate guessing-games and to avoid embarrassment.

### **Government Approval**

Most responsibilities on Beta Colony which can be construed as affecting others -- engendering children, bearing weapons, working as a LPST, driving a lightflyer, and many more -- require a license from the government. It may be awarded after a simple examination, or may necessitate a set of interviews, tests, and similar hoops to be jumped through. Co-parents need to pass physical, psychological, and economic tests, and take a course to qualify for a parent's license. Further permissions for more than one child are extremely difficult to obtain. Betans accept all this as a fact of life, but it generally comes as a severe shock to the average visiting galactic.

However, Beta Colony has one of the greatest discoveries in the entire galaxy -- a bureaucracy that actually works. When a Betan fills in a form to make a request or to apply for permission, he can confidently expect a logical, reasonable result. The Betan administrative system processes requests quickly and accurately. While the occasional error or slowness does exist, it is so rare that it annoys the recipients to a level that the rest of the galaxy would find astonishing.

Barrayar has used this Betan tendency to its advantage: the Barrayaran embassy on Beta Colony processes any complaints by Betan citizens against Barrayarans by demanding dozens and dozens of forms. This develops into an endless moebius loop of files and reports, kept especially for such occasions by the very competent staff. The forms include some particularly creative specimens which need to be sent on the 6-week journey to Barrayar, and which are almost guaranteed to be sent back several times for minor errors in execution. As the Betans being run through this maze actually believe that they are accomplishing something, everyone is happy. (Of course, in the case of a complaint which is justified by *Barrayaran* standards, the embassy might take some real action. For the standard case of "Barrayaran assaults Betan due to Betan making an approach which the Barrayaran takes as an insult," however . . .)

## Democracy and the President

Betans see absolutely nothing strange about their way of life: it's what they've grown up with, and they find most other planetary cultures lacking to some degree. They expect democracy as a natural condition, and complain loudly in its absence. Given that on Beta Colony democracy actually works, and bureaucracy and formal complaints achieve results, Betans can't understand why the rest of the galaxy doesn't see the merits of the system. (The patented Betan attitude of horrified, snobbish pity towards non-democratic galactics can be extremely annoying.)

While some Betans are used to military discipline, and are able to function efficiently in a command structure, most of them aren't. The captain of a Betan Astronomical Survey spaceship can look forward to shepherding a group of intellectual prima donnas who are prepared to argue his every decision. (In keeping with the Betan tradition of minimalizing social stress, psych profiles are vitally important for Survey teams.) A successful Betan leader has to be able to persuade as well as command.

Of course, idealists who vote in a democracy are morally bound to follow the wishes of the democracy -- ergo, the Betan government is actually obeyed by its independently minded citizens. Even if most Betans have a healthy distrust of the current President and the majority of politicians, the choice of a democratic system includes the obligation to obey whoever got voted into power. Beta Colony is quite capable of having a President ("Steady Freddie") whom half the planet despises . . . but if he's the democratic

## Betan Characters

Betans don't all have to be scientists. Careers for a Betan as a merchant, jump-pilot, recycler, or member of the Betan Astronomical Survey are all possible; very few jobs on Beta Colony carry any social stigma, so a character could have almost any set of skills.

Betan characters may well have the advantages of Common Sense, Empathy, Longevity, and Mathematical Ability. Rarer talents may include Lightning Calculator, Rapid Healing, Contacts (in the scientific world), and Unfazeable. On the other hand, they are frequently prone to the Odious Personal Habit of giving unwanted psychotherapy to everyone around them, and attempting to apply "Betan common sense" to any given situation. They may also have a Reputation with other races (as a galactic degenerate and Betan sexual pervert, depending upon the situation) or be prone to Absent-Mindedness (especially scientists). A Delusion is possible, ranging from "Everything will be fine because people are basically ethical and rational" to "All non-Betans are prejudiced barbarians." Gullibility and Honesty are also possible disadvantages, given Betan views on freedom of information. Pacifism is common, but usually as self-defense only: Curious is *very* common.

## Cetaganda

The Cetagandan Empire includes eight developed planets, and an equal fringe of allied and puppet dependencies. It is an expansionist power, which has invaded and occupied Barrayar in the past. The Empire is based on a split-level aristocracy, with the haut caste governing the Empire and providing the satraps which control the planets, while the military ghem caste command the armies. Ten years ago, the Cetagandans staged a strike on Vervain, but were foiled by a combination of Barrayaran and Vervani forces and the Dendarii Mercenaries. Shortly after that, they attacked and occupied Marilac, but were eventually forced to abandon their holdings there, due to a spirited local resistance. Since then, the Cetagandan Empire has been relatively quiet: however, their neighbours -- especially the Barrayarans -- have not relaxed their vigilance, and are constantly on the alert for any further aggressive moves.

## Geography & Climate

Eta Ceta IV, the homeworld of the empire, has been industrialized and is covered with cities: any natural features on its surface have been carefully designed by the haut or ghem to suit their tastes, and areas of natural wilderness are cultured examples of their type rather than genuine unexplored territory. The other developed planets are also terraformed and industrialized, though not to the same degree as the homeworld. Given the work of the ghem-ladies in genetic manipulation, it is not impossible that any number of experiments, or "works of art," might have escaped in the past, and may form an interesting surprise for characters. (The haut-ladies only work in human stock -- and don't lose track of their creations.) There are several jump-point stations around Eta Ceta, and an orbital station above the planet itself, through which visitors must pass when going down to Eta Ceta IV's surface. Off-planet legations

Eta Ceta IV itself is home to the Imperial residence, the Celestial Garden, also known to galactic visitors as Xanadu. It is contained in a force dome 6 kilometers across, which takes an entire generating plant to supply the necessary power. The central towers of the Celestial Garden are around a kilometer high, and are elaborate paragons of Cetagandan architecture: the surrounding gardens are creations of beauty, containing some of the finest genetically sculpted animals and plants from ghem-ladies across the planet. Wide jade pathways wind through arboretums and botanical gardens, and scattered low private pavilions nestle like secrets among the trees and valleys. Outside the Celestial Garden's dome, a kilometer-wide park with trees is surrounded by a silver street, then another park, and then eight boulevards radiating outward. The Celestial Garden is the center of the city and the heart of the planet, and every Cetagandan knows it. It is also the home to the Celestial Emperor, Fletchir Giaja, and to his household. The Emperor's personal servants are known as *ba* -- they are neutered, unobtrusive and quiet, rarely speaking to outsiders. They are also largely depilated and hairless, due to a whim of the previous Emperor.

Other Cetagandan Empire worlds include Rho Ceta (positioned near the wormhole to Komarr); Mu Ceta (which recently failed to expand towards Vervain); Sigma Ceta (which borders the Vega Station group); Tau Ceta; and Xi Ceta (which gives onto Marilac).

## History

The Cetagandan Empire's recent history, as far as the rest of the galaxy is concerned, consists of attempts to intimidate neighbors into alliances, or to conquer them by force. Eta Ceta IV was one of the earliest colonies from Earth, and the nascent empire rapidly spread outward through the jump points near Eta Ceta, colonizing and developing the seven subsidiary worlds. The haut-ghem structure has been in place almost since the inception of Cetagandan culture, although it has evolved and elaborated as the centuries went by.

However, internal Cetagandan affairs tend to remain private, and are kept hidden from the rest of the galaxy. Although numerous bloody wars between haut constellations and ghem-lord factions have taken place in attempts to control or replace the Emperor, these frequently end in quiet suicides or "accidents", and find little mention in galactic history texts. (It is considered illegal, but not unbecoming, for a haut-lord to attempt to usurp the Emperor, and many have tried.) A native Cetagandan would be expected to have a firm grasp of the history of his own constellation or house, especially where it involved any feuds with other constellations or houses. Galactics, on the other hand, rarely have much information beyond the obvious bloodshed and reported deaths.

## Basic Culture

The Cetagandan Empire has evolved into a highly stratified society, consisting of three tiers: haut, ghem, and servitor classes. The ghem-lords control the military, but the Celestial Master is haut, as are the eight planetary satraps, each of whom controls one of the eight planets. Each satrap, or satrap-governor, has a ghem-general assigned to him by the Emperor. The satrap-governors are chosen from men who are close Imperial relations, such as uncles, brothers, or cousins: each rules his satrapy for 5 years, then is required to leave it (sometimes for permanent retirement on Eta Ceta IV, and sometimes to another satrapy).

While the haut-lords hold the ultimate authority, in the positions of Emperor and satrap-governors, the ghem-lords control the army directly. Those haut-lords not occupied in positions of government often pursue artistic careers -- indeed, even those haut-lords employed in politics and government are frequently known for their artistic and aesthetic skills. The ghem and ghem-lords, on the other hand, fill the military, and are known for their aggressive, forceful attitude. It is frequently surprising to the rest of the galaxy that the haut are still in control, and that the ghem-lords have not seized power in an armed uprising. Ghem customs are rigid and formalized, and include such rituals as "swearing to a hunt," where the oath-taker vows not to rest until he has captured or killed his target. One of the currently most powerful ghem-lords is Ghem-Admiral Har, who commands half the Cetagandan fleet -- his clan-colors are orange and green.

The Cetagandan Empire has a general TL of 9, although access to the different aspects of science is scattered across the population. Since the ghem-lords make up the bulk of the military, they have access to the full range of military technology: however, the haut-ladies (and to a lesser extent, the ghem-ladies) specialize in medical and biological technology. Young haut-lords and ghem-lords with pretensions to art often use equipment put together by better-educated servants to create their works, defining the end results which they desire and leaving it to the 'mere technicians' to assemble the actual tools needed to accomplish it. Technology used by haut is usually elegant, subtle, and artistic -- almost distinctive in itself by the degree of its sophistication. Their knowledge of and use of bioweapons is greatly feared: some suspect that this is the true hold which the haut have over the ghem. However, such bioweapons -- engineered viruses, tailored diseases, and so on -- are only used internally: it is almost unheard-of for such weapons to be used in struggles outside the Cetagandan Empire. That's the ghem-lords' job.

Public order is kept by the Cetagandan Civil Police, generally known as "the Civils" to the rest of the population. The general populace is not encouraged to carry deadly anti-personnel weapons. While it is not technically illegal, anybody brought in for questioning on suspicion of some other crime and discovered to be carrying heavier weaponry than a stunner is liable to have it confiscated at the very least. Cetagandan Imperial Security, who also provides the guards for the Celestial Garden, are an autonomous force, distinct from the Civils, and have sweeping powers of arrest and detention.

### **Female Occupations**

No women serve in the Cetagandan military. Ghem-ladies manage their households, and pursue careers in civil or commercial positions: however, the highest form of art among ghem-ladies is the genetic manipulation of plants or animals. They demonstrate their art at regular exhibitions, where the highest prize and honor is to have the winning specimens placed inside the Celestial Garden as permanent exhibits. Haut-women are only rarely seen outside their private quarters: when they do go out in public, they have personal float-chairs to ride on, which generate force-fields around them. These private force-bubbles can be of any color, but are usually adjusted to suit the circumstances and decor. The haut-ladies can see out, but nobody can see in, and nothing short of a gravitic imploder lance can penetrate the field. Audio transmission is controlled from inside the force-bubble, and each float-chair is personally keyed to the haut-woman who uses it, with a DNA-scanning unit set into the arm of the chair.



Haut-ladies are not openly involved in the politics of the Empire, but pursue private careers in science and art. Very occasionally, a haut-woman is given as a wife to a particularly successful ghem-general, and this is considered to be the ultimate social and political coup which he could achieve. In such an event, she automatically outranks any previous wives which he may have (polygamy is legal) and her children become the family heirs. The haut-woman in question is no longer permitted a float-chair and force-bubble, but if she is encountered outside her home, it is considered polite to look away from her and address all questions to her through her husband, as though she were still within her force-bubble.

### **Family And Marriage**

Family structure is an important part of Cetagandan life and political advancement. Ghem-lords belong to clans, each of which has a distinctive face-paint pattern. There are more than 50 clans, but some are far more powerful than others. If a haut-lady is given in marriage to a ghem-lord, she joins the ghem-clan. Before marriage, young ghem-lords and ghem-ladies are free to pursue liaisons as they wish, assuming their clans have no disagreement. Haut belong to what are known as constellations, and would state that a relative is "of the same genomic constellation." Young haut (less than 50 years old) live as pensioners of their parent's constellation. Known constellations include the Degtjar (to which the Empress belongs), Rond, Giaja (the Emperor's own constellation), Kety, and Navarr.

There are no haut marriages, but there are several types of contract to produce progeny: the simplest is for one-time usage of the genome, resulting in a single child who is registered with the male parent's constellation. The child is raised in the constellation's creche, and the parents may never meet one another. The other extreme is a lifetime monopoly. Most arrangements fall somewhere between the two degrees. Sexual relationships between the haut are mostly social play, and intensely bounded by etiquette, though there are some long-lasting sexual relationships close to marriage. To become one of the Emperor's wives, the mother of a potential Imperial heir must never have contracted before, and must never do so again: she goes to live in the Celestial Garden for the rest of her life. Advantages frequently come to the constellation of the Empress (the mother of the declared heir) or the Dowager Empress.

### **Clothing and Fashion**

Ghem-lords wear their faces painted in the colors of their clan or rank, or the two combined. Junior officers wear the colors of their rank while on duty, while senior officers wear colors and patterns denoting both rank and clan. Recent avant-garde fashion has the color-design being worn as a decal on one cheekbone, instead of the full facepaint -- this would not be tolerated in the military, however. An exception to the above is the Imperial facepaint pattern, a white base with black curves and red accents, which is worn by Imperial guards to mark their primary allegiance. Ghem-ladies do not paint their faces like the men, but occasionally wear some decoration in their clan-colors. Neither haut-lords nor haut-ladies wear face paint. Haut-women *never* cut their hair.

Casual street-wear for both sexes is a simple bodysuit and calf-length robes for both sexes. For formal occasions, up to a dozen over-robes may be worn in layers. White is the color of Imperial mourning, and pure white robes (with no other colored clothing) may only be worn by haut-lords or haut-ladies, on such occasions as the death of the Emperor or Empress. Clothing itself is practically a secret code on Cetaganda: while the native Cetagandans learn its intricacies from birth, it is difficult for galactic outsiders to move among the ghem-lords without committing error, and impossible for outsiders to mingle with the haut without *some* technical impropriety. Uniforms are always correct when worn -- or at least clearly not the wearer's fault, as he has no choice in the matter.

## Cetagandan Culture

### Haut vs. Ghem

When outsiders see the artistic haut-lords and military ghem-commanders, they often fail to understand how Cetagandan society can function -- and, in particular, how the haut manage to keep control of the aggressive, expansionistic ghem. Tradition is one of the major factors here: while the ghem intrigue among themselves for positions as generals and commanders, few of them actually attempt to seize the satrapies, or worse, the Imperial throne. Likewise, the haut-lords leave the military largely to the ghem, and have their own plots for the satrapies and throne. Social indoctrination from birth keeps haut and ghem intriguing inside their own fields, rather than attempting to seize power outside their assigned fiefs. The loose and shifting relationships among the ghem-commanders, and the assorted secret haut-lord factions lend an unusual degree of deniability to all hidden operations.

### What It Means To Be Haut

The haut aren't just a social stratum -- they're a controlled genetic experiment, run by the Star Creche. There are no random haut births. All haut-children come from contracts agreed by the heads of their constellations, and sealed by the approval of the Empress herself. As matters stand, the haut are unusually tall, unnaturally handsome or beautiful, very long-lived (to them, youth lasts till 50), and have other genetic advantages. At some point, it is likely that they will no longer be what the rest of the galaxy considers human -- or that they will no longer consider the rest of the galaxy to be human. In comparison, the ghem are much closer to the human "norm," even though they may be pushing the upper limits. The haut-ladies and the Star Creche watch the ghem carefully, permitting them to breed as they wish, in order to identify any useful genetic complexes which may occur. Such genes are later incorporated into the haut genome, after testing among the ba.

The Emperor is the interface between the haut and the Empire: it is his duty to ensure that matters of the haut-genome, while supervised by the haut-women, are kept separate from the political sphere. Politicians are not to be allowed to interfere with the evolution of the haut, as they do not understand its true goal -- to create a new and ultimate species.

It seems likely that the haut will spend the next few generations expanding inside space which they control, with any aggressive exercises by the ghem-lords being small-scale -- certainly nothing on the scale of the occupation of Barrayar.

### The Star Creche

In genomic matters among the haut, the Star Creche rules absolutely. The Star Creche is composed of the eight planetary Consorts -- the Empress stands as the Consort for Eta Ceta IV -- and the Empress' intended successor, if chosen, who bears the title of *Handmaid to the Star Creche*. They control all haut-births, and direct the genomic future of the haut as a race. This fact is kept secret from all non-haut, and certainly from all galactics. While the Barrayaran ImpSec has recently become aware of certain facts about this situation (see *Cetaganda* for further details), they are probably the only non-haut to be so well informed.

A fact not widely known to galactics is that every haut genetic cross (and thus, child) is produced via a contract which is drawn between the heads of the two genetic constellations, and must be approved by the senior female in the Emperor's line -- the Empress, or Dowager Empress -- and marked with the seal of the Star Creche. Any genetic alterations must be examined and cleared by the Empress' board of

geneticists before they are allowed into the haut genome. These children are produced from genetic samples kept on Eta Ceta IV, engendered in uterine replicators, and transported out to the constellation which is to raise them. Every year, each Consort travels to Eta Ceta IV to collect the uterine replicators containing the children for haut constellations on her planet, and then escorts them back to her planet. The frozen genetic samples are kept in a gene bank which is indexed and sealed by a collection of data known as the Great Key: since the gene bank includes hundreds of thousands of samples, loss of the Great Key would be catastrophic. The Key itself is a small rod with the Star Creche's symbol (a clawed screaming bird-pattern) embossed on one end, and can only be activated by a seal-ring held by the Empress.

The Key and seal, and other symbols of the Star Creche, are held by the mother of the Emperor, if alive, or by the mother of the heir-apparent otherwise. Should the current holder die, the Seal and other regalia are handed over to the new Empress on the last day of the old Empress' funeral.

### **The Ba**

The ba are far more than neutered and reliable palace servants: they are the private experiments of the haut-ladies, given human form. Before a genomic cross is carried out among the haut, it is first tested: the ba are those tests, neutered so as not to reproduce and muddy the evolutionary waters. Many haut, even the Emperor himself, share much of their genetic structure with the ba: however, no such relationship is publicly acknowledged. As far as the public and the ghem-lords know, the ba are merely domestic servitors, the trustworthy minions of the haut-ladies and the Emperor. The haut are aware of the importance of the ba, and do not consider them expendable.

### **The Emperor Fletchir Giaja**

The Emperor Fletchir Giaja is typically haut in appearance: tall, with the look of an attenuated elf, and dark-haired. He took the Imperial throne at an extremely young age for a haut-lord -- less than 30 -- and is now approximately 70 years old, still on the young side of middle age. He is a subtle man, and extremely intelligent, with vast experience at playing the different political factions of the Cetagandan Empire against one another. One of his greatest strengths is his ability to find useful positions for people of talent, and thus to bring them under his control: awkward or dissident citizens, should they have worthwhile abilities, are more likely to be recruited into a useful job than to be imprisoned or killed, and led into compliance through their self-interest. Given the rules of Cetagandan society, it is unlikely that characters will come into casual contact with him. However, haut or ghem on an important mission (military or otherwise) might well be given briefings which involve the Emperor, or require the Emperor's presence -- and certainly any ambitious young Cetagandan would be anxious to attract Imperial attention.

## **Jackson's Whole**

Jackson's Whole was founded -- or, rather, grew -- as the base of a conglomeration of hijackers, pirates, and criminals in general. It is widely known to be a place where anything can be purchased, legal or illegal. While it has no central government, a powerful oligarchy of Great Houses sets the tone of its dealings with the rest of the galaxy. There is no centralized fleet, but the various ships belonging to the separate Houses create enough of a deterrent to possible invaders that even the Cetagandans haven't bothered trying to take the place over. Besides, the helpful citizens of Jackson's Whole will sell their services in any case . . .

Jackson's Whole has a general Tech Level of 8: some specialist Houses have a partial Tech Level of 9 in medical areas, particularly concerning gene design and cloning. Such knowledge is only shared by those inside the House, and the theft of information or trained professionals is part of life. Information in

general is a vital currency, and no sensible visitor speaks too freely. Good lines of communication are also vital: it is well known that the Jacksonian jump-courier system is riddled with spies.

"Business is emperor, here. Laissez-faire capitalism gone completely over the edge."

-- Admiral Miles Naismith, *Borders of Infinity*

## Geography & Climate

Jackson's Whole is a mountainous and rather cold planet, temperate only at the equator, but highly industrialized. All of the Major Houses have some establishment on the surface, ranging from mildly fortified to extremely fortified, as do most of the Minor Houses. There are five orbital transfer stations, one for each jump point. The largest of these, Jump point Five, is owned by House Fell and gives onto the jump point leading to the Hegen Hub -- it also serves as House Fell's headquarters and home city. The station on the route to Escobar is held by a consortium dominated by House Bharaputra. Another of the jump point stations is owned by the Hargrave-Dynes Consortium (composed of the two Major Houses Hargraves and Dyne), and Barrayar maintains a consulate there. The Hargrave-Dynes Consortium is willing to hire out troops to anybody on their Jump point who should need them -- and who can pay.

## History

There are a number of records of the evolution of Jackson's Whole from a mob of cutthroat criminal gangs into a group of Syndicate monopolies: since such records were kept by separate Houses, each of whom has its own perspective on matters, their accuracy is somewhat doubtful. Also, while inter-House feuds are deep, bitter, and lasting, there are few inhabitants of the Whole who wouldn't put aside a generation-long vendetta for the sake of profit. (For a while, at least.)

What is definitely known is that Jackson's Whole, conveniently situated at the junction-point of five wormholes, was used by several groups of pirates and criminals as a convenient base. It served as a nexus for fencing goods, resupplying ships, and the frequently illegal scientific research necessary for further profit. Slowly the separate groups melded or evolved into distinct families, and the system of Houses established itself. Different Houses seized different (and usually criminal) monopolies, and held onto them tenaciously. Jackson's Whole became a place that sold everything -- weapons, false identities, mercenaries, clones, slaves, and even a form of immortality.

## Jacksonian Culture

There is only one thing sacred on Jackson's Whole: The Deal. There are no laws, no automatic rights, no protection for the weak, and no government. Only the Deal can set boundaries and establish rules to be followed. Without a Deal, everyone is alone, and nobody can be trusted. Whether it is the usual Deal of belonging to a House, or some personal Deal involving private profit, every citizen of Jackson's Whole understands that the Deal is sacrosanct. Once a Deal is established, both parties must fulfil their sides of the bargain . . .

Unless the Deal gets broken later, for a greater profit. But then, this is Jackson's Whole. Everything's for sale.

A Deal usually begins with the fact that both parties have something to offer which interests the other, and the phrase, "Let's Deal." In the discussion leading up to this, it is good Jacksonian etiquette to state that if the answer to a question matters, then it is information for sale or trade, not free. When a conclusion is finally reached, both sides may state that, "It's a Deal." It is not uncommon for a certain

amount of short-changing to take place in the later payoffs, where one side believes that they can get away with it, but total betrayal is unusual. Though not impossible.

## Law

Jackson's Whole follows the golden rule -- whoever has the gold makes the rules. On any Jacksonian territory, "arrest orders" can be purchased by anybody who wishes to lay charges against someone else. The cost of such orders varies, depending on the severity of the crime, the probable ease of arrest, and how rich the bidder appears to be. When caught, the person who is being arrested may attempt to outbid the person who bought the arrest order, and is always offered the opportunity to do so. If he fails to outbid the purchaser, either through disinclination or lack of money, then he will be taken to the nearest Jacksonian prison, and held there until the purchaser can collect him. The purchaser can withdraw his bid at any time, but will lose his deposit. The minions sent out to actually do the arresting usually carry shock-sticks, stunners, and tangle-fields. There are usually surcharges for resisting arrest, to be paid by the target: these consist of any money he has on him, or failing that, a thorough beating.

There is no such thing as actual internal law on Jackson's Whole. If an individual has the allies or power to back up his wishes, then he can do as he wants on his own territory. However, when interacting with other planets, some of the planet's basic principles are generally quoted as law. The most frequently mentioned of these rules is that a clone belongs to the person who paid for him to be grown; this will be enforced by any local Jacksonian authorities as long as the clone-buyer has the finances to pay for it. This applies to all intellectual, physical, and potentially claimable property, while on Jacksonian territory. When off Jacksonian territory, such claims may be put forward through the nearest Jacksonian consulate, upon payment of suitable sums to whichever House is operating it. (Alternatively, the Jacksonian's "moral" right to his "property" may be dealt with by hiring mercenaries or sending personal troops to fetch said "property" back, irrespective of the laws of whatever planet the "property" is currently inhabiting.)

## Houses

A House on Jackson's Whole is an association of individuals who have all made a Deal to be part of the House; it is something between a business corporation and a 20th century Mafia family. Jackson's Whole is currently home to 116 Great Houses (or Houses Major), and countless Houses Minor. The Great Houses are usually significantly more powerful than the Houses Minor, although a very old House Minor (one that has existed for at least a couple of centuries) can often claim the honors of a House Major by default, and be given due respect and bargaining weight by the Great Houses. Houses generally have a single ruler, who holds power through a mixture of ability, craft, and cold-blooded ruthlessness: there will invariably be half a dozen rivals in the background who would be delighted to replace him. Most Houses have several sub-divisions and departments, which cooperate with varying degrees of effectiveness.

Among the most prominent of the Great Houses are House Dyne, which specializes in banking and money laundering; House Fell, which specializes in weapons, both technological and biological; House Bharaputra, which specializes in genetics and clone-growing, including clone-brain transplants; and House Hargraves, a galactic fence and middleman for ransom deals. House Ryoval (procurers and specialists in producing unusual clones) recently dissolved, due to the death of Baron Ryoval at the hands of Mark Vorkosigan: most of its properties and facilities were taken over by House Fell, who came into possession of Baron Ryoval's code-keys later the same day.

## The Durona Group

The Durona Group is an example of a sub-organisation inside a Great House. Lilly Durona was a scientist, bred inside House Ryoval to serve the House's interests. When her previous mentor (the last

Baron Ryoval but one) died, she found her position intolerable, and fled House Ryoval together with Georish Stauber. The two reached House Fell, and came to a Deal with the then Baron Fell. Lilly Durova then cloned herself 36 times as the years went by, creating what became known as the Durova Group. The extremely talented scientists served House Fell, specializing in R&D on military poisons and antidotes, quietly famous in their field. While they recently relocated to Escobar, the family is still together, and now operates a clinic there. They are easily identifiable: tall and striking with Eurasian features, straight black hair, and brown eyes. Women in the group are named after flowers, and men are named after birds. The group was extremely close-knit while part of House Fell, with the only known defector being Lotus Durova, who left the group for co-control of House Bharaputra. Lilly Durova is a typical Jacksonian, with one unusual ethical constraint: she does not perform clone-brain transplants, nor did she permit her clone-children to do so.

## Cloning and Bioengineering

Clones have no rights on Jackson's Whole -- then again, *nobody* has any rights on Jackson's Whole. However, unlike more socially regulated planets such as Beta, where a clone has legal rights which he can expect from the person who paid for him to be made, on Jackson's Whole a clone is purely and simply property. A clone is grown and shaped for a purpose -- whether it should be as assassin, slave, prostitute, guard, curiosity, or future organ donor. However, should the clone manage to obtain some resources, financial or otherwise, and make a Deal of his own with some House for support, then the clone will have just as many legal rights and just as much consideration as any other citizen of Jackson's Whole.

One of the things for which the Whole is best known is the clone-brain-transplant trade. As a possible way to cheat death, it is extremely popular among the rich and amoral: House Bharaputra is the main practitioner of the trade on Jackson's Whole, though it is possible that other Houses might occasionally engage in it. Clones are prepared from the buyer's own tissue, and raised from birth to 10 or 11 years old: they are given growth accelerators, so that they have the bodies of teenagers, and may also be given other cosmetic or body-shaping treatment. They are not taught much more than the bare minimum for socialization, and are housed together in the Bharaputran compound, often being told that they are the protected heirs of noble houses, in a special school for security reasons. When the clone is of age and has a suitable body, his buyer's brain is transferred into the younger body, giving the buyer a new, fresh body, and a new lease on life -- assuming that he survives the operation, which is a risky procedure. Many of the Barons and Baronnes of Jackson's Whole have undergone the procedure, some of them multiple times. (Incidentally, it is not necessary to transfer into a body *precisely* similar to one's own when young: a clone of the opposite sex, or with unusual enhancement, can be created if that is what the buyer wishes.) House Bharaputra performs about one transplant a week, on average, and there are usually 50 or so clones in the Life House (the establishment where clones are kept when nearly old enough for transplanting) at any time. Owing to a raid by the Dendarii Mercenaries a few years ago (see *Mirror Dance*) the Bharaputran compound is extremely well-defended.

Scientific research is geared towards profit, rather than ethics or pure knowledge: if the House can't see any useful or financial application for some line of research, then it will be written off without a second thought. This clearly does not extend to areas such as military toxins and antidotes, anti-personnel weapons and defences, genetically engineered viruses, body organs, aphrodisiacs, the creation of super-soldiers or ideal concubines, and so forth.

## The Underclass

On Jackson's Whole, it is *vital* to belong to some sort of organization which can provide backing, finances, and firepower. For most of the locals, this would be one of the Houses. Any sort of rank inside

a House, however menial, is preferable to existing as part of the underclass outside the Houses. The web of a House's associations can reach seamlessly down to the lowest levels of society, involving street gangs and informers: should they perform well, they can hope to be formally absorbed into the House. Outsiders have no guarantees of protection, shelter, or food: they lack the money to be able to obtain the tools to do better for themselves, whether weapons or ships, and they frequently serve as spare genetic material for Houses in need of experimental subjects. The only hope for an outsider is to be able to provide some skill or service to a House, and to earn a place in their ranks. Other than that, there are no civic measures to care for the poor -- and nobody who is interested in their plight. While many of them would dearly love to get offworld, transport is expensive, and outsiders can only rarely perform a service significant enough to earn the money for it.

### Known Exports

Both legal and illegal buyers come to Jackson's Whole. Ethical laboratories or hospitals can purchase cloned organs, biological samples, or weapons by the caseload -- hopefully from the more ethical Houses -- for perfectly respectable projects. The fact that Jackson's Whole often asks lower prices than Beta Colony has led many people to take their money to the Whole, rather than go for a Betan guarantee . . . Equally, mercenaries, corrupt governments, rebel conspiracies, armies, and plutocrats of dubious morality can buy whatever they want, unhindered by morality or law. This can range from the exotic to the practical: weapons, smuggling services, computer codes and viruses, and, of course, information. Such items as personally designed bodyguards or handmaid concubines are merely par for the course to the larger Houses.

Less physical services, such as money laundering or false identities, are also easily obtained. (In fact, one can buy documented pasts with full IDs quite easily. Many are registered as coming from the planet Frost IV, where a tectonic disaster wrecked the planet and its computer net shortly before Miles Vorkosigan's birth. Careful buyers should be aware that most of the galaxy's security networks know about this, and may give particular scrutiny to such IDs if they become aware of them.) The First Bank of Jackson's Whole is famous for its numbered accounts and discreet services: it has investments in gambling rackets, industrial espionage, and the slave trade from one end of the wormhole nexus to the other. Jackson's Whole provides everything, and it keeps records, the better to sell the information again later.

Characters from Jackson's Whole may be anything at all -- and may well be on the run. There is no sexual prejudice on the planet: both women and men will be treated equally unfairly. If they are members of the underclass, then they are unlikely to have significant technical skills, though they may well be experienced in hand-to-hand combat and stealth-related abilities, and probably want to get offworld. Members of a House will probably have excellent training in some area that serves the House's interests, but will also have a Duty to the House. It is possible for members of a House to go on temporary 'detached duty,' and to be allowed to operate solo, or as a group: such characters might find positions as traders or mercenaries, and would owe a lessened Duty to their House.

Exiles from a House, or characters on the run from some House, will have that House as an Enemy, and can probably expect assassins or kidnappers to be trailing them. Escaping clones may be in perfect physical condition (if intended for brain-transplanting) or have unusual modifications (see Sergeant Taura, p. 00) and may lack scientific skills, or knowledge of the worlds outside Jackson's Whole -- they are also *extremely* likely to have a House as an Enemy, and to have representatives of that House hunting them. A common Disadvantage for new Jacksonian characters is Paranoia, though this may be bought off given sufficient exposure to the rest of the galaxy.

## Earth

*@PULLQUOTE:Earth was still the largest, richest, most varied and populous planet in scattered humanity's entire wormhole nexus of explored space.*

-- Brothers in Arms

Geographically, Earth is much as it was in the 20th century; the most noticeable differences are the rise in sea level and the occasional highly radioactive area. Global warming has forced some countries to invest in large-scale building to counter the higher sea level. London, for instance, now has miles of barriers and interlocks across the mouth of the river Thames, in order to prevent the city from being flooded; Los Angeles is a lake, and New York shelters behind great dikes. Many cities are jigsaws of juxtaposed historical architecture, displaying their age in comparison to the colony worlds. Even such planets as Barrayar, with hundreds of years of human settlement and a vivid history to match it, cannot compare with Earth's sheer level of antiquity or layered depth of culture.

Earth is rather unimportant in galactic power politics, due both to a shortage of good wormholes nearby, and to governmental disunity. There are still many dozens of different governments, although most of them are joined in the Eurolaw group, which provides a regular system of laws and finance. America was one of several nations that suffered significant losses and destruction during the collapse of the space program during the late 21st and early 22nd centuries. Today, many of the industries serving spaceflight are based in Europe, and the planet's primary shuttleport is in London.

This does not, however, diminish its importance in scientific and cultural matters. Earth remains the cradle of mankind; it is rich, populous, scientifically advanced, and a good place to live. Nor is it vulnerable. The Solar Navy is well-equipped, even though it seldom has cause to go far afield, given Earth's distance from the galactic core. It protects Earth's interests by guarding Earth, and it does that quite competently.

Much of Earth's business, of course, is tourism. Visitors to Earth are likely to begin at London; it is a major historical site in its own right, has the planet's biggest shuttleport, and enjoys good transport links to the rest of the world.

It also hosts embassies for all the major galactic powers. These embassies are all situated in the same part of London, only a few kilometers apart at best, allowing a healthy atmosphere of politics and paranoia. Galactics assigned to embassy duty can look forward to days of intelligence processing, spying, and attending polite receptions and parties. Given the proximity of the embassies to one another and the general high quality of assigned staff, most of the local diplomats know each other -- and know who does the spying, and where. Well-known enemies in particular (such as the Barraran and Cetagandan embassies, who are sited only two kilometers apart) watch each others' movements carefully. Mercenaries and free agents are often hired for political maneuvering: spying, kidnappings, even murder . . .

However, Earth does not welcome crime. The Eurolaw Network enforces the law within Europe. Weapon control is strict (Weapon CR 5); anything more than a stunner is strictly illegal, and even a stunner requires a license. Simply carrying an unregistered stunner will result in a fine, if the subject has no other criminal charges on his record: heavier weaponry or harmful use of the stunner will result in heavier charges and possible imprisonment. Eurolaw's work is assisted by the fact that Earth's financial network is totally integrated. Earth citizens -- and visitors -- must carry a credit card and visitors' money is converted into GSA Federal Credits. This allows easy tracking of financial transactions, and since there is no time lag during monetary transfers, there are fewer opportunities for fraud.

Earth is at TL 8 (with a Weapons TL of 9, occasionally 10) and at the same general scientific standard as Beta Colony, even if it fails to produce the same level of innovation. Euronews Network employs a small army of reporters, and its broadcasts cover most of the world, providing up-to-date and mostly unbiased



coverage of recent events. Public transport is served by tubeway networks under and between major cities; for longer jaunts, flyers are available. Visitors can also hire personal cars or groundflyers. Using a personal shuttle, which must have come down via the shuttleport, requires official approval of one's flight plan.

Earth, of course, has many attractions besides London. In England itself, visitors can see the Unicorn and Wild Animal Park (a division of GalacTech Bioengineering) in Wooton, Surrey. Here a wide range of actual and imaginary animals have been bred, from tame lions to unicorns. (GalacTech also produces many other bioengineered products, such as living furs (p. 00) which serve as both pets and blankets.) Further afield, many cultural sites still exist, and many natural areas have been preserved or recovered. The thriving tourist industry offers a world's worth of attractions: mountain-climbing, sailing, water-skiing

## Other Locations

### Athos

Athos is an all-male society which deliberately chose isolation on the far side of the galaxy, in order to avoid contamination by galactic culture -- and especially by women. No women are permitted to land on the planet, no communications from women are accepted, and no women are ever born there. The entire population is male, generally agrarian, and -- to the surprise of many -- socially stable. It is an agriculturally based society with no cultural resources worth shipping. Athos has no jump ships of its own and almost no commerce; it depends on a yearly galactic census ship for contact with the rest of the galaxy. While Athosians have a TL of 8, and the knowledge to build jump ships, they have neither the inclination nor the finances to do so. The closest galactic outpost to Athos is Kline Station -- 2 months' travel in the census ship -- and a handful of immigrants arrive through it every year.

Two hundred years ago, the Founding Fathers of Athos settled the planet and began terraforming it, a process which still continues. They founded a society which depends on the uterine replicator for reproduction. There are two main land masses on Athos, North Province (fully developed) and South Province, which is still being terraformed. The Provinces contain a total of nine Districts. The civilized parts of the land are well-kept and well-organized: pleasant cities, ordered farm communes, beautiful seas, and patchwork terraformed farmlands. On the edges of both the Provinces are the Outlands, vast desolate wastes with extremes of climate. These are havens for misfits: they are generally frequented by outlaw Outlanders, holy but dirty contemplative hermits, and young men who have temporarily fled society and its restrictions.

While over half the population works in terraforming, or on one of the large farming communes, 2 years of military service is compulsory for all citizens, and many men choose to collect extra social credits by serving a few more years in the army. Even after that, it is possible for the General Council of Athos to reactivate any citizen's Army Reserve status at any time, and to then issue orders to the victim via the military system. This, however, is only used in cases of dire emergency, where some particular set of skills or talents is required, and where the individual in question is unwilling to fulfil his social duty to the planet.

Since there are no women on Athos, children are created by uterine replicator. A sperm sample from the prospective father is used to fertilize an egg from a collection of ovaries brought to the planet by the Founding Fathers, *in vitro*. Some of the ovarian cultures (which are identified by strings of letters and numbers; even the medical technicians who work with them don't think of them as being connected to

individual women) are believed to give sons with particular talents, such as medical skills, and are often requested by prospective fathers.

This is costly; the Reproduction Centers are the second-biggest item in the planetary budget, frequently causing squabbles over funding with the military (the third-biggest item, even though Athos has had no enemies in 200 years) and terraforming (the biggest). Each District has its own Reproduction Center (or Rep Center), and the Directors of the Rep Centers all have seats on the Population Council, which ultimately controls the Rep Centers.

In order to have a child, potential fathers must have a "designated alternate" -- a co-parent -- and adequate social duty credits. These are earned by work of social benefit, such as road repair, army service, government duties, park maintenance, care of the elderly or orphans -- any sort of work for the good of Athos as a whole, above and beyond the prospective father's own self-support. The fastest way to accumulate credits towards paternity is to act as a Primary Nurturer for someone else's sons. Normally it would take more than three years of dedicated effort to earn enough social duty credits for a single son.

Most would-be fathers enter into a mutual arrangement with someone else to become each others' "designated alternates." While this relationship can occur between anyone willing and able to become a parent, such as an uncle, a parent, or a friend, it most often occurs between lovers. It is common for designated alternates to grow mustaches, and for actual fathers to grow beards. Sexual relationships between men are perfectly normal; however, celibacy is also a valid lifestyle choice, and many communes, strict interpreters of the Founding fathers, take vows of chastity, and are highly respected for it.

@PULLQUOTE:*He was not sure if they [women] were supposed to be inciters to sin, or sin was inherent in them, like juice in an orange, or sin was caught from them like a virus. He should have paid more attention during his boyhood religious instruction, not that the subject had ever been anything but mysteriously talked around.*

@PULLQUOTE:-- Ethan of Athos

Religion is an important part of an Athosian's life. During his childhood classes, he is taught the values of the Founding Fathers, and the fact that sin and women are associated (though this area is somewhat short on precise detail). Basic Athosian ethics are inextricably interwoven with religion: cloning is a sin (the sin of vanity), and all creatures that have free will are human, and therefore their brothers, answerable to God the Father according to their abilities. This broad-minded outlook is not always applied in practice, however, especially during an Athosian's first confrontation with a woman. Women are theoretically human, but given that they are founts of sin and corruption, no right-thinking Athosian would *want* to associate with one. To make it easier for the men of Athos to avoid corruption, all incoming galactic material is automatically censored to remove mention of women, and only Clearance Level A (very high-level leaders and administrators) are allowed to handle totally uncut and uncensored galactic publications.

((BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD: The Telepathy Gene

@TEXT-BOX: Recent events, as recounted in *Ethan of Athos*, have

fallen out in such a way that the new ovaries installed in the planet's Rep Centers all contain a recessive genetic complex for telepathic ability. Therefore, the next generation of Athosians will all carry that

genetic complex as a recessive, and their own children will begin to develop functional telepathy. Future generations will contain more and stronger telepaths, until the population is totally telepathic. This may well not come to the attention of the rest of the galaxy for a while, given Athos' isolation. (It is unknown whether or not other psionic powers may also develop as a result of this gene complex.) Elli Quinn of the Dendarii Mercenaries (p. 00) was aware that the special ovarian cultures existed, but she believes them to have been destroyed. The Cetagandan Star Creche originated the gene complex and tried to recover it, but their agents did not make it home, and their last report also indicated the ovaries had been destroyed. Right now, no one off Athos, and only two men on Athos, know that the future holds a world full of mind-readers.

((END BOX))

PCs from Athos could be career military types, farmers, doctors, engineers, government representatives, or young students: any Athosian encountered offworld is likely either to be on a direct mission for the General Council, or simply wanting to escape Athos and its traditions. All Athosians offworld, however enlightened or unusual they consider themselves to be, start play with the disadvantage of Intolerance (Women) for 5 points, and quite possibly a Phobia (Women) for 5/10 points as well. Athosians working for the government will have a Duty (Athos) of 5 points, and many who strongly respect the traditions of the Founding Fathers will also have a Vow (Chastity) for another 5 points. In an adventure set on Athos, the Intolerance/Phobia (Women) should not come into play or be figured into NPC characteristics, unless female characters are directly involved.

## Escobar

Escobar is large, old, rich, temperate, and one of the major planetary hubs in the wormhole network. The system hosts wormhole jumps to Beta Colony, Sergyar, Jackson's Whole, Kline Station, and Tau Ceti V. Regular trade from Beta Colony, Jackson's Whole, and Tau Ceti V passes through. The planet is also a center of excellence for various forms of scientific training, and medicine in particular, even if it can't match Jacksonian genetic engineering -- or Jacksonian illegality. It is a reasonably democratic world, and both genders have equal rights.

The most dramatic event in recent Escobaran history is the war with Barrayar, referred to as the "120-Day War" on Escobar. An unprovoked assault by Barrayar, led by the late Prince Serg himself, was repulsed with help from Beta Colony, who contributed their latest scientific development -- plasma mirror fields (p. 00). This, coupled with the assassination of Admiral Ges Vorrutyer, caused the Barrayarans to retreat, leaving behind approximately 11,000 ground troops stranded on Escobar. These prisoners were later exchanged for the 1,000 Escobaran prisoners of war whom the Barrayarans were holding in a camp on Sergyar. Seventeen female Escobaran prisoners were found to be pregnant, having been assaulted by Barrayarans soldiers. Their unborn children were removed, placed in uterine replicators, and given to Admiral Vorkosigan to dispose of. (Players wanting a character with an extremely Unusual Background might take the role of one of these children, who grew up in the Imperial Orphanage on Barrayar.) A general opinion on Escobar, possibly fostered by this invasion, is that Barrayar is still in the middle of the Time of Isolation, and that it is a benighted world whose technical facilities barely stretch to alembics, stills, and trepanning chisels.

Escobar has a healthy (and, after the Barrayarans invasion, rather paranoid) military presence in local space. Serving military officers wear dark red uniforms, while desk officers wear dark blue. The Escobarans are also very aware of the potential dangers of mercenary fleets visiting their system. They insist that all mercenary fleets must seal their weapons at the jump point station by which they enter Escobaran space, and submit proof of purely commercial intentions before being allowed to pass.

Escobaran military inspectors check the seals on the weapons, and may also insist on personally inspecting the ships. These procedures are repeated if the mercenary ships then enter Escobaran orbit.

The planet's main shuttleport is at Beauchene, one of Escobar's biggest cities. Beauchene also hosts several clinics which may interest the galactic traveler, including the Life Center (cryotherapy a speciality). Elsewhere on Escobar one can find the Durova Group's new clinic, in which Lord Mark Vorkosigan is a secret partner, recently relocated from House Fell and Jackson's Whole (p. 00). Another location likely to be of interest to visitors -- or likely to take an interest in *them* -- is the Investigatif Federale building. This 45-story structure of solid glass houses the local law enforcement headquarters. It is considered to be one of the most beautiful police buildings in the known galaxy (though unwilling visitors are, of course, free to disagree.) The legal system is controlled by the Cortes Planetaris de Escobar.

## **Kline Station**

Kline Station sits at the junction of six wormhole routes, each within a reasonable sublight boost of it. It is a nexus for trade, repairs, refuelling, and business in general, whether legal or illegal. The station operates under incredibly strict rules of biocontrol to preserve its fragile ecosystem, given the risks of contamination from passing transients and cargo.

Kline Station was originally built 300 years ago, in order to serve the jump routes, as there was no convenient habitable planet which could be used as a nexus. Since it offered access to Jackson's Whole, Escobar, and other worlds (including Athos, though that planet is something of a backwater, galactically speaking) it was able to service a lot of trade. It changed hands several times as various factions sought it as a guardian of their gates and a source of cash flow, continually expanding and upgrading. Kline Station was one of the first space stations to be equipped with the new artificial gravity generators from Beta Colony. It still equips itself from the forefront of technological innovation -- particularly with respect to ecological and biological control.

@PULLQUOTE: *A poor fortress, but a great place to do business . . .*

@PULLQUOTE:-- Ethan of Athos

The station is currently independent, due to a combination of bribery, determination, suppleness in business practices, and internal loyalty. The residents grow up with Kline Station as their world, learning the disaster drills and regulations of the station as "dirtsiders" learn a planet's climate and geography. Over 100,000 people live on the station, rising to 120,000 from transients at peak periods of traffic.

Kline Station is composed of different pieces from different eras stitched together. The glittering wheels of the earliest sections, in the days before anti-gravity generators, spin forever to maintain their centrifugal gravity, while other, more recent parts are linked through them and around them. No section is ever truly abandoned: some are put to different uses, while others are half-dismantled for salvage.

Inside the station, there are two basic areas: the parts used by tourists, and the Stationers' own sections. Tourist areas contain cafes and restaurants, theaters, parks, feelie-dream booths, embassies, an arcade offering 85 different established religions, and of course, accommodation ranging from Economy Cabins to Imperial Lounges. Almost anything is available, if the visitor is willing to pay for it. A map or guide is necessary to avoid getting totally lost: fortunately, everyone arriving by a proper passenger ship is issued with a tiny holo-projector map.

The Stationers' own areas are much more staid, and include the equipment and functions which actually keep Kline Station operational, ranging from power sources to oxygen exchange to waste reclamation. Housing and refectories in the Stationer areas are much more basic and ordinary than the glittering tourist traps for visitors. There are cheap hostels reserved for transients with Stationer work permits, who perform jobs such as clerk, housekeeper, porter, whore, and other lower-echelon service sector employment. Stationer staff are easily identifiable by their uniforms. Docks and Locks staff wear bright red coveralls, while Security wear orange and black uniform: the lower Security ranks wear orange picked out with black, while the highest wear black with orange piping. The Biocontrol staff (or ecocops) wear pine green uniforms, slashed with sky blue, and they frequently have utility belts with a wide selection of tools.

Oxygen is provided for the station via a carbon dioxide exchange system. Huge tanks of algae, bioengineered for maximum oxygen generation and carbon dioxide absorption, keep the station oxygenated. Since the algae grows, and it would be impractical to constantly have to empty out the tanks to cut it back, specially bred newts are kept in the tanks to crop it. The newts, in turn, are used for food, to the extent that most Stationers are utterly sick of newt recipes. (Fried newt legs, cream of newt soup, newt creole, newts 'n chips, newt mousse in aspic, slither goulash, newt caviar, newt nuggets . . .) However, they sell well to downsidiers as Premium Fresh Frog Legs on the restaurant menus.

Kline Station's recycling procedures involves accurate charting of all mass transfer in the station's systems. It is very nearly impossible to "lose" a large item -- such as, for instance, a body. Throwing it out of the station airlocks would involve computer records of who opened the airlock, how, and when. Slicing it into pieces would result in the waste disposal system recording an unusually high level of protein mass. Simply abandoning it in the nearest empty room means that it will soon be found by the regular ecocop patrols. *Official* disposal of dead bodies is handled by Ecobranch Recycling, who sees to it that the dead bodies are broken down to their components and that the biomass is returned to the Station ecosystem. Clean animal mass (such as dead newts) is broken down to the higher organics and goes to the protein culture vats, while human bodies are broken down more finely and fed to the plants. Of course, every such transaction is logged on the Recycling computer system. Waste matter is tethered in bags to the outside of the station -- some of it has been there since Year One, 300 years ago.

Draconian laws are in place to protect the station's structural and ecological integrity. While most of these are biocontrol-related (see below), others deal with the full range of possible dangers. Fire control systems can seal a room if there is any report of fire inside -- or if they should be reprogrammed to do so by someone with the authority, such as an ecocop -- and pump out all the air, thus dousing the fire. Incidentally, blocking the emergency override door locking circuitry for any reason is a violation of the fire safety regulations.

(While Kline Station has stricter biocontrol laws than most intergalactic outposts, it is nevertheless a reasonable template for other isolated space stations with contained ecosystems.)

Characters from Kline Station may be either immigrants, or Stationers who were born and grew up there. Immigrants may have a background in trade or piloting, if they are on the right side of the law, or smuggling and mercenary work, if not. There is scope for visiting agents from Jackson's Whole, Escobar, Barrayar, Cetaganda, or dozens of other places. Security's lack of strong interest in matters other than Biocontrol can make Kline Station an ideal place for secret rendezvous, deniable payoffs, and simply hiding from pursuit. Stationers are likely to have been trained in the sciences, or as part of the station administration, ranging from ecocops to pilots, from clerks to cargo haulers. They may either have a strong contempt for downsidiers ("dirtsiders"), or may desperately want to live downside on a planet rather than in a space station. Free Fall skill is common, as are Phobias about dirt and contamination.

## Biocontrol

One of the greatest fears of Stationers is the possibility of biological contamination. An entire section of the station administration handles this, with unlimited powers to enter any apartment, perform any search procedure, and seize any goods (even in the case of diplomatic immunity) if there is any suspicion of biocontamination. The Biocontrol department (also known as Ecobranch) has branches in Kline Station Customs, Recycling, Infestation Control, Epidemiology, and other areas. Biocontrol staff are often referred to as "ecocops", and are frequent throughout Kline Station.

While their task is vitally necessary, given the fragile nature of a space station's ecology, they are not widely loved by other Stationers, as they tend to be arrogant and proud of their privileged status. Station Security, in particular, has far fewer rights of search and seizure than Biocontrol, and is a far less important department: they like nothing better than arresting an ecocop. Security's status is clearly shown in Kline Station Customs, where there is no particular interest taken in guns, drugs, or politics, but there are extremely thorough microbiological inspections and control procedures.

@PULLQUOTE: *"Now that's a violation of fire-safety regulations," said the burly Security man happily . . . "You Biocontrol guys may be able to barge over every Transient civil rights guarantee on hearsay evidence but I gotta have documented justification or my tail goes on the line." He sighed envy.*

@PULLQUOTE:-- Ethan of Athos

Contamination is a much more serious charge than mere murder, and nearly as bad as arson. Ecobranch Epidemiology has a hotline to take reports of diseases and vectors. (Lodging a false report of a disease is illegal, and subject to heavy fines.) If anybody has been accused of harboring infection, or is in some way connected to a possible infection, they are required to submit to whatever tests Biocontrol may demand, and are not protected by any civil rights or diplomatic immunity. The ecocops also check every area on the station regularly, looking for signs of physical infestation. Cockroaches are particularly dangerous, as they have been known to eat the insulation off electrical wiring.

## Other Planets

### Dagoola IV

Dagoola IV is a satrapy of the Cetagandan Empire. It has no strategic value or useful resources, and is unsuited to colonization. The Cetagandans use it as a prison world and hazardous waste dump. It is most notable for having been the location of the third biggest prison breakout in history, when the Dendarii Mercenaries helped 10,000 Marilacan prisoners of war escape. Despite its low importance, the Cetagandans discourage casual visitors. (If there are any useful mineral resources there, or interesting discards among the hazardous waste dumps, nobody has yet identified them.)

### Hegen Hub

The Hegen Hub is not a planet: it's a set of four space stations at the center of a group of four wormholes. Each of the neighboring planetary systems -- Aslund, Jackson's Whole, Pol, and Vervain -- owns one of the space stations. Since Komarran trade passes through Pol, and Cetagandan trade passes through Vervain, the Hegen Hub is an incredibly busy trade nexus. Each of the four space stations offers slightly different services. The Jacksonian station is maintained by a syndicate of several Houses, and provides a wide range of services and pleasures: it is run according to Jacksonian custom (p. 00). The Pol station focuses mainly on handling trade and servicing trade vessels. The Vervani and Aslund stations are more military in nature, but both have trade-handling capacities as well.

## **Illyrica**

Illyrica is famous for the design, technology, and building of spaceships. An Illyrican ship is easily recognizable by knowledgeable engineers and captains, and the planet does its best to stay on the cutting edge of space-travel technology, rivalling even Beta Colony in this area. The planet itself is situated off one of the Zoave Twilight wormholes, and its shipyards are patronized by customers from across the galaxy. Visitors may be picking up a ship that has already been ordered, seeking to have one designed to

## **Lairouba**

Lairouba is a desert world located in the Tau Ceti arm of the galaxy, and connected by wormhole jump to Tau Ceti. It has a strong Islamic influence, and women habitually obey strict Islamic clothing regulations, though they are allowed to converse with men under diplomatic situations. The head of state is known as the Baba, and rules the planet by hereditary right. Lairouba has strong ties with Earth, and many Lairoubans visit in order to make the traditional pilgrimage to Mecca. Lairouba has its own language, though many of its inhabitants are also fluent in Arabic.

## **Marilac**

Marilac is a planet poised between the Cetagandan Empire and the rest of the galaxy. It commands two wormholes, one of which leads to Xi Ceta, the other to Zoave Twilight (a wormhole nexus giving onto the Tau Ceti arm of the galaxy). Marilac is a moderately sophisticated galactic democracy, though it cannot match Beta Colony's technology. Foolishly, Marilac took a great deal of aid and money from Cetaganda, leaving it at a disadvantage when the Cetagandans invaded 7 years ago. Most of the Marilacan troops who were captured were placed in a mass prison camp on Dagoola IV: 10,000 prisoners of war under a single force dome, conforming to the letter of the Interstellar Judiciary Commission rules but violating their spirit. Fortunately, before the imprisoned soldiers could descend too deeply into barbarism and apathy, Miles Vorkosigan and the Dendarii Mercenaries staged a mass breakout. The freed prisoners mounted a resistance on and around Marilac, forcing the Cetagandans to eventually abandon their outposts there. Marilac has formed more contacts with the non-Cetagandan side of the galaxy recently, needing supplies for rebuilding, and allies to prevent another such conquest.

## **Nuovo Brasil**

This militaristic world was aggressively expansive 30 years ago, but has been noticeably less active recently. During the early days of biological experimentation, after the invention of the uterine replicator, it attempted military cloning on a large scale in order to produce the perfect army. While the precise details of the ensuing disaster never leaked off the planet, enough information got out to act as a warning to other worlds with similar intentions.

Nuovo Brasil is definitely not a tourist spot, but may be of interest to military characters, mercenaries, arms dealers, and conspirators.

## **Tau Ceti**

Tau Ceti is the planetary hub of the main Western Orion Arm group of wormholes. It is extremely busy, with jumpoints to Zoave Twilight, Orion IV, Escobar, Mahata Solaris, Lairouba, Dalton Station, and Earth. Most of the major powers have embassies there, with secure communications to their home planets. □@D-HEAD:Tau Verde IV

Tau Verde IV is a planetary cul-de-sac, only accessible through a single wormhole, which has Vega Station at the other end. While it is a fertile world, it is industrially backward, though it has an excellent rail system. The local nation states (primarily Felice and Pelia) are frequently fighting, and both sides have been known to hire mercenaries. There are a number of local deep-space rare metals refineries, which collect asteroids and extract ore from them: these are often among the first targets in the case of another civil war.

### **Vega Station**

Vega Station is a small power just outside one of the Cetagandan Empire's back doors, and at an awkward junction in the wormhole nexus. It commands three jump points. One leads to the Cetagandan satrapy Ola Three (and from there to Sigma Ceta), one to Toranira (a sometimes-Cetagandan-ally, sometimes-enemy), and the third to Zoave Twilight, which is politically neutral towards Cetaganda, but wary of the Empire. Cetaganda is interested in gaining influence over Vega Station, and was blockading it two years ago through Ola Three and Toranira against the import of any kind of major space-based offensive or defensive weapons system. (Zoave Twilight cooperated reluctantly with the blockade, under pressure.) Barrayaran ImpSec provided Vega Station with some upgraded weaponry by smuggling in three warships, using the Dendarii Mercenaries as go-betweens. If the blockade is still in progress, Vega Station is likely to need more help soon.

### **Vervain**

Vervain is a barely terraformed agricultural world, situated between wormhole jumps to the Hegen Hub and Mu Ceta. While it did quite well out of handling trade between the Hub and the Cetagandan Empire, it was recently the target of a takeover attempt by the Cetagandans. The conquest was only halted by the combined force of the Dendarii Mercenaries, Cavilo's Rangers, the Vervani fleet, and visiting warships from Barrayar who "happened" -- together with the Emperor Gregor -- to be in the area. The Cetagandan Empire later declared that the whole invasion had been an unauthorized gamble on the part of certain highly placed officers; the avowed leader, ghem-General Estanis, conveniently committed suicide. Since then, Vervain has had an extremely good relationship with Barrayar, as well as its continuing thriving trade with its Hub neighbors. Business with Cetaganda continues as before the invasion, though more guardedly.

## **No Fixed Abode**

Whether through choice or necessity, not all characters have a fixed planetary (or even space station) base or mailing address. There are many opportunities open to people who are willing to travel in order to find the best market for their skills, or to supply needs -- mercenaries, merchants, freelancers . . . While they may suffer from not having a reliable home base, or possibly not being able to call upon a government's protection (though this can vary), a fast spaceship and a well-paying job are enough to satisfy a lot of people. Some characters, like Admiral Elli Quinn (p. 00), even prefer this way of life rather than living "dirtside" on a planet.

### **Mercenaries**

A typical company of mercenaries is *organized*: it has a book of regulations, pay scales, insurance packages, paid vacations, pensions, and retirement plans. Newly arrived trainees in any good mercenary company are within their rights to ask about such things, and to find out their conditions of employment. Particularly good companies arrange cryorevival for their members where possible, and dispose of corpses according to the dead mercenary's last wishes. A mercenary fleet is often a free coalition,



composed of a number of ships, where the captains are Captain-owners of their ships, serving under an elected Admiral or similarly ranked commander. The Admiral negotiates contracts with would-be hirers, and pays the fleet's wages. The mercenaries on each ship have signed contracts with their captains, or with the Admiral of the fleet.

@PULLQUOTE: Then another voice from the back popped up. "What kind of insurance package does the, the Dendarii have? Do we get a paid vacation?"

@PULLQUOTE: And another: "Do we get any perks? What's the pay scale?"

@PULLQUOTE: And yet another: "Will our pensions carry over from our old contracts? Is there a retirement plan?"

@PULLQUOTE: -- *The Warrior's Apprentice*

The regulations cover the rights of ship captains as well as regular troopers. Their contracts often include a clause stating that if a captain loses his ship in conflict, then the commander of the mercenary fleet owes him another command. Of course, this is open to wide interpretation, depending on the situation under which the captain lost his ship, the price and availability of a new command, the business ethics of the commander, and other details. The actual enforcement of such regulations can be an awkward business, depending on where the ships are registered, if any of the people involved are citizens of planets with relevant legal codes, how much evidence gets out to the fleet as a whole, and any other considerations. In cases where money belonging to the Houses Major of Jackson's Whole is invested in the operation, it is possible that the Jacksonians can be persuaded to pay attention -- for a fee, of course.

Interstellar law also governs certain aspects of mercenary behaviour. If a mercenary fleet is active in an area, they are required by law to post warning buoys on regular merchant shipping lanes. Of course, not all mercenaries abide by this -- but their employers may insist that they do so, if only to retain popular goodwill in a private dispute. If a planet is engaged in civil war, with both sides attempting to blockade the other, then both sides will probably insist that any mercenaries they employ should keep strictly to the law. After all, annoying other galactic forces only gives them reason to support the hirer's enemies . . .

It is also common for galactic powers to take action against mercenary fleets who are being unduly awkward. An example of this would be the fleet once run by "Admiral" LaVarr, which used to show up in orbit around planets -- and get paid to go away and not make war. When the Cetagandan Navy from Tau Ceta caught up with them, LaVarr was sent to the disintegration chamber. Another example is the relationship between the Cetagandans and the Dendarii Mercenaries after the Dendarii assisted the mass Marilacan escape from Dagoola IV. A number of Cetagandan assassins were promptly sent after Admiral Naismith. (The problems of acquiring a reputation . . .)

Particularly good (or spectacularly bad) mercenary companies, past and present, acquire a reputation among planetary powers and merchant traders. Some of these include the Dendarii Mercenaries (once the Oseran Mercenaries), currently run by Admiral Elli Quinn, previously by Admiral Naismith; Cavilo's Rangers, previously Randall's Rangers, commanded by Commander Cavilo, last seen at the battle with the Cetagandans for Vervain; Selby Fleet, which was operating during the Komarran Invasion; and LaVarr's fleet, mentioned above, notable for planetary blackmail. (The Kshatryan Imperial Mercenaries are a "Foreign Legion" organization on their own planet, rather than a galactic fleet.)

### **The Dendarii Mercenaries**

The Dendarii Mercenaries were invented by Miles Vorkosigan in a moment of panic, but have become one of the galaxy's most famous and efficient mercenary fleets. They specialize in daring rescues, covert

operations, intelligence gathering, and hit and run raids. However, by galactic standards they are a small force, and not suited for all-out slogging matches in fixed spatial fields against a whole developed planet. The Dendarii also serve as a private, deniable strike force for Barrayaran ImpSec, though this is only currently known to Admiral Elli Quinn and Master Sergeant Taura, and certain people on Barrayar.

Miles Vorkosigan founded the Dendarii while attempting to smuggle a shipload of weapons onto Tau Verde IV. While attempting to control the crew of an Oseran Mercenary ship which he had just captured, he claimed to represent an elite force called the "Dendarii Mercenaries." Miles found that he had to keep on accepting new recruits, in order to keep his head above water, and by the time that the civil war was over, the Oseran Mercenaries (previously commanded by Admiral Oser) had become the Dendarii Mercenaries. In order to avoid breaking Vorloupulous' Law (p. 00), Miles persuaded the Emperor Gregor to take the Dendarii as a personal Crown Troop. Three years later, Miles used the Dendarii to investigate the situation around the Hegen Hub, and led them in defense of Vervain against the Cetagandan assault. After this, his role as Admiral Naismith was formalized with ImpSec, and for the next ten years he directed the Dendarii on private missions for ImpSec, between more normal mercenary contracts. After his cryo-revival and ensuing seizure disorder, Miles was forced to allow Admiral Naismith to "retire."

The ordinary Dendarii uniform is grey trousers and jacket with white trim, black tshirt, and grey ankle-topping boots. Dress uniform is a grey velvet tunic with white trim and silver buttons on the shoulders, and grey synthesuede boots. During combat operations, all troopers have vid pickups in the helmets of their battle armor, with infra-red, visual, and UV; they also have medical readouts and holo vid map displays, and audio channels which can eavesdrop on enemy telemetry. (All data scanned by the helmet is recorded, and can be analyzed after an operation.) The Dendarii Free Mercenary Fleet is an established corporation, registered out of Jackson's Whole. Its military ranks are Ensign, Trooper, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Commander, Captain, Commodore, and Admiral. It is comparatively easy for would-be hirers to contact the Dendarii, but Admiral Quinn checks all assignments with ImpSec before accepting them.

### **Cavilo's Rangers**

Cavilo's Rangers are an organization recently fallen into eclipse. Although they took part in the triumphant defeat of the Cetagandans at Vervain 11 years ago, they had significant losses in men and ships, and have kept a low profile of late. What is not widely known is that during the Vervain crisis, Commander Cavilo had originally planned to knock out the planet's navy, loot its treasuries and art galleries, and then hand the place over to the incoming Cetagandans, barely "escaping" in time in order to preserve her reputation as a honorable mercenary. Her plans ran afoul of Miles Vorkosigan and the Emperor Gregor. Cavilo was captured by the Dendarii Mercenaries, and forced to commit her troops to the battle on the Vervani side for real. The Vervani were not informed of the truth, and she unblushingly accepted a medal from them before leaving the Hegen Hub system at high speed.

The Rangers uniform is tan with black tabs and trim, and short black boots.

@PULLQUOTE: "Face like an angel, mind like a rabid mongoose."

@PULLQUOTE: -- Miles Vorkosigan, *The Vor Game*

Commander Cavilo is a lethal woman, with absolutely no conscience or honor, though she often finds it profitable to simulate both. Physically she is short, but extremely intense, with a slight figure and white-blonde hair cut close to her head. Cavilo either wears Rangers uniform, or goes for an extremely

seductive outfit: she has the Odious Personal Habit of using a spicy green-smelling scent, to which some people (including Miles Vorkosigan) are allergic.

Cavilo has a vengeful nature, and would no doubt enjoy the prospect of revenge on Admiral Naismith or Miles Vorkosigan (since she is aware of both identities.) However, she is a mercenary in every sense of the word, and would only be interested if there was some degree of profit involved. The Cetagandans are unlikely to employ her, having been betrayed by her once already, but Jackson's Whole might very well make a deal with Cavilo's Rangers. Barrayaran ImpSec has very complete files on her history and motivations, contributed to by both Miles Vorkosigan and the Emperor Gregor.

## Merchants

While the Komarran trade fleets are famous throughout the galaxy, many other planets have their own exports and imports, and there is always work available for free traders -- legal or otherwise. Galactic merchants range from huge fleets sent out by oligarchic families, financed by shares sold to the populace (as on Komarr) and hoping for a huge return, to miserable little broken-down freighters with barely-operating out-of-date jump drives, and underpaid crews looking for the best opportunity to desert. In between these two extremes, one finds specialist freelancers, small family traders, young hopefuls trying to make a quick fortune, hard-bitten professionals running the regular trade routes, and the occasional anonymous Vor lordling out in the galaxy for the first time, yearning for adventure. One of the most important people on any merchant crew is the accountant: the trip must be budgeted for, with full allowances being made for fuel, food, oxygen, maintenance for cargo where appropriate, and shipping charges on either end. Factoring this in with the ability to identify profitable markets and future needs, a good accountant and analyst can make or break a merchant trading crew.

Some merchants will only carry cargo when the deal has already been set up on both sides. Others are prepared to be more adventurous, and to risk the current market, by taking the goods to where they think -- or hope -- that they can find buyers. Most regular merchants on the spacelanes practise a bit of both, often at the same time, accepting a definite contract (from Beta Colony to Komarr, say) and stockpiling a few of the latest terraforming inventions in the hopes of finding a good market for them when they arrive, or along the way. Naturally, this involves a near-encyclopedic knowledge of trading opportunities, at least in the area that the merchant hopes to do business in. In the case of older traders, this may have been acquired through experience: younger ones are more likely to spend days going through local computer nets and news files, trying to find the perfect opportunity. (And even then, there is scope for potentially drastic errors -- someone wanting to quietly ship arms into the middle of a civil war may well describe it as "agricultural equipment" in his advertisement for shipping . . .)

## Common Transported Goods

High technology doesn't make itself, and it requires almost equally high technology to manufacture -- which means that there's always going to be an opportunity for someone who wants to ship the latest R&D from Beta Colony across the galaxy. This can range from large-scale antigrav units to much smaller gear, such as weaponry, spying devices, and so on. This is an excellent business opportunity for single traders with a suitcase full of samples, out on their own and trying to make a deal for later, larger shipments. (Of course, some of these salesmen can be unreliable. If you buy a cheap crate of plasma arcs at a reduced price from a shifty-looking woman who's leaving the planet that night, don't be too surprised if they have a few manufacturing defects which she failed to mention.) High technology is also a good target for pirates, as are rare ores: the fact that both will usually survive the ventilation of the spacecraft they're being carried on makes matters all the easier for the pirates.

Not everything is worth the shipping. Very few planets or space stations depend on trade for the necessities of life, such as food, water, and oxygen; they have either natural resources or protein vats. The fact that animal-tasting protein can be produced cheaply from recycled organics has largely destroyed the food trade, except in totally isolated organic-low areas (such as asteroid belts or military bases), or for the rich who enjoy the rarity of their food. Precious gems were once reliable trading goods; however, they became near-worthless as investments when it became possible to artificially synthesize them. (This caused several bankruptcies on Barrayar for those who had unwisely invested in them.)

### **Trade Opportunities**

One trade opportunity which never goes away is the arms trade: whether to armies, mercenaries, planetary governments, rebel forces, or just space stations wanting to defend themselves, everyone wants to buy the latest in weapons technology. This can range from imploder lances for spaceships, to neural disruptors (and shields to protect against them) for personal use. Of course, some planetary governments legislate against the arms trade, or tax it heavily. Beta Colony disapproves of arms deals taking place on their planet (though the Orb of Unearthly Delights (p. 00) shelters a lot of wheeler-dealing), and both Barrayar and Cetaganda will object to weapons passing through their systems that don't go directly to the government. Various Houses of Jackson's Whole will gladly offer hospitality to weapons-dealers -- in return for a share of the profits, the weapons, or the confiscation of the whole if matters go wrong.

Other trade opportunities include various forms of vegetation and seeds for space stations who want to improve their hydroponics, planets engaged in terraforming who want to establish an ecosystem, and private individuals who like gardening. This can be awkward, though, as transporting live vegetation requires care from the crew, and the traders may need to hire some horticulturalists -- or take some rapid courses in basic gardening.

Finally, one way to earn some quick cash (after the bills for food and oxygen have been deducted) is in transporting *people*, legally or illegally. Some people who are forced to travel on trading freighters are desperately short of money, and hope to work their passage or get it at a reduced rate: others are on the run from the law and can't risk the normal passenger ships. It is up to the individual captain how much he wishes to charge such travelers, whether he will risk the law on their behalf, and whether or not he will keep any bargains that he makes with them. (Jackson's Whole is always on the lookout for cheap labor who don't know the local rules, and who can be reduced to economic semi-slavery before they realize their position . . .)

### **Customs (and Bribery)**

Very few planets will allow totally free trade with no restrictions or duties on imports. The wise freighter captain will attempt to make a smooth passage through Customs. This may involve having his goods ready for inspection, appropriate bribery, or ultimately being very efficient at hiding any illegal goods. Some planets enforce rigid ethical standards, like Beta Colony; others have rigid empirical ones, such as Cetaganda or Barrayar, where items that could prove dangerous to the Empire and its servants are illegal, whatever the written regulations may say. Some places have strictly biological quarantine laws, such as Kline Station with its ecocops (p. 00), where a shipload of the latest technological weapons wouldn't be so much as blinked at, but a single cockroach could cause the entire ship to be impounded for full search and fumigation. Others have no laws at all, save those which money will buy -- Jackson's Whole in particular.

For the busy captain who doesn't want to explain his cargo to Customs, there are several possible options. A ship's bulkheads can be remodeled to create hiding places, or other cargo can be used to conceal the illegal freight. Betan technology provides the extremely useful mass detector jammers, which can be run

off a ship's artificial gravity system, and which can be used to foil weight checks. Rigorous sterilization can to some extent hide any evidence of illegal biological goods, but a really thorough check -- again, such as practiced on Kline Station -- is likely to show anomalies. Bribes to customs officials vary in reliability, and to a large extent depend on the severity of the smuggling which the official *believes* is taking place, and on the personality of the official. Blackmail is also a useful tool, and offers the added advantage that once the official has condoned the crime, he is as guilty as the smuggler, and even more vulnerable to exposure . . .

(For those interested in a trading campaign, *GURPS Traveller: Far Trader* discusses the subject extensively.)

## CHAPTER 4 -- Character Opportunities

*"I'd like to offer you an incredible opportunity," the Jacksonian told Dancer. "Now, a lot of my friends would have just pulled the trigger and got this whole conversation over with a lot faster, but I think you have potential. I think we could work together."*

*tucked into the neck of his jumpsuit. **Evidence suggests House Fell.** He shifted his weight against the handcuffs from which he was dangling. "Of course, if I wasn't fast-penta-allergic, you wouldn't have to make this offer."*

*"You're a bright one," the Jacksonian said approvingly. "So are you prepared to negotiate?"*

*The ImpSec analyst mentally reviewed the latest dossier he'd seen about current affairs in the Whole, and sighed, lowering his head. "I figured you'd catch up with me sooner or later. Yes. Okay, we have a Deal. Ryoval's dead now, and I need a new employer . . ."*

*The Jacksonian blinked, mouth gaping wide for a moment in shock. "You were one of Ryoval's? On **Barrayar!**" He brought his voice back under control. "Yes, well, we knew that he had people everywhere, but not that far. Fine. Let's deal."*

### Starting Points

Starting points levels are one of the things that will determine how a Vorkosigan campaign plays. The heroes may be unskilled novices or highly talented experts, and may be at the center of a web of useful contacts and reliable allies, or just out-of-work mercenaries in the corner of a Jackson's Whole spaceport.

#### 25-50 Points: Just Getting Started

While most of the main characters in the Vorkosigan universe are competent (to say the least), some of them start out inexperienced and naive. Starting with this level of points produces moderately competent characters, possibly with a talent or two above the average, who may be big fish in small ponds (such as their own home villages in the Dendarii Mountains). They are frequently thrown into positions where they have to learn fast, or where their limited areas of competency *are* useful -- for example, Miles Vorkosigan and Elena Bothari-Jesek at the beginning of **The Warrior's Apprentice**.

However, such characters are unlikely to be able to take down squads of trained mercenaries (though sneaking round behind them is an opportunity) or to effortlessly handle Jackson's Whole politics. Possible options for this sort of character include an ensign only just arrived at the Academy, a Barrayaran peasant arrived in the city from the mountains, or a young Betan with no offplanet experience.

An option is to allow the characters to take substantial disadvantages (e.g., a Jackson's Whole escaped clone, Komarran rebel, or runaway Cetagandan genetic experiment) to compensate for higher levels of *work* for the points -- life will be exciting, dangerous, and quite possibly short.

#### 50-150 Points: Competent Ladies And Gentlemen

This level of character is on a par with Cordelia Naismith and Aral Vorkosigan in the first book: an officer, a scientist, or some other competent professional, heroes who can risk an expedition into the heart of enemy territory and hope to succeed. They are quite capable of taking care of themselves under most

circumstances. Most of the time, they are also intelligent or experienced enough not to get into situations where they will be out of their depth.

While this sort of character won't necessarily be shaping the destiny of planets, or altering the course of wars (unless the campaign should force them in that direction), the constant political flux between planets offers scope for lower-level maneuvering and important missions. Military officers may be sent to attend political or ceremonial observances on other planets, and may find themselves embroiled in local civil wars. Scientists might get offers that they can't refuse from Jacksonian Houses -- especially if they have some particular area of expertise -- or be forced into politics in order to protect their clinics, laboratories, or planets.

### **150-300 Points: Movers and Shakers**

Characters at this level have a very definite influence on the world around them: they investigate matters personally for the Emperor Gregor, run mercenary fleets, serve as fulcrums in polite society, and are immediately courted by both sides the moment that any political dispute breaks out. They're not only professionals -- they're polished, expert professionals, mentioned in private ImpSec reports and public newscasts, and discussing scientific problems with colleagues across the galaxy. By now they have Duties and Dependents as well as Allies and Patrons, and if they represent a faction or planet, they must be careful about what they say and do.

Here, the challenge for the GM is to provide a suitable campaign which will test the characters' ingenuity and keep them interested, without bringing the galaxy to the brink of war twice a week. However, by now the characters should have a network of allies, dependents, students, friends, and armies, which can be used to lead them into social and political problems. Such ties can also prevent them from taking the easy option out ("I knock him down and break his nose!") that a junior officer might get away with. Rank and status have their liabilities as well as their advantages. Also, if the characters are all at the 300-point level, and with varying backgrounds, the GM will need to give a certain amount of thought about why they are together, and why they *remain* universe so interesting shouldn't be disregarded: a Cetagandan haut-lady in regular contact with a Vor lord will need an extremely good reason for it, and both sides will have to face the prejudices of their respective cultures.

### **Gender Roles in Different Cultures**

@PULLQUOTE:"On Beta Colony, I scarcely noticed a thing. By the time I got to Komarr, well, the personal space people gave me had approximately doubled, and their response time to me had been cut in half. By the time I hit the Vorbarr Sultana Shuttleport, the change was phenomenal. Somehow, I don't think I got all that result just from my exercise program."

@PULLQUOTE:Lord Dono Vorrutyer, on his change of sex from female to male -- *A Civil Campaign*

Very few cultures in the Vorkosigan universe have genuine equality between the sexes. Some worlds, such as Barrayar, refuse to allow women to join the Service, to hold rank as a Count (although a Countess can occasionally hold power for a male heir not of age), or to give or accept certain oaths. However, Barrayar may eventually evolve into a more equal society, and has already shown the ability to cope with "special cases" such as Madame Koudelka (p. 00) or Countess Vorkosigan. Other worlds, such as Cetaganda, have a rigid caste structure which gives strict roles to women in both the haut and ghem castes, and which shows no *capacity* enough, the two worlds (other than Earth itself) which display the least tendency towards gender prejudice are the worlds at either end of the legal spectrum: Beta Colony, where positive affirmation is a way of life, and Jackson's Whole, where gender is irrelevant to power.

This is not surprising: part of the appeal of the Vorkosigan universe is in the comparison of different cultures. Some worlds *do* treat women as second-class citizens -- this is usually a result of the planet's history, however, and is either due to a prejudice of some kind among the original colonists (as with Athos and its founders), or is related to the world's evolution (as with Barrayar's Time of Isolation.) Interstellar organizations which work via merit tend to be non-sexist (the Dendarii Mercenaries are a good example) although they will not necessarily employ equal numbers of men and women.

Questions of gender prejudice can provide a great deal of interesting roleplay, and are a common part of life on many planets. Even the inhabitants of "civilized" Komarr, given the strong influence of the Barrayaran invaders, display subtle differences in how men and women are treated. Although women on Komarr may not be outright second-class citizens, they will not be given the same respect as men by most Barrayaran visitors. Similarly, Sergyar (as an offshoot colony of Barrayar) will have laws and attitudes towards the different genders which strongly resemble Barrayar's -- although the Vicereine's influence may mitigate this somewhat.

The universe isn't going to change overnight. Barrayar will probably take centuries to achieve a true equality of the sexes in all fields, if indeed it ever does so: Cetagandan haut-ladies have no intention of leaving their bubbles or their gene-manipulation. However, individual characters may seek a new way of life, and look for opportunities not normally available to them. Unusual Backgrounds can be used to explain unlikely history or abilities -- a ghem-lady with military training, for instance, or a Barrayaran woman serving off-planet with the Dendarii Mercenaries. And cultures do slowly evolve: the uterine replicator is now a fixture on Barrayar, and women there are able to study and to hold professional positions such as attorneys, or leave the planet outright if they so desire. The ongoing changes are part of what makes the Vorkosigan universe so compelling a milieu. Past history has made the worlds, and their respective prejudices, what they are: present action (possibly by player characters) can create a new future.

## **Advantages, Disadvantages, and Skills**

### **Advantages**

#### **Clerical Investment**

Religious sentiments vary so wildly between worlds that it is difficult to give a standard price for this advantage. On Barrayar, superstition is strong but actual religious practice seems rare, while on a Jackson's Whole jump station, dozens of different faiths have establishments for paying customers. This advantage is never worth more than 5 points per level, and may -- at the GM's discretion -- be worth less, if the faith in question is small or planetary-local. Modifiers for the frequency of appearance of the religion are appropriate, with Clerical Investment in a religion that is only recognized by a single planet being worth only 2 points. (It is possible that such a faith might also have a negative Reputation associated with it, whether or not this is justified, as with the Church of Athos.)

#### **Eidetic Memory**

The 30-point version of this advantage may be acquired normally, either through natural talent or by training, and the 60-point version can also be produced with the help of an Illyrican memory-chip (p. 00), although this has its own disadvantages and dangers.

#### **Immunity to Disease**

This does not necessarily protect the character against a new laboratory-designed disease -- especially if



he's managed to personally offend Cetagandan haut-ladies or Jacksonian scientists! It will, however, give him a +2 HT bonus in all rolls to resist the disease.

### **Legal Enforcement Powers**

Most planets give their own legal officers the 10-point version of these powers, even Beta Colony: Komarr is a notable exception, as the local Security forces only have the 5-point version, while the Barrayaran ImpSec present have the 10-point version (which is most annoying to the Komarrans!) However, the 15-point version is rare, as very few planets are willing to give foreign agents that degree of autonomy: co-operation (and bureaucracy) is common, though differing legal codes can cause problems. (For instance, Jacksonian practices are substantially different from Betan laws, and Barrayaran ones are different again, and certainly none of the three cultures are willing to agree with Cetaganda about the precise definition of piracy or war crimes.) While the Interstellar Judiciary (p. 00) has established guidelines about the treatment of prisoners of war, individual definitions of crime are left to separate planets, and questions of jurisdiction must be hammered out as individual cases. Agents with supra-legal authority will usually find that it is only effective in their own world's sphere of influence, and that their parent organizations may not appreciate being dragged into awkward situations. Barrayaran ImpSec won't be interested in helping agents who get caught by the Earth authorities while trying to execute a known Komarran revolutionary . . .

### **Longevity**

Longevity is a very common advantage, given the high level of medical science prevalent on most planets.

### **Wealth**

Most planets have their own currency (though the Betan dollar is the most respected). However, wealthy on one planet usually equates to wealthy on any planet: it is generally easy to convert money from one currency to another, though if a character is using a Jacksonian money-changing facility to do so, he should keep a careful eye on the transfer fees.

### **Disadvantages**

#### **Social Stigma**

Social Stigmas vary wildly between cultures in the Vorkosigan universe: to be unprofitable on Jackson's Whole is as bad as being a woman on Barrayar, or being servitor class on Cetaganda. However, there are practically no groups which are stigmatised on *all* worlds: if a character is prepared to leave his homeworld and native people, he may be able to leave the Stigma behind. (He may also acquire other disadvantages by doing so, but that's a different story.) On Barrayar, for a man to be crippled (even if in the line of duty) is a 5-point Social Stigma, and being a mutant of some sort (or looking significantly non-human, if an offworlder) is a 10-point Social Stigma.

#### **Addiction**

There are plenty of addictive drugs available in the galaxy. Even comparatively backward worlds, such as Barrayar, are up-to-date enough to import such vices, and the wherewithal to indulge in them (illegally), as well as keeping the more old-fashioned habits, such as alcoholism.

@PULLQUOTE:"The devil's bargain part about being Vor, which a lot of people including some Vor overlook, is that our lives are made for sacrifice."

@PULLQUOTE: -- Miles Vorkosigan, *Komarr*

### **Code of Honor**

*Vor Code of Honor:* A Vor man's first duty is to his Emperor, and a Vor woman's first duty is to her husband. (An unmarried Vor woman's first duty is to her father, or to the male head of the family if her father is dead. Should all the menfolk of her family be dead, she has a duty to protect any children she may have, and to marry again to rebuild the family line.) No Vor should ever break his word once given, whatever the circumstances. A Vor man or woman owes a duty of care to his liegemen (armsmen or trusted servants, in these degenerate days) and will shelter them in illness, protect their dependents, and see them properly buried. A Vor officer will serve the Imperium, and will sacrifice himself or other Vor for the Imperium. A Vor brings up his children to serve the Imperium, and tends the graves of his ancestors, and burns their death-offerings. A Vor woman keeps the family bloodline pure, and is faithful to her husband.

The Vor Code of Honor is worth -10 points.

### **Illiteracy**

Literacy is common on all civilized worlds: only *very* backward areas, such as some of the more remote corners of Barrayar, or the depths of Jacksonian slums, will harbor illiterate peasants or beggars. It is a full -10 point disadvantage.

### **Sense of Duty**

On Barrayar, a Sense of Duty applies towards people that the character is *not* oathbound towards -- if he were oathbound to them, either as liegeland or liegeman, then he would have an actual Duty. Thus, a Vor man will have a Duty to the Emperor, to his Count (if he was sworn to him), to military superiors, and to any liegemen sworn to his service. He would have a Sense of Duty (assuming such feelings existed) towards his family, his colleagues, or anybody else whom he felt suitably strongly about.

### **Skills**

#### **Beam Weapons/TL-9**

While Plasma Arc, Stunner, Neural Disruptor, and Plasma Rifle are all beam weapons, they each handle differently, and require specialization.

#### **Fencing**

This skill is still taught on Barrayar, though duelling with the two swords is illegal, and carries the death penalty. The common Barrayaran Vor style has a longer sword in the fencer's main hand, and a shorter one (usually used to parry with) in the fencer's off hand. Non-Vor will have learned more practical fencing, and are accustomed to fighting with a single sword. If they carry a blade, then it is technically the property of their liege-lord, and must be worn in his service (or that of the Emperor) to be legal.

#### **Languages**

All galactics speak basic English, which has become the generally accepted universal language. However, some planets have their own languages, which are usually learned by locals in addition to English. The Cetagandan Empire has a private dialect, which is often used by its soldiers in combat situations outside the Empire, and for ceremonies inside the Empire.

Barrayar is unusual in having four local languages: English, French, Russian, and Greek -- though all have drifted from the original Earth dialects during the Time of Isolation, and would be difficult for a native-Earth speaker to comprehend. However, most Barrayarans only know English and a smattering of words from the other languages, unless they actually came from a local enclave who spoke that language ("Greekie hicks," for instance). Imperial Officers are given basic training in all four languages, and ImpSec agents will speak them all fluently.

### **Survival**

Skill in Survival for a particular terrain type becomes less useful when the character is stranded in familiar terrain, but on an unfamiliar planet. The basic survival techniques will still be useful, but totally strange fauna and flora can come as a nasty surprise to the best prepared explorer. ("It was dry plains territory. Nobody warned me about the jellyfish floating in mid-air . . .") If the character has Survival for the terrain type, but is on a strange planet and has no familiarity with that world's native creatures, then he takes a penalty of -2 to the skill. Having Botany-12 or higher, or Zoology-12 or higher, allows a bonus of +1 to the Survival roll for each skill separately.

### **Heraldry**

On Barrayar or Cetaganda, the "general knowledge" aspects of this skill are covered by Savoir-Faire: a member of the upper social class, be he Vor, ghem-lord, or haut-lord, is supposed to know the House liveries and symbols automatically. Actual design of new symbols or liveries, however, requires this skill specifically.

### **Law**

This skill must be purchased as a separate, specialized skill for each culture in which the character wants to have some expertise.

### **Astrogration**

Astrogration only covers navigation through normal space. Navigation through and around wormholes is covered by 5-Space Math (p. 00.)

### **Piloting/TL9 (Lightflyer)**

Whatever young Vor may think, Piloting/TL9 (Lightflyer) *cannot* default to Driving/TL9 (Groundcar), even if both are common in the streets of Vorbarr Sultana.

### **New Advantages**

#### **Hermaphrodite -- 5 points**

The character is a fully functioning hermaphrodite, with both male and female organs. While only fertile with other hermaphrodites, it is capable of both siring and bearing children. It usually lacks facial hair, and may appear either male or female to the casual glance.

**Jump Pilot Aptitude -- 5 points** □ @TEXT: This advantage is required to be a jump pilot; it often manifests as hallucinations or mental time distortions during jumps. There are no normal-space effects. □ @C-HEAD: New Disadvantages

#### **Fast-Penta Allergy -- -5 Points**

The character has a fatal allergy to the drug fast-penta (p. 00) -- either this is natural, or it has been chemically induced. If he is given a full dose of the drug, then it will be instantly lethal. Fortunately, patch-testing to check for such an allergy is a standard part of fast-penta interrogation routines. If he is patch-tested, he will have a rapid allergic reaction, developing a hard white welt surrounded by angry red weals at the location of the patch. (There will be no further ill effects for a small dose, but the welt will take a day to subside, and will be extremely itchy.)

Intelligence agencies often induce this allergy in agents who are at risk of being captured and interrogated by the enemy. It doesn't protect the agent from being forced to talk in some other way, but it does prevent him from spilling everything he knows in fast-penta-induced babble.

## New Skills

### 5-Space Math (Mental/Very Hard) -- No Default

This skill is used by scientists, pilots, and spaceship captains to plot courses around and through wormholes. In technical terms, it is defined as Astrogation (Wormholes). As it is a completely different branch of mathematics, it cannot default to normal Astrogation. Mathematical Ability *does* provide a bonus to this skill.

## Status

In the Vorkosigan universe, Status only really commands proper respect in the type of culture that it comes from. A caste-based or feudalistic society will acknowledge -- at least to some extent -- the grades of other caste-based, feudalistic societies. A total democracy, on the other hand, is unlikely to have more than a rough appreciation of the feudal society's precise levels of aristocracy (even though it may develop a vague and imprecise admiration for the fact that it *has* look for approximating strata in democratic societies -- whether or not they exist. A Vor man visiting Beta will find it difficult to accept that he's not socially superior to the local Licensed Practising Sexual Therapist . . .

In general, within or between socially stratified or feudal cultures, the full gradation of status will apply, assuming that characters understand the rough degrees of status in each other's culture. (For instance, a Barrayaran would easily understand how much respect to show an admiral from Cetaganda.) A character from a feudal or stratified society, if meeting someone else from a democracy or other loosely graded system, will attempt to classify the character according to the levels of the feudal society, and will react to him accordingly. ("Sexual therapist? I know what *that* means . . .") Democrats, on the other hand, will have far less respect for feudal graduations. Assuming they are actually aware of the nuances of other societies' social strata, they will only take half the relevant bonus or penalty on reaction rolls.

While the table below attempts to consolidate categories, it is only an approximation, given the viewpoints of different cultures. GMs who wish to apply social modifiers strictly, in societies such as Barrayar or Cetaganda, are advised to remember that military rank will cover a multitude of sins on Barrayar, and that the Cetagandans don't expect other cultures to understand their private rules anyhow.

## Status Table

*Level Typical Jobs or People*

8 Emperor of Cetaganda or Barrayar

- 7 President of Beta, haut-lord planetary satrap, Viceroys of Sergyar and Komarr
- 6 Barrayaran Count with office or military rank, Head of House Major on Jackson's Whole, head of haut constellation or ghem-clan, Barrayaran Auditor
- 5 Barrayaran Count with no other rank or office, Head of House Minor on Jackson's Whole, Barrayaran admiral or Minister, Komarran oligarchic family head, haut-lord or haut-lady, military ghem-lord
- 4 Barrayaran Count's heir, Top-rank Betan or Escobaran scientist, high-ranking Barrayaran officer, haut-lord or haut-lady, ghem-lord officer
- 3 Cetagandan ba, Barrayaran Vor, Barrayaran ImpSec officer, unemployed ghem-lord, interstellar mercenary admiral, Betan Survey Captain
- 2 Barrayaran scientist or skilled craftsman, Jacksonian head of department, Betan Mental Health Board, Barrayaran Ensign
- 1 Cetagandan skilled servitor, Barrayaran clerical staff, interstellar mercenary, Betan LPST, Barrayaran common soldier
- 0 Barrayaran peasant, common citizen, Cetagandan servitor class
- 1 Barrayaran thief, Houseless Jacksonian, unemployed Betan
- 2 Barrayaran prostitute or unacknowledged bastard

The status given to various members of the nobility varies from place to place and time to time. During the Time of Isolation, before Emperor Dorca brought the Counts under control and established such laws as Vorloupoulos' Law (p. 00), most Barrayaran Counts would have had a status of 7 -- only just below the Emperor.

## Jobs and Wealth

Most jobs have a fairly standard rate of remuneration, comparable across different planets. A ceremonial guard gets one rate of pay, a skilled scientist gets another, and so on. Unfortunately, the difference in rates of exchange between the worlds makes it hard to give precise financial figures. At the high levels, they become irrelevant: Counts and Ministers hire accountants to balance their incomings and outgoings, tot up the annual tribute to the Emperor, and make sure they're safe from an ImpSec audit. At the very low levels, in places such as the Dendarii Mountains (or other backward parts of Barrayar) or the Jacksonian slums, the economy is more barter than financial -- though even the lowliest Jacksonian can display unexpected financial acumen.

Some positions may not involve a regular allowance at all. A haut-lady will be given everything that she needs for her research or for her position in society by her constellation, but won't have a regular wage, and doesn't need a bank account. The pet scientist of a Jacksonian Major House could probably obtain any equipment that he wanted for his experiments, and any luxuries that he asked for -- but he wouldn't get a monthly salary. (Of course, private embezzling of experimental funds is entirely different . . .) After all, if he had independent funds, he might be tempted to take himself -- and his research -- elsewhere . . .

@B-BOXHEAD:Current Exchange Rates

@TEXT-BOX:Recently, the rate of exchange stood at one Betan dollar to five Barrayaran Imperial marks. While it may fluctuate slightly, this is the standard rate, and it can be assumed to remain at this level short of galactic disasters or crashes in the relevant economies. The Jacksonian dollar is much less stable, and investors can make short-term killings -- or lose a fortune.

The Job Table below is merely a set of guidelines, intended to assist GMs and PCs with basic details on jobs and comparable wealth. The GM should feel free to alter PC wealth levels as he wishes, or to "fudge" dice results where possible. He should also remember that it is possible for an extremely rich or poor character to fall outside the usual guidelines for salary -- a Count may be unusually poor, or a cook unusually well paid.

## **Job Table**

### ***Job (Required Skills) Success Roll***

#### *Poor Jobs*

Beggar (no requirements) IQ

Houseless Planetside Drifter (no requirements) ST

Peasant (no requirements) ST

Prostitute (Sex Appeal 10+) Sex Appeal-1

Rough Labourer (ST 11+) ST

#### *Struggling Jobs*

Bar Staff/Waitress (HT 11+, DX 9+) IQ

Bouncer (ST 13+, any combat skill or Intimidation at 14+) Best PR-1

Craftsman's Assistant (Craft skill at 14+) PR-1

Impoverished Scientist (any Science skill at 15+) PR

Kitchen Servant (DX 9+) IQ

Spaceport Drifter (ST 11+, DX 9+, IQ 9+) IQ

Thug (ST 13+, any combat skill or Intimidation at 14+) Best PR-1

Student (IQ 10+, at least one IQ-based skill) Best PR-1

#### *Average Jobs*

Clerk (Administration 13+) IQ

Cook (Cooking 14+) PR

Craftsman (any Craft skill 14+) PR-1

Enlisted Man (3 combat skills 14+) Best PR

Police (Legal Enforcement Powers, Streetwise, and combat skills totalling 30+) Best PR

Secretary (Administration 13+, Savoir-Faire 11+) IQ

Shopkeeper (Merchant 13+) PR-1

Sexual Therapist (Psychology 14+, Sex Appeal 12+) Best PR

Teacher (Teaching 14+) PR

### *Comfortable Jobs*

Armsman (3 combat skills 15+, Savoir-Faire (Barrayar) 11+) Best PR

Doctor (IQ 12+, Diagnosis 14+, Physician 14+, Surgery 14+) Best PR

Court Functionary (Administration 14+, Savoir-Faire 14+) Best PR

Ghem-Lady (IQ 13+, Genetics 11+, Savoir-Faire (Cetaganda)) Best PR

ImpSec Analyst (IQ 13+, Information Analysis 15+, Research 15+) Best PR

Mercenary Officer (Weapon skills, Strategy, and Tactics totalling 60+) Strategy

Military Officer (Weapon skills, Strategy, Tactics, and Leadership totalling 70+) Strategy

Landlord (Own Establishment, Merchant 13+) IQ-1

Master Craftsman (any Craft skill and Administration totalling 30) Worst PR

Merchant Trader (Merchant 14+, Administration 14+) Worst PR

Scientist (any Science skills totalling 40, Reputation +2) Worst PR

### *@TEXT Wealthy Jobs*

Admiral or General (Military Rank 6+, Status 5+, Administration, Tactics, Politics, and Leadership totalling 60+) IQ

Count (Status 5+, Legal Enforcement Powers, Administration 13+, Politics 14+, Savoir-Faire (Barrayar) 14+) IQ

ImpSec Colonel (Status 3+, Military Rank 6+, Administration 15+, Information Analysis 14+) Worst PR

Haut-Lady (IQ 13+, Status 5+, Genetics 16+, Administration 13+) IQ

Haut-Lord (IQ 13+, Status 5+) IQ

Jacksonian Head of House (Status 4+, Administration, Politics, Fast-Talk, Merchant, and Leadership totalling 60+) Worst PR

Mercenary Admiral (Status 4+, Military Rank 5+, Administration, Tactics, Politics, and Leadership totalling 60+) IQ-1

*Abbreviations:* PR = Prerequisite

### **Explanation of Wealth Levels**

*Poor:* The character is lucky to have a roof over his head. Every month is a struggle to keep body and soul together. Clothes are worn till they fall to pieces, and then darned to hold together a little longer. Nothing is ever thrown out if it can be reused or traded. Higher education is near-impossible, as is any sort of training in skills or science. The character can afford to buy cheap clothing, poor quality hand-to-hand weapons, and basic food.

*Struggling:* The character has a small house, or a sturdy shack which is unlikely to fall down for the next year or two. His job gives him enough money to live on, and a little extra. He can afford a couple of cheap luxuries every month, and is able to save up to afford higher education or training. If he needs them, he can afford decent quality hand-to-hand weapons, or cheap beam weapons (legal or not), though this would take most of his pay for a month or two. It would take years of saving for him to be able to afford even a cheap short passage on a spaceship.

*Average:* The character has a small to medium house or apartment, regular good-quality meals, and clothing and possessions of decent quality. He can afford to dress neatly, if not elegantly, and has enough spare cash for a holiday once or twice a year at a cheap resort. If he wants to, he has enough savings to be able to afford higher education or skilled training, and can indulge a hobby to a moderate extent. Should he need to, he can afford good-quality hand-to-hand weapons, or cheap but reliable beam weapons, or bribe a few cheap thugs to assault someone else. Several months' savings are sufficient to buy a cheap passage on a spaceship.

*Comfortable:* The character has a good-sized house, possibly with a maid or two, and sufficient savings in the bank to cope with serious downturns in business for a while. He can afford to eat at expensive restaurants frequently, to buy himself minor luxuries, to take holidays once or twice a year in prime resorts, and to buy passage on decent spaceships when travelling to other planets. If he needs to buy weapons, he can get good-quality ones -- even antiques, or specialty items.

*Wealthy:* The character has a large house, or even a mansion and country estate, a personal staff of servants, and a sizeable bank account. If he has a hobby or particular interest, then he can afford to buy the best in that area. He can buy a small spaceship of good quality, and hire a crew to go with it, if he is willing to make serious drains on his savings or mortgage landed property. Should he be so inclined, he can easily finance minor criminal operations, or afford personally designed products from Jackson's Whole. Shopkeepers know his name and court his business.

## **Character Templates**



This section presents a group of character templates, which can be used for PCs or NPCs. A template is a playable "character in outline," with the basic features that the concept requires, and a number of suggested options to permit individualization. GMs and players should always remember, however, that a template is only a suggestion, and not a rule -- modifications are always feasible, and in the case of a player wanting an Unusual Background for his character, desirable. A powerful character (such as a very experienced ImpSec Analyst, a ghem-colonel, or a Barrayaran admiral) should certainly have skills and abilities beyond those suggested here. The templates provided below are intended to offer a choice of certain common character types which occur in the Vorkosigan universe, and which players are likely to consider as possible PCs -- or which GMs may find useful as common NPCs.

## ImpSec Analyst

ImpSec analysts are usually to be found in ImpSec Headquarters on Barrayar, though they may be assigned elsewhere if there is urgent need. Their role is to analyze incoming information, for trends and for relevant data, and to provide the results of their analysis to the head of ImpSec -- and, ultimately, to the Emperor. They are men of proven loyalty, often twenty or twice-twenty-years men, though an exception to length of service may be made for those with exceptional talent. While they are fanatically loyal to the current head of ImpSec, and to the head of their department, they frequently have a somewhat detached attitude towards the regular military chain of command. Since analysts work with information from across the galaxy, they are less likely to be shocked by galactic cultures than most Barrayarans.

@TEXT-CSTAT:Template: A high IQ is a necessity here. Reputation (ImpSec Agent), Military Rank (Lieutenant at least), and Patron (ImpSec) are all automatic, as is Duty (ImpSec). Beam Weapons (Stunner and Plasma Arc) would be necessary for an ex-soldier, even if only at a low level, together with some skill in Karate or Judo. An Analyst should have Intelligence Analysis, all four Barrayaran languages (English, Greek, Russian, and French) at a high level, Computer Operation, Accounting, Psychology, Research at a *very* high level, Administration, Area Knowledge (the Barrayaran Imperium), and Detect Lies.

### @TEXT-CSTAT:*Customization Notes:*

Barrayaran who made his way up through the Service the hard way. Eidetic Memory (the 30-point version) and Lightning Calculator are common, while Intuition and Empathy are useful among Analysts with field assignments, or who have to handle people as well as raw data. Age may be a problem among older Analysts: if the character in question was invalidated out of the regular Service before being recruited as an Analyst, some physical disadvantage such as Lameness, Blindness, Deafness, or a missing limb is conceivable. (However, in such cases the character will also have a 10-point Social Stigma on Barrayar, as a crippled soldier.) An expert on a particular planet or culture would have high levels in Knowledge of that planet's culture and language and Area Knowledge of its geography, or training in some field of technology. Ex-officers, or Analysts whose spheres of interest include military affairs, will have Astrogation, Strategy, Leadership, and Politics. Analysts of local Barrayaran affairs will have a high degree of Savoir-Faire (Barrayaran), Law (Barrayaran), and possibly Agronomy (if local terraforming is a concern.) Analysts with a scientific background will have a high degree of skill in whichever science is appropriate -- ImpSec only employs the best. Fast-Penta Allergy (p. 00) might be appropriate, if the Analyst handles sensitive data and is a possible target for enemy agents.

## Imperial Enlisted Man

This is the standard Barrayaran man in the Service, ranging from a just-enlisted 18-year-old to a veteran who's served out his twice-twenty-years and is going for the triple term. It also covers the non-com ranks of Corporal and Sergeant, as well as the base rank of soldier. These men are the backbone of the Barrayaran system, and will have the standard Barrayaran outlook on such unusual principles as

democracy, female rights, and anything non-traditional. While a few will go on to become Armsmen to Counts, ImpSec Analysts or agents, or maybe even training as officers, most of them will serve out their career and retire to a quiet marriage and veterans' pay.

@TEXT-CSTAT:Template: High ST and DX, and possibly HT (though not necessarily IQ) are appropriate here. Military Rank (Enlisted Man, Corporal, or Sergeant) and Duty (Barrayar) are automatic for this character. Some skill in Beam Weapons (Stunner and Plasma Arc) and Brawling comes automatically from basic training, and skill levels may be very high in experienced veterans.

@TEXT-CSTAT:**Customization Notes:**

(fellow soldiers), Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Extra Hit Points, and High Pain Threshold. Equally common Disadvantages include Bloodlust, Bully, Flashbacks, Sense of Duty (Barrayar), Alcoholism, Bad Temper, and Berserk. Intolerance (to galactics, or particularly to Cetagandans) is quite common, though may become less so as Gregor's reign progresses. Physical disability is extremely unlikely, and would probably result in the soldier being invalidated out of the Service. Veterans may be trained in Karate or Judo, or both, rather than simple Brawling, and may have Leadership, Tactics, and Strategy. A veteran may also have a Patron -- either a senior officer, or someone outside the Service (such as ImpSec, or a Count waiting for a future Armsman) though this should be balanced with a corresponding Duty. Enlisted men who have served on spaceships will have Free-Fall, and may have the basics of Astrogation. Although they aren't included in Basic Training, a lot of soldiers will have some experience in Computer Operation, Administration (Military), Fast-Talk, Interrogation, and Stealth. A soldier who's been stationed in a particular area for more than a few months will have some Area Knowledge of the place -- if nothing else, he'll know where to find the alcohol -- and some training in Survival for that terrain type.

## Imperial Ensign

@PULLQUOTE: . . . the go-to-hell graduates of the Imperial Services' most elite school with visions of military destiny dancing in their heads. *We don't just march on the future, we charge it.*

@PULLQUOTE:-- ***The Vor Game***

This character may be Vor-class, or may be non-Vor attempting to rise through the Service. He has survived at least 3 years at the Imperial Academy, or one of the other schools for Service officers, and probably hopes for assignment to starship duty. Unless he possesses a very unusual background (such as Duv Galeni, who enlisted after gaining his Ph.D. at Vorbarr Sultana University) he will probably be young (early 20s), enthusiastic, and thoroughly Barrayaran in opinions and prejudices. Any young Vor who want a military career will have to take this route, and will (possibly for the first time) have mingled with talented non-Vor in the Academy, and had to cope with class prejudice.

@TEXT-CSTAT:Template: Scores of at least 11 in ST, DX, IQ, and HT are all required, as is Military Rank (Ensign), Duty (Barrayar), Beam Weapons (Stunner and Plasma Arc), and at least one of Brawling, Judo, and Karate. A Status of +2 is appropriate, together with Computer Operation, Survival, and a skill of 11 in at least two of Astrogation, Agronomy, Botany, Computer Programming, Geology, History (Barrayar), Language (any), Mathematics, Meteorology, Psychology, Free Fall, Leadership, Strategy, Tactics, Piloting (Lightflyer), and Driving (Groundcar).

@TEXT-CSTAT:**Customization Notes:**

family), Alertness, Ambidexterity, Charisma, Combat Reflexes (though rarely, alas, Common Sense), Danger Sense, Intuition, Luck, Ally Group (fellow ensigns), or a Patron. Corresponding disadvantages can include Poverty (for a struggling young ensign trying to rise through the army), Code of Honor

(Vor), Fanaticism (Barrayar, The Emperor, or The Service), Gullibility, Impulsiveness, Intolerance (galactics, usually Cetagandans), and Overconfidence. (The character is unlikely to have a Reputation, Dependents, or Enemies yet -- but give him time.) Ensigns are given a wide range of training, and while the character is unlikely to be an expert in any particular field yet, he can justify a wide range of skills. These may include any of Astrogation, 5-Space Math, Agronomy, Botany, Computer Programming, Geology, History (Barrayar), Language (any), Mathematics, Meteorology, Psychology, Free Fall, Leadership, Strategy, Tactics, Piloting (Lightflyer), and Driving (Groundcar). Upper-class or Vor cadets will also have Savoir-Faire (Barrayar), and may have any of Fencing, Dancing, or Riding (Horse).

## Imperial Officer

Whether stationed on a starship, or given planetside duty, this officer will be expected to uphold the proud traditions of the Barrayaran Imperium. (Of course, officers with dubious records serving in Camp Permafrost (p. 00) may be less enthusiastic about the whole thing . . .) A wide range of experience is possible, as the officer may have spent most of his life planetside, assigned to a single world -- or, alternatively, he may have been continuously transferred from spaceship to spaceship, and have little experience at regular planetside administration. Non-Vor officers will now have enough military rank and experience to be accepted as part of "polite society." They may even have started to play the political game on their own account, allying themselves with the Progressive or Conservative factions, and will doubtless have plans for future advancement.

@TEXT-CSTAT:Template: The officer is at least as competent as the average Ensign, and preferably more so. Scores of at least 11 in ST, DX, IQ, and HT are all necessary, together with Military Rank (Lieutenant or higher), Duty (Barrayar), Duty (his men), Beam Weapons (Stunner, Plasma Arc, and Neural Disruptor), and at least one of Judo or Karate. A Status of +3 or higher is appropriate, together with Computer Operation, Astrogation, History (Barrayar), Leadership, Strategy, Tactics, First Aid, and Savoir-Faire (Barrayar).

### @TEXT-CSTAT:*Customization Notes:*

Wealth, Alertness, Ambidexterity, Charisma, Combat Reflexes, Common Sense, Danger Sense, High Pain Threshold, Intuition, Luck, Rapid Healing, an Ally (maybe another officer, or a contact from another culture), Ally Group (fellow officers, or a political party), Strong Will, Voice, or a Patron. Corresponding disadvantages can include Poverty, Code of Honor (Vor), Fanaticism (Barrayar, the Emperor, or the Service), a bad Reputation of some sort, Addiction, Alcoholism, Bad Temper, Bully, Impulsiveness, Intolerance, Unluckiness, Dependents, a Sense of Duty towards someone, and Enemies. An officer should have a wide range of skills, which may be drawn from Astrogation, 5-Space Math, Agronomy, Botany, Computer Programming, Geology, History (Barrayar or other planets), Language (any), Mathematics, Meteorology, Psychology, Electronics, Free Fall, Leadership, Strategy, Tactics, Piloting (Lightflyer), Piloting (Shuttle), and Driving (Groundcar). Upper-class officers may also have Fencing, Dancing, or Riding (Horse).

## Idle Vor Lord

This child of privilege may never even have tried to enter the Service: or, possibly worse, he may have tried but failed the Academy examinations. He is now a man-about-town, an idle socialite, probably an object of scorn to the more conservative or military Counts. He may be ashamed of his failure to enter military service, and this may fuel a bitter sarcasm and deliberate flippancy. Alternatively, he may be a vigorous Progressive, seeking a career in the arts or sciences -- or even commerce. He might be sent to support family interests offworld -- Komarr, Sergyar, or even further out -- or might have chosen to try to make a living for himself on another planet. He could well be the second or third son of the family, and have brothers who are doing well for themselves in the military or administration.

@TEXT-CSTAT:Template: There are no restrictions on ST, DX, IQ, or HT for this character, though a high IQ can be appropriate for a disaffected aesthete. He will automatically have Code of Honor (Vor), Status +3 (Vor), and Savoir-Faire (Barrayar), but other than that, anything's possible.

@TEXT-CSTAT:*Customization Notes:*

ways. However, common advantages include Charisma, Intuition, Language Talent, Luck, Strong Will, Allies or an Ally Group, a Patron, and Wealth. Disadvantages may include Odious Personal Habits (with Sarcasm, at -5 points, being common), a minor physical disability of some sort (explaining why he didn't join the Service), a bad Reputation, Addiction of some sort, Bad Temper, Cowardice, Laziness, Lecherousness, Unluckiness, or Weak Will. Useful skills for an aristocrat living in the capital can include Piloting (Lightflyer), Driving (Groundcar), Riding (Horse), Fencing, Dancing, and History (Barrayar). If he is an artist -- though he may not necessarily be a very talented one -- then he may have skills from among Artist, Bard, Calligraphy, Musical Instrument, Sculpting, Singing, and Writing. A bookish type may have skills in Research and History, and any number of Sciences. A social character may prefer to have Carousing, Bard, Ally Group (fellow drinkers), and Area Knowledge (Vorbarr Sultana). (A truly devious character may work privately for ImpSec -- or, treasonously, for some foreign power -- and will have a corresponding Patron and Duty.)

@PULLQUOTE: *"To be a Count's sworn Armsman -- it's an honor. Only*

twenty places to fill. They take the best, they take the bloody heroes,

the men with medals, the twenty-year-men with perfect records."

@PULLQUOTE: -- Sergeant Bothari, *Barrayar*

## **Barrayaran Armsman**

Only the best of Barrayar's enlisted men can hope for a post as a Count's Armsman -- it requires an exemplary record, decorations for valor, a personal interest by the Count in question, or all three. Armsmen are totally loyal to their Count, and will have taken formal oath to him. Although they may well have wives and families, their primary duty is to their Count, and they will follow him off-planet if necessary. Armsmen may also be transferred to a Count's heir, and are permitted to take formal oath to him instead of to the Count. (However, to receive an Armsman's oath before one is confirmed as a Count or Count's heir is a serious crime -- a violation of Vorlopoulous' Law.) Armsmen may be trusted to be utterly discreet about their lord's doings, and will often be used for private, confidential missions.

@TEXT-CSTAT:Template: Above-average scores in ST, DX, HT, and IQ are automatic, as are Patron (Count), Duty (Count), and Status +2 (Armsman). Beam Weapons (Stunner and Plasma Arc) and Judo or Karate -- or both -- are also required, as the Armsman would have a military background. Ally Group (fellow Armsmen), Duty (Fellow Armsmen), and Common Sense are usual. Savoir-Faire (Barrayar) and Area Knowledge (the Count's estates) are also expected, given that the Armsman will be serving as a bodyguard and servant for his Count.

@TEXT-CSTAT:*Customization Notes:*

will usually have served at least 20 years in the Service. Common advantages include Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Extra Hit Points, High Pain Threshold, and Reputation. Common disadvantages include Flashbacks, Sense of Duty (Barrayar), Alcoholism, Bad Temper, and a bad Reputation (to those outside the Count's service). Physical disability of a not-too-serious kind is possible, and may explain why the Count took the Armsman into his service, if the disability is due to an injury suffered while

protecting the Count's interests. Fanaticism (the Count in question) is possible, though the character's background should give reasons why. Dependents (wife and/or children) are common, as Armsmen often settle down and raise a family. Leadership, Tactics, and Strategy are all common in Armsmen who rose to non-com rank, as are skills such as Free-Fall, Computer Operation, Administration, Fast-Talk, Interrogation, Stealth, and Demolitions.

## Dendarii Mercenary

Whatever his reasons for joining up, this Dendarii mercenary ("Daring Rescues Our Speciality") can look forward to a career punctuated with infiltration, combat, and secret missions (though he'll probably never know it) for Barrayaran ImpSec. He should be competent -- Admiral Quinn doesn't employ incompetents, any more than Admiral Naismith did. He may be a regular grunt soldier, or have some particular specialty, such as demolitions, spy work, piloting, accounting, and so on. Since promotion is by ability, he may well hope to rise to command rank, and own his own ship some day. A mercenary may also have private reasons for leaving his previous job and joining a spaceside organization: a criminal past, a pursuing enemy, or some other urgent need to get offplanet . . .

@TEXT-CSTAT:Template: The character should have at least 11 in all of ST, DX, IQ, and HT. He requires some skill in Beam Weapons (Stunner and Plasma Arc) and Battlesuit, Free Fall, and at least two of Judo, Karate, and Brawling. He has Military Rank (Enlisted Man at least), a Duty (Dendarii Mercenaries), Duty (Current Employer), Ally Group (fellow mercenaries) and Duty (fellow mercenaries). Since the Dendarii are a reasonably educated group, he will also have 11+ in Computer Operation, and Piloting (Lightflyer).

@TEXT-CSTAT:*Customization Notes:* Customization of this character will vary, depending on whether he's just a grunt mercenary, or if he's got particular talents in some specialized area. (If he has such talents, he may be on the fast track for promotion.) Possible advantages include a good Reputation, Absolute Direction, Absolute Timing, Alertness, Ambidexterity, Combat Reflexes, Common Sense, Danger Sense, Intuition, Luck, Night Vision, Peripheral Vision, Strong Will, Unusual Background (this can be quite common!) or a Patron. Disadvantages can include Poverty (for a mercenary who's careless with his money), a minor physical disability (though this may prevent the mercenary from serving on active combat missions), a bad Reputation, Addiction or Alcoholism, Bad Temper, Code of Honor (Pirate's), Compulsive Behavior, Greed, Impulsiveness, Intolerance, Overconfidence, Sadism, Unluckiness, Dependents, a Sense of Duty, or an Enemy. If he is a combat specialist, he may have further weapons skills, such as Beam Weapon (Neural Disruptor or Plasma Rifle), Knife, Demolition, Shadowing, or Fencing. A Dendarii who serves as a spy or who frequently deals with outsiders may have Fast-Talk, Diplomacy, Politics, Detect Lies, Languages (any), Bard, or Administration. Field medics may have Diagnosis and First Aid, while planetside teams may have Navigation, Survival, and Tracking. A fleet clerical officer could have Accounting, Administration, Electronics Operation, and Law (very useful while arranging contracts). A fleet pilot requires Astrogation and 5-Space Math, and a technical specialist needs at least one of Electronics Operation, Electronics, and Engineer. Officers, or would-be officers, will have Leadership, Strategy, Tactics, and Administration. Any Dendarii may have Carousing or Savoir-Faire. Given the wide range of backgrounds from which a mercenary can come, almost any skill or field of knowledge can be justified . . .

## Jackson's Whole Scientist

This character is a specialist in some particular area of science, though he may well have some knowledge of other, related fields. He will be employed by one of the Jacksonian Houses (Major or Minor) which provides him with bed, board, armed guards, and experimental laboratories, and which expects highly profitable results. He may be the prima donna of a hidden laboratory, the expert in an

unusual field, or one of a regular team of researchers employed in areas that interest the House. He is likely to be arrogant, obsessive, and probably somewhat amoral, and will be aware of the political currents between the Houses. After all, he might need to look for a new position at some point . . .

@TEXT-CSTAT:Template:A high IQ is mandatory, together with Patron (Jacksonian House), Duty (Jacksonian House), and a Reputation and Status of at least +2 each. Automatic skills should include Research, Politics, Computer Operation, and at least one Science at +15.

@TEXT-CSTAT:*Customization Notes:*

Calculator, Mathematical Ability, Strong Will, Longevity, Eidetic Memory (probably only the 30-point version), Language Talent, Intuition, Immunity to Disease (valuable if his daily work involves custom-tailored viruses), Allies, and Wealth (though this is probably in a secret bank account). Frequent disadvantages include Odious Personal Habits (such as constant lecturing), Age, a physical handicap of some sort, Absent-Mindedness, Bad Temper, Cowardice, Fanaticism, Greed, Gullibility, Intolerance, Megalomania, Paranoia (often justified on Jackson's Whole!), Sadism, and Enemies (other Houses, or other scientists). Common Sense is not obligatory, but has been observed among more politically savvy scientists. An Ally Group of fellow scientists is possible, as is an Ally Group (or a Dependent or two) of experimental results for those scientists who work in human genetics. Skills can include any or all of Diagnosis, First Aid, Physician, Surgery, Agronomy, Astrogation, 5-Space Math, Biochemistry, Botany, Chemistry, Computer Programming, Ecology, Electronics, Engineer, Genetics (extremely common in some Houses), Geology, Linguistics, Mathematics, Metallurgy, Meteorology, Nuclear Physics, Physics, Physiology, Psychology, and Zoology. Common practical skills include Beam Weapon (Stunner or Neural Disruptor), Judo, Piloting (Lightflyer), Driving (Groundcar), Languages, Accounting, Administration, Area knowledge (Jackson's Whole), Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, Detect Lies, Electronics Operation, and Free Fall.

## Beta Colony Therapist

A Betan therapist will usually be a native of Beta Colony, and will have been brought up according to the local principles of tolerance, understanding, open-mindedness, and democracy. He will possess numerous certifications from the Mental Health Board, and degrees in various types of psychology and psychotherapy. While he may not have specialized in sexual therapy, he will have some understanding of how a client's sexuality may affect the client's needs in treatment. He may travel offplanet if necessary, to study (possibly at Escobar), treat patients, or to help staff a facility elsewhere.

@TEXT-CSTAT:Template: Betan therapists should have a high IQ, Empathy, Duty (their patients), Duty (Mental Health Board), Strong Will, and Patron (Mental Health Board). Automatic skills should include Psychology, Diplomacy, Detect Lies, and Research. If the therapist is associated with a particular hospital or clinic, then he will have the staff of that clinic as an Ally Group, and will also owe them a Duty of service.

@TEXT-CSTAT:*Customization Notes:*

Intuition and Common Sense -- though this is certainly not automatic! Pacifism (either 15 or 30 points) is a very likely disadvantage, as is Curious -- though this will be controlled while dealing with patients. Given Betan education, most therapists will have Computer Operation to some degree: a therapist with training in self-defense will have some Judo, or Beam Weapon (Stunner), and one with additional medical training may have Diagnosis, First Aid, Physician, or Surgery. A 5-point Delusion of "Betan psychotherapy and mediation can resolve all problems" is not unknown. Honesty and Gullibility are less likely, as a competent therapist can keep his mouth shut about his patients, and can sort through truth and lies to identify a client's problems.

## Cetagandan Ghem-Lord Officer

This profile covers the average ghem-lord, who will have been raised on one of the eight worlds of the Cetagandan Empire, and is currently serving as an officer in the military. Naturally, he will be intriguing for the advancement of his clan -- and on his own behalf -- in the hope of eventually rising to the rank of general or admiral, and possibly even winning a haut-lady as a wife. As a ghem-lord will normally have to rise through the ranks, as would any officer, characters of this type can be found at any rank in the Cetagandan navy, from ensign to general.

@TEXT-CSTAT:Template: A score of at least 11 in ST, DX, IQ, and HT is appropriate, as is Status of +3 or more, Military Rank of 3 (Lieutenant) or higher, and Duty (Cetaganda), Duty (his men), Duty (his clan), Beam Weapons (Stunner, Plasma Arc, and Neural Disruptor), and both Judo and Karate. He should also have Computer Operation, Leadership, Strategy, Tactics, First Aid, Language (Cetagandan), and Savoir-Faire (Cetaganda).

### @TEXT-CSTAT:*Customization Notes:*

excellent physical shape: any of Acute Hearing, Acute Taste & Smell, Acute Vision, and Extra Fatigue, Appearance: Very Handsome/Beautiful, Immunity to Disease, Longevity, and Rapid Healing are appropriate. They may also have Alertness, Charisma, Combat Reflexes, Extra Hit Points, Hard to Kill, Common Sense, High Pain Threshold, Intuition, Luck, Rapid Healing, Perfect Balance, Reputation (whether good or bad), and Musical Ability. Disadvantages can include Fanaticism (Cetaganda), Addiction, Bad Temper, Bully, Intolerance (Barrayarans or other races), Unluckiness, a Sense of Duty, and Enemies. He is likely to have a range of skills, such as Astrogation, 5-Space Math, Agronomy, Botany, Computer Programming, Geology, Mathematics, Meteorology, Psychology, Electronics, Free Fall, Leadership, Strategy, Tactics, Piloting (Lightflyer), Piloting (Shuttle), and Driving (Groundcar). At higher ranks, political maneuvering will become more important, and the character may acquire a Patron and corresponding Duty. If the character should be engaged in a private conspiracy to overthrow the Emperor, discredit a rival, or any other similar exploits, he should have an Ally Group, a Secret, and probably an Enemy.

## Cetagandan Servitor Expert

This is one of the servitor classes, neither haut nor ghem, with neither a constellation nor a clan to protect him. His skills have earned him patronage and possibly even some respect, but he will never achieve the status of the ghem, let alone the haut -- and he knows it. Such a character may well be leaving the Cetagandan worlds (legally or illegally) with plans to make a new, more profitable life for himself elsewhere. Alternatively, he may be faithful to the Cetagandan Empire, but have to accompany his patron out into the galactic wilds. Ghem and haut artists often have a select staff of servitor technicians who provide the raw material and tools with which they compose their art. Such a technician may be far more scientifically competent than his superior, even if he lacks the latter's artistic flair -- or position in society.

Template: A high IQ is appropriate, since the tech came to the notice of the ghem or haut due to his skills. A competence of at *least* 14 in the skill or skills in which the character specializes (be it science, administration, or some other craft) is necessary: he must be extremely good at his job to have risen this far. A Patron (ghem or haut) and corresponding Duty are also required, together with Savoir-Faire (Cetaganda), Computer Operation, and Language (Cetagandan).

*Customization Notes:* Since the main requirements here are that the character be extremely competent, and be capable of functioning inside the Cetagandan caste system, there is a great deal of scope for customization in this template. (Of course, if the character is attempting to escape from the Empire, then

an Enemy (his previous Patron, or other agents of the Empire) or Secret may be appropriate.) Should the character have some ghem blood in his family tree, or (though he may not know this) be a private experiment of the Star Creche, then he may have any number of physical and mental advantages. If the servitor is a technician or scientist, then he may have the advantages of Mathematical Ability or Lightning Calculator, and will certainly have scientific skills suitable to his area of study. (He is unlikely to have any training in Genetics, however -- the haut- and ghem-ladies are the acknowledged experts here, and do not share their knowledge.) A qualified clerk or administrator will have Administration, Diplomacy, Fast-Talk, and Detect Lies, while a pilot would have Astrogation and 5-Space Math.

## **Komarran Rebel**

He is either one of the original Komarrans involved in the fighting against the Barrayarans, or descended from them -- physically, ideologically, or both. He may be an aging rebel on the run, a wanted criminal and an object of interest to ImpSec, or a young professional who dreams of a "free Komarr" no longer ruled and taxed by Barrayar. If he is the descendant of one of the original Komarran fighters, his parents may have been forced to flee Barrayaran security forces, and he may have been raised off-planet, weaned on stories of an independent Komarr. Alternatively, he may have been a child at the time of the original Barrayaran conquest, or the later Rebellion, and has only recently turned to thoughts of resistance. This template covers all types of Komarran rebels, from the utterly idealistic freedom-fighter to the

@TEXT-CSTAT:Template: Intolerance (Barrayar, 10 points) is a necessity, as is a Sense of Duty (Komarr). Fanaticism (Komarr) is also usual, as is Enemy (ImpSec). An established rebel with a history of fighting against Barrayar will have an Ally Group of other Komarran rebels, and a rebel agent should have a Patron -- someone hidden in the government, or offplanet, who is funding his work against the Barrayaran government. Practically all rebels will have some experience with weapons (usually Stunner, Plasma Arc, or Neural Disruptor).

### @TEXT-CSTAT:*Customization Notes:*

should have the Reputation (Komarran rebel, to ImpSec) disadvantage. If the character belongs to one of the Komarran ruling class (and has not yet been investigated by ImpSec) he may have Status of +5 or +6. Any rebels who were adults during the Barrayaran invasion, over 30 years ago, should have either Longevity or Age. Flashbacks, Bad Temper, Alcoholism, Bully, minor Delusions, Megalomania, and Paranoia are all suitable disadvantages, depending on the rebel's character and history. Charisma is appropriate for leaders (or would-be leaders), as is Leadership, Strategy, and Tactics. Freedom fighters with more active tendencies may have experience with Demolition, Disguise, Holdout, and Stealth. Luck or Unluckiness are both appropriate, depending on whether the rebel is successful or unsuccessful . . .



## CHAPTER 5 -- Human And Posthuman

*"For your information," Solone said frostily, "I was born from an uterine replicator. I'm as broadminded as the next galactic."*

*"The next galactic is that dead Jacksonian over there," replied Dancer, smoothing some of the antibiotic cream from his first aid kit on the cuts around his wrists. "And he wasn't broadminded at all."*

*"What were you telling him to keep him so preoccupied?" Waverd queried, coming in from the next room. The bag over his shoulder bulged with computer disks.*

*Dancer shrugged. "The full particulars of the recent ~~secret~~ Council of Counts meeting, with details on the possible prosecution of Lord Auditor Miles Vorkosigan for treason against the Imperium, unnatural liaisons with that clone-brother of his, and violation of the law by breeding up a secret army of genetically designed soldiers in the Dendarii mountains." He paused. "I'm half tempted to see if we can get that one into the report, just to have it on record somewhere. I get so few chances to be creative in this job."*

The only intelligent species known in the galaxy so far is humanity -- or biologically altered humans, still clearly kin to Homo sapiens, but fertile within their own species and large enough in number to continue their race. No aliens have yet been encountered: this is not to say that they never will be, but so far there have not been any discoveries of alien relics, let alone alien races in the flesh. However, natural selection and evolution (and in some cases, deliberate breeding) on separate planets, combined with genetic manipulation and design, have created variants on humanity who are -- in a very real way -- alien to each other. In another few hundred years, humanity will be the aliens.

### Established Races

Two variants on the human norm have established themselves -- hermaphrodites and quaddies. Both of these saw their genesis shortly after the invention of the uterine replicator, and managed to establish populations large enough to be known to society as homogenous groups. Members of both races are entirely suitable as player characters, or as interesting NPCs.

### Base Humanity

These are the regular inhabitants of the galaxy. Old-style racial prejudice has, by and large, disappeared (although some planets still have minorities in their populations, and racial divisions to match) and has been replaced by planetary prejudice. Normal humans far outnumber the variant types -- while there are occasional pockets of paranoia and dislike, nobody seriously expects quaddies or hermaphrodites of plotting to take over the universe.

Given the high TL and resultant biotechnology of most planets in the Vorkosigan universe, it is not unusual for "normal" humans to be extremely healthy (by 20th century standards) and to have one or more physical advantages. These may include Extra Fatigue (3/point), Extra Hit Points (5/point), Immunity to Disease (10 points), Longevity (5 points) on planets with highly developed medical resources such as Beta Colony or Cetaganda, Perfect Balance (25 points), Rapid Healing (5 points), and Toughness (5 points).

## Hermaphrodites

Hermaphrodites (or, in general slang, "herms") are the product of a social experiment. With the invention of the uterine replicator, a number of scientists were finally able to try out their long-held theories, and to attempt to produce the "ideal race" which would resolve all gender and social difficulties. Many of these fell by the wayside, never to be heard of again, due to inherent design problems or popular prejudice. However, one variant on humanity which succeeded -- if not quite as well as its creators might have liked -- was the hermaphrodite.

The idea, theoretically, was that since a hermaphrodite combined both genders, it would eliminate gender prejudice, and eventually the entire galaxy would become gloriously hermaphrodite, working together with no gender bars. (Not surprisingly, this idea came from Beta Colony.) To the regret of the originators, the experiment never caught on. Enough hermaphrodites were created, and later bred among themselves, to produce a working population, and to achieve popular recognition as a variant on humanity. The galaxy as a whole, however, was not convinced.

In the current period, a population of several thousand hermaphrodites lives on Beta Colony, mostly centered in the Silica district. Hermaphrodites are generally stable, reliable people, with all the usual attitudes and standards of a Beta Colony inhabitant. They rarely leave their planet, and those who do tend to be looking for excitement, adventure, and other things not usually found on Beta Colony.

A hermaphrodite has both male and female secondary sexual characteristics, and is only fertile with other hermaphrodites. Other than that, it (the correct pronoun in this case) is likely to have advantages and disadvantages typical to the average Beta Colony inhabitant. It may appear on first sight to be either male or female, depending on how it is dressed and presents itself. Many hermaphrodites work in the LPST field (p. 00), or other areas involving social dynamics: however, it is probable that any hermaphrodite making a career off-planet is going to have some unusual tastes, skills, and hobbies. These may range from life as a mercenary captain, to anything conceivable -- a childhood education on Beta Colony can cover a multitude of subjects.

## Quaddies

Quaddies (or *Homo quadrimanus*, according to their creator, Dr. Cay) are genetically modified humans, altered so that they have four arms instead of two arms and two legs. They are thin-hipped, as they don't have the hip-and-thigh muscles which legs require, and their lower set of arms are more powerful than the upper set -- grippers rather than manipulators. Quaddies are never motion-sick, and their muscles maintain tone in a zero-gee environment with an exercise regimen of 15 minutes per day. Equally, their bones don't deteriorate in a zero-gee environment as normal human bones would. Their bone marrow and reproductive organs can endure several times the normal human amount of radiation exposure without ill effects.

Approximately 200 years before the Barrayaran invasion of Komarr, shortly after the creation of the uterine replicator, GalacTech decided to create a set of beings who would provide cheap and convenient free-fall labor. Since artificial gravity had not yet been invented, workers on space stations and spaceships required frequent rotation back down to the nearest planet in order to minimize zero-gee damage to their muscles and bones. (Maintaining artificial gravity via the use of a rotating section of the spacecraft was expensive and power-intensive, and took up a large amount of space -- it was generally only done for a small part of spaceships or space stations, such as a gymnasium.)

Dr. Cay of GalacTech genetically designed the quaddies, and supervised the project. The quaddies were educated to think in communal terms first and foremost, to specialize in engineering and other work necessary to space stations and spaceships, and never to question GalacTech. Dr. Cay genuinely cared about his creations -- unfortunately, he died shortly before the project was complete, with the oldest quaddies only 15. This was followed shortly afterward by Beta Colony's development of artificial gravity, removing the purpose -- and the profit -- in the quaddies' development. GalacTech intended to sterilize their thousand quaddies, then dump them planetside for the rest of their natural lives. However, the quaddies managed to escape together with the space habitat in which they were living, and publicized GalacTech's actions, winning autonomy for themselves.

At the current date, quaddies are an unusual sight. Most of the galaxy's quaddie population lives in Graf Station, a space station out on the far side of Earth from the Nexus, close to the planet Orient IV. The system has no inhabitable planets, but considerable asteroid and cometary resources, and the quaddies make a living from mining the asteroids and servicing passing ships. It is extremely rare to encounter any of them on the Barrayaran side of the galaxy. Many galactic travellers will never have encountered any, and Jackson's Whole would be very interested in tissue samples. If moving around normal-gravity (or artificial gravity) areas, quaddies often utilize a floating chair, shaped like a cup, which allows them to float around freely. (Without such a device, they are forced to pull themselves along the ground in an ungainly, awkward way.)

Quaddie characters automatically have the *Lame* disadvantage (-35 points), but also the *Extra Arms* advantage (20 points, CI, p. 54-55). They do not currently have the *Slave Mentality* disadvantage (although this was prevalent among quaddies during the early stages of the Project), but *Selfless* (CI, p. 94), *Honesty* (-10 points), *Pacifism* (-15 points) and *Sense of Duty* (-10 points, other quaddies) are common. Quaddie communal living and work ethic also tend to produce the disadvantages *Humble* (-1 point, CI p. 91), *Workaholic* (-5 points, CI, P. 95), and a reduced form of mild *Kleptomania*, owing to lack of distinction of personal property (-5 points). However, quaddies also have the automatic advantages of *Ambidexterity* (10 points), *Rapid Healing* (5 points), *G-Experience* (10 points, CI, p. 25), *3D Spatial Sense* (10 points, CI, p. 31), and the skill *Free Fall*/(9)-18. Quaddies are only fertile with other quaddies by natural birth: any conception with other variants of humanity would result in a spontaneous abortion. (However, a quaddie could produce a child with a normal human or a herm via uterine replicator. The child would be genetically engineered to be of the same variant of humanity as either his father or his mother.)

While quaddies are frequently engineers or technicians, travelling entertainers or artists have been known -- and occasional tourists. Any quaddie characters should have a good reason for leaving their home (possibly an *Unusual Background*) and may well encounter prejudice from Barrayarans, who are likely to view them as mutants, or from humans who have not encountered quaddies before.

## Potential Alternatives

While certain worlds wouldn't *want* their population to be other than properly human (Barrayar being notably prejudiced in this matter) other planets are much more open-minded about the whole thing -- whether because they're being paid to produce modified humans (such as Jackson's Whole), or because they have plans to evolve their race (as Cetaganda does.) While Beta Colony has the biotechnology, their strong ethical values make it extremely unlikely that any new variants on humanity will emerge from their laboratories in the foreseeable future. (Of course, it is possible that the odd Betan scientist might become socially maladjusted and begin a few projects of his own . . .) Even isolated planets such as Athos might produce unusual specimens, due to introduction of the telepathy gene (p. 00) or mistaken attempts by

doctors at the Rep Centers to improve some of their stock. The story of a genetically modified human escaping from the circumstances of his creation -- or possibly a group of such characters -- would certainly produce an adequate and interesting campaign.

## Haut and Ghem

As described elsewhere (p. 00) the haut are busy evolving their own race through selective breeding and genetic manipulation, and are occasionally adding proven ghem genestock. This means that any haut characters will have certain advantages automatically: at least 1 level in Acute Hearing, Acute Taste & Smell, Acute Vision, and Extra Fatigue, 2 levels in Appearance: Very Handsome/Beautiful, Immunity to Disease (10 points), Longevity (5 points), and Rapid Healing (5 points). They may also have Charisma, Combat Reflexes (15 points), Extra Hit Points, Hard to Kill, High Pain Threshold (10 points), and Perfect Balance (25 points). All haut-women are automatically immune to fast-penta (and may not take the disadvantage Fast-Penta Allergy (p. 00)): haut-men are susceptible to it, however.

While the ghem are unlikely to be as evolved as the haut, it is quite possible that any given ghem-lord or ghem-officer of good family may have several of the above advantages. This is even more likely if he is the direct descendant of a ghem-general who was given a haut-lady as a wife, as a reward for good service. (In this case, the character should be asked to detail those events, and fill in his family history -- it is quite possible that the Star Creche will be watching the ghem-clan for future genetic stock.)

## Genetically Modified

A genetically modified variant on humanity can have whatever physical advantages and disadvantages the GM and player consider appropriate. However, the genetics will have been modified by its creator for some *purpose*: this should be borne in mind while the character is being designed. It may well involve the advantages of Unusual Background (10 points or higher) or the disadvantage of Enemies (-10 points for a single scientist, -20 points for a syndicate developing an assassin, -30 points for a Jacksonian House, and -40 points for the Star Creche of Cetaganda . . .)

Sergeant Taura, below, is an example of a variant human who was genetically modified: she is clearly non-human, although based on human genetic stock. (The fangs and 8-foot stature are something of a giveaway.) Her origin also explains her Enemy, and includes physiological disadvantages (her fast metabolism) as well as advantages. Genetic design isn't always perfect . . .

**Sergeant Taura** □@TEXT:**Taura is 8 feet tall, with long dark hair and yellow eyes, and a mouthful of fangs which gives an extremely disquieting smile. She wears a Dendarii Mercenaries uniform with sergeant's stripes, and her claws are trimmed short and polished.**

□@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 16 [80]; DX 16 [80]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 18

[125]. □@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:**

Acute Vision (+5) [10]; Alertness [5]; Combat Reflexes [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Immunity to Disease [10]; Military Rank (Master Sergeant) [15]; Night Vision [10]; Rapid Healing [5]; Toughness [10]; Patron (Miles Vorkosigan) [15]; Hyper-Strength (CI, p. 58) [30]; Hyper-Reflexes (CI, p. 58) [15]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:**

(Mercenary) [-10]; Fanaticism (Miles Vorkosigan) [-15]; Shyness (in social situations) [-5]; Duty (Dendarii Mercenaries) [-10]; Enemy (House Ryoval) [-30]; Increased Life Support/2 (CI, p. 102) [-20]; Short Lifespan/3 (CI, p. 104) [-30]; Self-Destruct (CI, p. 104) [-20]; Unusual Biochemistry (CI, p. 106) [-5]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Free Fall/TL9-17 [4]; Running-18 [4]; Stunner-17 [2]; Plasma Arc-18 [4]; Judo-18 [16]; Karate-18 [16]; Survival-12 (Woodlands) [1]; Leadership-14 [4]; Tactics-13 [4]; Stealth-18 [8]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** No fashion sense when out of uniform [-1]; Dislikes psychologists [-1] □ @TEXT: Sergeant Taura of the Dendarii Mercenaries was born -- or, rather, created -- "Nine," one of a set of ten experimental specimens designed by House Bharaputra of Jackson's Whole for a sub-planetary government who wanted super-soldiers. Unfortunately, the other nine specimens died from biological or genetic disorders, and the government in question lost the war they were fighting, resulting in the funding for the project being cut off. Taura was sold to House Ryoval, who had an interest in unusual genetic specimens.

At this point, the Dendarii Mercenaries entered the picture. They had been hired to help Dr. Canaba, a biologist under contract to House Bharaputra, escape from Jackson's Whole. However, Dr. Canaba -- who was the leader of the scientific team which designed Taura -- insisted that his "experiment" be humanely killed before he left the planet. While leading the mission to do so, Miles met Taura, and treated her like a human being rather than as a biological experiment or freak, giving her her name. (Part of this treatment involved a romantic encounter with her, which began a relationship that still continues.) Together they escaped from House Ryoval, destroying Baron Ryoval's prized banks of tissue samples along the way. Miles promptly gave her a position in the Dendarii.

Taura rose to the rank of Master Sergeant in the Dendarii Mercenaries very quickly. It was the ideal job for her, given her nature, and Admiral Naismith was an unprejudiced employer. However, her highly accelerated metabolism is likely to result in a greatly shortened lifespan: as matters stand, her hair is already greying, despite the fact that she is only 23. The Dendarii fleet surgeons have done what they can to slow down her metabolism, lowering it from approximately 6 times normal to only twice normal, but ultimately they cannot prevent her body from burning out. Taura is aware of this, but does not let it affect her behavior or work.

Sergeant Taura is an extremely compassionate woman, with an understandable loathing for the Houses of Jackson's Whole. While she is physically extremely imposing, she is capable of great gentleness toward children, or toward the weak. She enjoys dressing in extremely feminine styles in her free time, with such additions as nail varnish and exotic hairstyles, but only does so in front of close friends or lovers. Her work among the Dendarii Mercenaries frequently involves combat drops and commando missions, and she is absolutely fearless in combat. Her Hyper-Strength and Hyper-Reflexes advantages only activate under extreme circumstances, such as threats to people she loves (in particular, Miles Vorkosigan) and do not normally come into play in combat. She is aware of Admiral Naismith's true identity, but will not reveal it under any circumstances.

## CHAPTER 6 -- Technology

*"So," Solone summed up, "The Jacksonians aren't sure what's going on, only that something's going on. The Cetagandans either don't know anything's going on, or are being so subtle we haven't noticed them yet."*

*"Or maybe I'm in Cetagandan pay," Dancer suggested dryly. "It's the sort of devious plot which a finicky deskbound paranoid might think up."*

*"Leaving aside the really unlikely possibilities," Waverd said hastily, "we now know that the Jacksonians were tracing the money, not the equipment. I still think they were just looking for a way to buy into the Toscane family, and the evidence supports that. I think we need to physically follow the equipment -- I've gone as far as I can in theorizing what they could be doing with it. I need some proof."*

*travelling in keep on turning up at a different destination full of second-hand holo-novels. The stuff is just dropping out of sight."*

*holo-novels. That's not just second-hand trash they're shipping there, that's ~~are~~ second-hand trash, even if they don't realize it. If we can follow back to the original owners, we may be able to get in on the trail from a different direction." He paused, coughed. "Er, my mother likes them. Don't ask."*

As with any science-fiction setting, technology plays a major part in the Vorkosigan universe. This chapter covers some of the more important technologies and devices. In **GURPS** terms, the galactic civilization is roughly Tech Level 10, with some areas being TL9, and others as advanced as TL11 or TL12.

### B-HEAD: Medicine and Bio-Technology

Medical science and bio-technology figure prominently in the Vorkosigan universe. Doctors and medtechs are frequently seen in the aftermath of combat, and important technologies are often partly biological in nature. Viral circuitry interfaces biological and electronic systems. The products of genetic engineering are often novelties, but seen with some frequency. Some of the more prominent medical and biological products and technologies are discussed below.

Galactic medical technology is generally TL9. If the GM uses other **GURPS** supplements such as *Ultra-Tech* or *Bio-Tech*, most TL9 medicine is available on the more advanced planets like Beta Colony, Jackson's Whole, and Earth. However, some technologies are apparently unknown, or only wild rumors: anti-agathics and rejuvenation (except by brain transplant), very rapid healing (e.g., Quickheal, p. UT99), panimmunity (p. UT102), and braintaping (p. UT102).

### Body Modifications

While galactic medicine is presumably capable of major body modifications through surgery and technologic augmentation, radical changes are rarely done. This may be due to cultural reasons, or because complex augmentation renders the patient vulnerable to new ills, like having electronic implants go haywire when hit by stunner or neural disruptor fire.

Most surgical alterations take weeks or months to heal completely. Major changes, such as those used to replace Miles' bones, often require multiple surgical sessions.

This area of medicine is under-developed relative to the general medical Tech Level. When using other *GURPS* books, treat the medical Tech Level as TL8 for body modifications. Some advanced facilities might attempt TL9 or even TL10 operations, on a very expensive, experimental basis.

### **Surgical Alterations**

Any advanced surgical facility can perform extensive modifications on the body, from a simple change of appearance, through changing -- or duplication -- of finger- and retina-prints, up to fully-functional sex-change operations. Beta Colony (and its colony Escobar) have the best surgeons, but customers wanting changes not compatible with Betan ethics usually wind up at Jackson's Whole.

The range of alterations is too wide to provide detailed rules here. If needed, extensive rules for surgical alterations can be found under *Bodysculpting* on pages 61-64 of *GURPS Bio-tech*; any of the procedures listed there are probably available at either Beta Colony or Jackson's Whole.

### **Implants**

These are small bio-mechanical devices implanted in the body to provide some additional ability, or to fix a medical problem that can't be readily with drugs or surgery. All implants are powered by the body itself, tapping biological energy sources.

The cost of an implant, and the time required to recover from the operation, scale with the complexity of the device. Implants that interface with the nervous system normally employ viral circuitry, and are partly biological and partly electromechanical, leaving them vulnerable to the failings of both types of systems.

A few types of implants are detailed below, many others are possible.

*Curative Implants* repair bodily malfunctions. Known examples include implants to cure epilepsy (including Miles' variant) and to bypass disruptor-burned nerves. (The latter was a Barrayaran development, since their medical facilities weren't capable of nerve regrowth at the time.) Curative implants ameliorate various physical disadvantages, and are one game-world mechanism for buying them off.

*Jump Pilot Implants* enable the wearer to interface to FTL drive controls in starships. They include small silver contact disks on the forehead and temples to connect the viral circuitry in the brain with the control helmet. Only characters with the Jump Pilot Aptitude advantage can benefit from the implant; while others can have the operation, they will be unable to successfully pilot a starship with it. The implant also may be used for normal-space piloting, and gives a +4 to Piloting (Interplanetary) skill. Jump implants are matched to specific jump control systems; to switch ship types, a pilot requires a new implant. (Upgrading implants is not always possible, however.) A jump pilot implant costs \$4,500, plus \$1,500 for the operation.

*Memory Implants* are experimental, cutting edge Illyrican implants; only 10% of the patients successfully integrate the implant. The other 90% go crazy . . . Simon Illyan was one of the lucky ones. A successful implant confers the 60-point Eidetic Memory advantage (p. B20); unsuccessful ones cause one of a variety of mental disadvantages until removed.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:Culture and Biotechnology

@TEXT-BOX:The biotechnology available -- or encouraged -- is different for each culture. Genetic modification is practically a religion for the Cetegandans; any suitably elegant project is likely to win approval from the haut, though utility is also valued. On Jackson's Whole, anything goes, as long as it's profitable. Beta Colony refuses to permit projects that they consider unethical, or even socially incorrect. Earth is likely to disapprove of anything that will upset the social dynamics of its huge population. Barrayar is most supportive of technologies with a military application, as long as they don't upset the old Vor.

@TEXT-BOX:Body modifications (e.g., "cyborging") are relatively rare, and usually minor. This may be reflect general social pressures in galactic society, or just bad experiences with such technologies. The most obvious group of surgically-modified humans -- jump pilots -- are widely considered to be crazy.

((END BOX))

## Genetic Manipulation

Minor genetic modifications are routine to galactic medicine. Major ones are possible, but expensive, and frequently less than successful. The Cetagandans are the foremost practitioners of genetic manipulation -- for them, it's an art form as well as a useful science, and the science of genetics is heavily interwoven into their culture. Expert genetic engineers can also be found at Beta Colony, Jackson's Whole, and Earth.

Screening and repair of defective genes in gametes is routine and inexpensive. Simple design projects, such as a custom strain of bacteria, are straightforward and relatively cheap -- one example project done at Jackson's Whole cost \$50,000. Complex, multiple modifications of the human genome (such as Taura, p. 00) are rarely successful, and are *much* better, but major bio-engineering projects are always expensive, and produce many failures for every success.

The myriad possibilities of genetic engineering are far too complex to detail here. ***GURPS Bio-Tech*** has extensive coverage of the subject, providing detailed background material on the genetic engineering process, and rules for designing new species, including cost and time required. The Genetic Engineering specialization of the Genetics skill is required to perform any sort of genetic modifications.

When using the rules in ***Bio-Tech***, galactic genetic engineers operate primarily at TL9; a few TL10 genetic modifications are known, such as the Betan hermaphrodites. The Cetegandans, and a few top researchers elsewhere, border on TL10 gengineering. This elite may be capable of occasional TL11 effects, though unintended side effects are likely, and the time required for such a project will increase greatly.

((START BOX)))

@B-BOXHEAD:Butter Bugs

@TEXT-BOX:An example of cutting-edge genetic engineering, butter bugs are inch-long, cockroach-like insects which produce a yoghurt-like substance called *bug butter*. This is a perfect food



for humans, containing all the essential dietary elements, including vitamins. Most of the necessary chemistry is performed by a carefully-designed set of symbiotic bacteria living in the insect's gut. These transform virtually any organic feedstock eaten by the bug into bug butter, which the bug then regurgitates into cells in a colony hive, much like bees do with honey. Worker butter bugs are sterile, only the queen can reproduce, which it does parthenogenically, and only under the influence of special hormones.

@TEXT-BOX: The bugs have a number of applications, from producing military rations, through station life support, and up to the terraforming of alien biospheres. Since the bugs can reproduce, and can eat virtually anything, production costs are minimal. Licensing terms have not yet been established, so the pricing of a complete hive is unknown.

((END BOX))

## Cryo-suspension

Thanks to cryo-suspension, recovery is possible from nearly any traumatic injury that doesn't directly damage the brain, even if the patient has been dead up to an hour. The faster this is done, the better; after a few minutes, oxygen deprivation of the brain begins to cause irreversible damage. The suspension process takes about a minute, and replaces the patient's blood with a greenish cryo-fluid that speeds the suspension process and buffers the body against freezing damage.

Cryo-suspension requires a First Aid-2 roll by the attending medtech or doctor. Also roll vs. the patient's HT for each 5 full minutes after death, and before cryo-suspension is begun. A failure of the HT roll results in the permanent loss of 1 IQ point.

## Cryorevival

Reversing the suspension process is much harder, and takes at least an hour. The revival process is usually complicated by whatever injuries required the suspension, and is often done in an operating room, after any needed replacement organs are grown (see p. 00 [\_\_\_ Organ Cloning]). Cryo-suspension takes a toll on the body -- it adds about a month to the recovery time needed for the injuries to heal.

## Cryo-amnesia

Once the cryo patient is revived and repaired, he must make a roll against HT. A success results in immediate recovery of memory. A failure results in cryo-amnesia. This is a temporary condition, otherwise identical to the Partial Amnesia disadvantage (p. B239). Memory recovery follows a bell curve -- first a few memories, then a slowly growing number, until a *cascade* occurs, when most of the forgotten memories flood back. After cascade, recovery of the final gaps progressively slows, possibly taking years for the last few memories to come back.

If the initial HT roll is a critical failure, the patient also suffers a long-term brain-chemistry imbalance. The character *permanently* gains a -5 point disadvantage such as a weak form of Epilepsy (p. B28), or any plausible mental disadvantage. Once diagnosed, however, such problems can usually be alleviated by galactic medical technology.

To recover, the amnesiac makes an HT-5 roll each day, starting when conscious returns after revival. On a failure, only a few disjointed memories return. A success indicates a cascade has started, and most of the subject's memories will return in the space of a few minutes. A critical success completely restores all memories at once. On a critical failure, the subject believes he is *someone else* for a period of 1d weeks,

and can make no additional recovery rolls until that period ends. The drug fast-penta (p. 00) can be used to assist the recovery process; it gives a bonus of +3 to the day's recovery roll.

For 2d months after cascade, the GM should require the character to make IQ rolls occasionally when he needs to remember some piece of information he would normally know without a roll. Failure on the IQ roll means the information is still missing.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:First Aid and Healing

@TEXT-BOX:There are no rapid-healing medications or technology available for First Aid, use the TL8 rules for First Aid (p. B128). Hospital recovery is no faster than normal for most injuries, though there are some techniques that speed bone regrowth; use the TL8 line of the *Medical Care* table on p. B128.

((END BOX))

## **Cloning**

Whole-body cloning technology is available, primarily on Jackson's Whole. Forced-growth body-cloning technology (p. S89) is a mere rumor. Clones are initially grown in uterine replicators (p. 00), and then raised normally through childhood to adulthood. They can also be grown to adulthood in vitro, but the resulting body will be in poor health. Either way takes a minimum of ten years. A clone is genetically identical to its "parent", and DNA scans cannot distinguish them.

The primary use for whole-body clones is to supply a young host body for a brain-transplant from the clone's "parent," though some infant clones are created as a substitute for more conventional reproduction. Whole-body clones can also be used as a source of parts for organ transplants.

The cost to grow a clone to infancy in a replicator is \$10,000. Costs to support a clone through childhood for an eventual brain transplant vary with the degree of care given to the clone. \$2,000 a month is a typical "caretaking" charge in a good facility, providing healthy food and exercise, basic clothing and quarters, and very good security. Education is normally minimal, of course.

### **Organ Cloning**

Individual organs or limbs may also be cloned, without growing the rest of the body. This is a common treatment for cases of severe injury. Seriously injured patients are normally cryo-suspended while waiting for the replacement organs. Unlike whole-body cloning, the growth of cloned organs can be accelerated. Most organs and smaller body parts (e.g., fingers) take two to three months to clone to transplantable maturity. A complete limb can take six months or more.

A typical cost for a replacement organ or limb is \$5,000, plus \$10,000 for the transplant operation. Major transplants require six weeks or more of bed rest following the operation before the patient is mobile, and another month of physical therapy to reach normal function.

### **Brain Transplants**

A healthy brain in an aging or otherwise damaged body may be transplanted to a adult clone body. This procedure is openly available at Jackson's Whole, and might be found at black-market medical facilities elsewhere. An adult clone must be grown first, unless a similarly-compatible donor body is already available (e.g., a twin). Even with expert surgeons and the best facilities, the operation has a substantial

failure rate. Thus, it is rarely attempted until the brain donor is close to death, making the procedure riskier still.

Brain transplants require an optional specialization of the Surgery skill. There is a minimum penalty of -2 for the tricky operation, and it is frequently higher, due to the poor state of the brain donor's body and brain. The transferred subject must also make an HT+2 roll after the operation (using the new body's HT). Failure on either the Surgery or the HT roll results in the subject's death. Other rules for brain transplants can be found on p. S89.

Cost for a brain transplant is usually "all the market will bear," but will not be less than \$50,000, which does not include any costs for the host body.

## Wonder Drugs

Listed here are a few of the more prominent drugs available to galactic medicine. Obviously, many others exist. Additional wonder drugs may be found in *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, *Ultra-Tech 2*, and *Bio-Tech*. Most drugs up to TL10 are likely to be available, *somewhere*, except those that produce super-fast healing, or retard aging. Combat drugs *may* be available, but are not widely used, probably due to the side effects.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:Memory Suppression Therapy

@TEXT-BOX:This psychotherapy procedure uses a combination of drugs and hypnotic therapy sessions to block memories from conscious access. It requires daily sessions over several weeks or months, depending on the amount of memory affected. The subject will experience severe migraine headaches if he attempts to remember anything from the blocked period of time.

@TEXT-BOX:Each week of therapy can block up to a month's worth of memory, and requires a successful skill roll by the doctor, using a required specialization of the Hypnotism skill.

@TEXT-BOX:The subject may retain a few specific memories by hiding notes to read after each session. For each memory to be retained, and for which notes were kept, the subject must succeed at a Will-3 roll at the end of the procedure. If the subject has an object related to the memories to examine after each session, there is a +3 bonus to the roll. (Keeping notes or other memory aids is likely to require Holdout skill.)

@TEXT-BOX:The same procedures can be used to recover blocked memories, but much more slowly. Unless extensive information is available about the blocked period (e.g., a recording of the subject's vicinity), each day's session can initially recover only a single, specific memory, and requires a successful skill roll vs. Hypnotism (Memory Suppression)-4. Once a reasonable number of memories (GM's decision) have been recovered from a period of time, each week of therapy can recover a week's worth of memories. Recovered memories will include gaps, unless one of the skill rolls is a critical success, which recovers *all* related memories, fully and immediately.

@TEXT-BOX:A week of treatment costs \$2,500, including the drugs. The procedure is LC3 on most planets.

((END BOX))

### **Barrayaran Antibiotic Cream**

Found in military field medkits, this wide-spectrum, but relatively weak, antibiotic adds +1 to all HT rolls vs. infections from wounds treated with it. Each application lasts 24 hours, and a tube contains ten such doses.

This cream is intended primarily for first-aid only, and infirmary or hospital treatment for an infected wound makes use of antibiotics tailored specifically to counteract the invading bacteria.

A 10-dose tube of antibiotic cream has negligible weight, costs \$5, and is LC6.

### **Barrayaran Military Analgesic**

These small white pills mask pain totally for a period equal to half the user's HT in hours. Any penalties normally inflicted by extreme pain are ignored totally. The user does not roll for stun or other damage effects until his HT reaches 0, nor does he take any penalties to hit from combat wounds -- he just doesn't feel the injury at all. Because of this, he may take more damage than he realizes, and suffer more in the long term. The GM rolls secretly for damage taken by the user, and doesn't tell the player what happens until the character falls over or takes time to examine his wounds. Once the drug wears off, the user will feel the pain of his wounds.

A half-dose of the drug can be used, with the same duration; it only gives a bonus of +4 to all pain-related rolls.

One dose (a single pill) costs \$50, and is LC4.

### **Barrayaran Military Stimulant**

These small blue pills restore the user to an unfatigued state. The restored points last for a period of about 16 hours. After that, the user gets all the all the original Fatigue loss back, plus 2 more. The pills take effect in 30 minutes, cost \$25/dose, and are LC4.

Weaker forms of this drug, similar to Superstim (p. S95), may also exist.

### **Clarium**

A tranquilizer often used in military interrogations, clarium puts the subject into a docile, dreamy state of euphoria, in which he has no interest in the world around him. The drug also inhibits the transfer of short-term memory to long-term memory, so the subject will not remember anything that happens while under the drug, or anything from the previous half-hour. This memory erasure effect makes the drug a popular adjunct to fast-penta interrogations, as well as having other applications.

Clarium's effects last 3d minutes. The subject will be at -2 to DX and IQ (and -1 Move) while under the drug. The drug can be resisted with an HT-3 roll, adding bonuses or penalties to Will. The subject may also regain volition if hurt or injured; make a roll vs. HT, with a +1 bonus for every point of damage taken. A successful roll leaves the subject semi-alert, but he will still have the DX and IQ penalties.

Multiple doses of clarium are relatively safe, but subsequent doses last only 1d minutes. However, if more than four doses are given in a 24 hour period, roll vs. HT for each additional dose to avoid permanent loss of 1 IQ.

Clarium is available in both pill and injection form, both at \$15/dose. The drug is LC4.

### Fast-Penta

Used almost universally by security forces for interrogations, fast-penta is a highly-effective "truth drug." It is an injectable euphoric, inducing happiness and benign good feeling in the subject. The interrogator must be trained in the drug's proper use, since the subject rambles in free-association if not answering a direct question. Keeping the subject on-topic is the only major difficulty in using the drug, and thorough interrogations usually take hours. The effects of the drug cannot be resisted (the only known exception being Miles Vorkosigan). Repeated doses are safe, and equally effective. A fast-penta session can be cut short by injecting *fast-penta antagonist*, which counteracts the drug in 10 seconds.

Unfortunately for the subject, he will remember the interrogation clearly, and both his uncensored speech and his behavior under the euphoric are likely to be embarrassing. Unless he was given the antagonist, the victim also suffers a severe, but relatively short, hangover after the drug wears off. Use the hangover rules on p. CII167, but substitute an HT-5 roll for the hangover roll, and measure the duration in 10-minute periods rather than hours. The only remedy for a fast-penta hangover is the antagonist, which provides relief in seconds.

A fast-penta injection takes effect in ten seconds, and lasts for 1d+3 hours. It provides no direct bonus to Interrogation skill, but eliminates the subject's ability to resist the interrogation with IQ or stay silent. Under fast-penta interrogation, each question takes one minute, and a success on Interrogation skill gives a truthful and relevant answer. On a failed roll, the subject misinterprets the question, or gives an unhelpful or irrelevant answer. On a bad failure (5 or more), the subject gives a reasonable answer, but was not responding to the question the interrogator meant.

Fast-penta is a powerful pain-killer <#208> the subject suffers no pain-related effects under its influence, and adding physical torture to a fast-penta interrogation is pointless. The drug also reduces coordination; the victim suffers a penalty of -7 to DX and all DX-related rolls while under the drug.

Fast-penta comes only in injectable form, and is LC2. Each dose costs \$50. It is also readily available on the black market. The antagonist is only available as an injection, is LC4, and costs \$50 per dose.

A few people are naturally allergic to fast-penta, and people with important secrets often acquire this allergy artificially. The allergy causes anaphylactic shock and rapid death at fast-penta dosages well below effective interrogation levels. The fast-penta allergy-inducing "vaccine" is a one-time injection, and is primarily distributed by government security agencies, though it is often available through black-market channels. A dose costs \$350 (legally), and is LC2.

Skin patch test kits for fast-penta allergy are available, but rarely used by interrogators since they have a high false-positive rate. (Roll 1d: 1-5 - the test is accurate, 6 - it indicates an allergy, even if none is present.) A patch test takes five minutes, and produces a rash or hives as a positive result. A typical test kit contains 10 inch-square patches, costs \$20, has negligible weight, and is LC4.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:Gravity and Medicine

@TEXT-BOX:Since artificial gravity is widespread in Miles' time, characters will spend most of their time in places with near Earth-normal gravity. However, "free fall" or "null-gee" figure prominently in earlier stages of space colonization, as described in *Falling Free*.

@TEXT-BOX:If characters spend time in free fall, space sickness is common. There are also long-term physiological effects from living in null-gee, microgravity, or high gravity. *GURPS Space* contains detailed rules for dealing with varying levels of gravity on pages S97-102; most of the rules can also be found on in *GURPS Compendium II* books also contain rules for many other hostile-environment problems which might arise in space or on planets.)

((END BOX))

### **Liquid Bandage**

This thick, sharp-scented liquid can be spread over a wound to hold the edges together until it heals. It stops any bleeding from the wound, and is part of standard first aid treatment (p. 00 [\_\_\_First Aid and Healing box]). Without either it or plastiskin, first aid counts only as TL7 (p. B128).

A bottle of liquid bandage can cover up to 25 square inches of wounds (use a 1-inch wide swath for linear wounds), weighs 1/2 lb., costs \$10, and is LC6.

### **Synergine**

Synergine is a mild stimulant, used to treat shock and temporary nausea, including "stunner hangover." It is extremely safe, and widely available.

A synergine injection takes effect in 10 seconds, and gives the subject a roll against HT+8 to recover from physical stunning, unconsciousness, and nausea. The drug has no specific duration, since it merely accelerates the body's natural recovery processes until the subject returns to normal. Similarly, multiple doses of synergine have no additional effect. Unfortunately, it is not effective against persistent nausea, such as space-sickness, nor will it help the subject recover from stunner *fire*, just the aftereffects. Synergine costs \$5/dose, comes only in injectable form, and is LC6.

### **Medical Devices**

Many medical devices are widely used by galactic medicine. A few of the most common are listed here.

#### **Cryo-chambers**

Portable cryo units are horizontal cylinders with a clear plastic cover over the body compartment. The addition of a power pack, refrigeration unit, monitoring computer, controls, cryo-fluid tanks, and tubing cause the unit resemble a deep sea probe.

The power pack (an "E" cell") will run the unit for up to six months in a room of normal temperature, and the built-in computer can maintain proper conditions for that long without human monitoring or maintenance. A portable cryo-chamber costs \$55,000, weighs 750 lbs., and requires 50 cf of space as cargo. This does not include the float pallet needed to move the unit. Cryo-chambers are Legality Class 6.

Hospital units are similar, but are designed to run off building power, and may share refrigeration and controls among multiple patients. These fixed units often lack the "freeze down" equipment of the portable trauma-treatment units.

#### **Medscanner (Diagnostic Viewer)**

This is a compact, short-range scanner with a dedicated medical computer and a small display screen,

designed to make specific medical diagnoses when used by a trained doctor. Its effective range is only 1 yard. On a successful Electronics Operation (Medical) roll, it adds +2 to diagnosis skill. It can detect implants if the roll is made by 3 or more.

The viewer weighs 1 lb., costs \$900, and is LC6.

### **Hypospray**

This hand-held, pneumatic-hypodermic instrument, about the size of a penlight, injects drugs with a charge of compressed air. The hypospray must be touching the patient to inject its drug -- most medtechs use the inside of the elbow. Its charge can easily penetrate clothing with DR 1 or less.

It takes two turns to remove an empty vial (or pneumocharge) and replace it with a ready new one. Air cartridges are good for 100 injections. Cost is \$125, weight is 1/4 pound, and Legality Class is 6. Replacement air cartridges cost \$10.

### **Plastiskin**

This is an antiseptic plastic patch that holds wounded flesh together, taking the place of normal skin. When the flesh beneath it heals sufficiently, the plastiskin patch falls off. It is found in any first-aid kit; without either it or liquid bandage, first aid counts as TL7 (p. B128). Plastiskin can be used to cover tattoos, scars, and marks, or for disguises. It costs \$10 per six-inch square patch, has negligible weight, and is LC6.

### **Uterine Replicator**

This device allows growth of human fetuses outside the womb, from conception through normal term birth at nine months. A fetus and its placenta may also be transferred to a uterine replicator from a human mother at any stage of pregnancy, using a procedure similar to a Caesarean section, but complicated by the need to detach the placenta intact and re-embed it in the replicator's matrix.

There are several types of uterine replicators, ranging from portables to built-in hospital units. The portable units are metal and plastic cylinders about 20 inches high, and 18 inches in diameter, studded with control panels and access ports. They cost \$2,500, take up 5 cf. as cargo, and weigh 20 lbs., empty. Uterine replicators are LC4 on most planets, since they require medtechs or doctors to oversee their operation.

The placental transfer operation requires a surgeon and support staff, and is fairly routine up to about four months, after which it becomes more risky. Roll vs. Surgery skill for the transfer, with a cumulative -1 skill penalty for each month of pregnancy past the fourth. The transfer operation costs \$7,000, not including costs for the uterine replicator.

## **Personal Weapons and Armor**

Most weaponry is drawn from Tech Level 9, with the exception of nerve disruptors and stunners, which are TL10. Ordinary chemical slugthrowers are obsolete, and are only used during ceremonial occasions by some planetary civilizations. There are, naturally, minor variations on weapons, depending on the manufacturer. Unlike standard power cells, weapon power cartridges are generally shaped to fit *only* that style of weapon and some exotic designs of a "standard" item may require a power cartridge from the same manufacturer!

Weapons from *Space*, *Ultra-Tech*, and *Ultra-Tech 2*

GM permission, but many TL9 weapons or armor are likely to be available *somewhere*.

### Laser Rifle

Previously used by militaries, the laser rifle is obsolete, passed over in favor of the more powerful and versatile plasma arc (below). Some old supplies may still exist, however. (Other laser-devices, such as solderers, are still extant.)

### Needle Guns

Needle guns, also called "needlers," fire small, sharp projectiles which break into dozens of tiny needles upon impact. They are recoilless, making it easy for a shooter to get most of a long burst into the target, and damage that penetrates armor is multiplied by 2. However, against rigid armor (or spaceship walls), the needles disintegrate harmlessly; the DR of anything but open-weave armor (e.g., mail, Kevlar, and monocrys) is doubled against needles. Needlers have two settings single-shot and auto rapid-fire (with Rate of Fire 3~ or 12, respectively).

Unlike the Gauss needlers from *Ultra-Tech*

fired; instead, the projectiles *whine* through the air. Locating the shooter by sound alone requires a Hearing-5 roll.

Each needle gun magazine contains a B cell, which is almost completely discharged after firing its 100 needles. Magazines can be reloaded with a new cell and needles; this takes an Armoury roll and 60 seconds. A fully-loaded and charged pistol magazine weighs 1 pound and costs \$55. Needles are \$25 and 0.75 pound per 100.

*Needler rifles might well exist, but have never appeared in the books; they would use stats akin to the Gauss needle rifle (p. UT45), with the above modifications to Rate of Fire, projectile type, and noise.*

### Nerve Disruptors

A more lethal version of stunners (below), these neural weapons produce a blue bolt of energy that *destroys* nerves (much like a Type II Nerve Gun, p. UT56, only more potent). They are also excruciatingly painful, making them a favored weapon for intimidation.

Anyone hit with a nerve disruptor must roll against HT-3, if it is a limb or body shot, with High Pain Threshold giving a +3 bonus, and Low Pain Threshold doubling all penalties. If successful, the victim can still use any remaining limbs which were *not*

body shot, assume that a successful HT-3 roll means the damage missed the spine, lungs, and heart though other organs will need attention after the combat! The target will be at a -2 to ST, DX, and IQ until given medical attention, and any limb that suffered a direct hit is now crippled and useless, whether he made the HT roll or not! A glancing shot that only affects surface nerves is merely a -2 to DX for the next 10-HT minutes (minimum 1).

If the hit was a head shot, a successful HT-3 roll indicates the blast missed the cerebellum and the target is now "merely" severely brain-damaged. (This can be anything from a loss of 1d IQ, to becoming a walking vegetable, at the GM's whim.) A failed roll for a head or body shot indicates death, as the nerves that control breathing and heart-beat are destroyed. (The body is left in an almost-unmarked state, with only faint blistering around the target area to suggest cause of death.)



Totally sealed armor, such as found in many vac suits and all powered armor, protects from the effects; interposing someone else between oneself and the beam also protects, though the nimbus of the blast may affect surface nerves in exposed areas. At ranges beyond 1/2D, a HT-5 roll indicates that the effects are as per a superficial hit: only surface nerves are affected.

### Plasma Arcs

The swiss army knife of ranged weapons, plasma arcs come in all sizes, from large pistols to rifles to cannon. (They were common as ship weaponry as well, before the advent of the plasma mirror shield, p. 00.) They can be used to dig graves (partly vaporizing the dirt), enlarge caves, and otherwise become tools. They can be adjusted to wide-range spray (divide damage done by the half the distance to the target, in yards), or kept on one-person focus. They are one of the few hand-held weapons that can get past the DR of space armor, and are thus a favorite of militaries and mercenaries. They emit beams of blue *plasma*, fiery, larger, and more impressive than the visual effects of stunners and nerve disruptors which makes them almost as terrifying as disruptors. These use Beam Weapons (Plasma Arc) skill, except for the plasma cannons, which use Gunner (Plasma Arc). Note that only *totally* sealed armor will protect fully from a plasma arc; lesser cover may help somewhat, at the GM's option.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:Weapon Table

@TEXT-BOX:This table lists all the weapons in this section, in the standard format used in **GURPS Basic Set** and supplements.

@TEXT-BOX:***Weapon Malf Type Damage SS Acc 1/2D Max Wt. RoF Shots ST Rcl. Cost LC TL Page***

@TEXT-BOX:Laser Rifle Crit. Imp. 2d 15 13 900 1,200 5 3~ 12/C - 0 \$2,000 4 8 00

@TEXT-BOX:Needle gun Crit. Imp. 1d+2 10 4 100 300 1.5 12 100/B - 0 2,000 2 8 00

@TEXT-BOX:Neural Disruptor Pistol Ver. Spcl. Spcl. 8 4 15 30 1 3~ 30/C - 0 1,000 1 10 00

@TEXT-BOX:Plasma Arc Crit. Spcl. 10d 4 12 70 150 4 1 8/C 6 0 1,300 2 9 00

@TEXT-BOX:Plasma Arc Rifle Crit. Spcl. 8d x 2 5 16 80 250 12 1 70/D 9 0 5,200 0 9 00

@TEXT-BOX:Plasma Cannon Ver. Spcl. 3d x 10 6 20 100 300 45 1 40/D 12T 0 10,000 0 9 00

@TEXT-BOX:Light Stun Pistol Ver. Spcl. - 6 4 12 20 1 3~ 40/C - 800 0 6 10 00

@TEXT-BOX:Heavy Stun Pistol Ver. Spcl. - 6 4 25 50 2.5 3~ 20/C - 0 1000 5 10 00

((END BOX))

### Stunners

These neural-energy weapons are non-lethal, and thus legal on all but the most restrictive worlds. (They often require a license to carry, though.) They are fired using Beam Weapons (Neural) skill. They do not work through sealed armor, such as spacesuits, and are therefore absent from most serious combats but

with unarmored combatants, rounds of "stunner tag" are a favored tactic. Any direct hit on a target renders him unconscious, but a Dodge that fails by 1 or 2 indicates only a partial, physical stun (which is quite painful) instead of total unconsciousness: roll HT to remain conscious; on a critical success, the physical numbness of the stun is also negated. Likewise, the full effects can be avoided either by being beyond 1/2D range by interposing someone else's body or similar suitable cover between oneself and the blue energy beam, though the nimbus of the blast may deliver partial stun or at least discomfort.

Stunners come in two types of pistol: light and heavy. (Many stunners also have settings, from "low" to "maximum" the "low" setting requires actual contact to the back of the head to render the target unconscious.) Victims of light stun will awaken in 20-HT minutes, while victims of heavy stun awaken in 15-HT *hours* (minimum 1, in each case). Both add certain side-effects, evident upon awakening: muscle aches and spasms (primarily from heavy stun), migraines (as per the disadvantage, p. C182; also primarily found from heavy stun), and nausea (treat as space sickness, p. C1136, lasting for 30-HT minutes). The nausea and headache effects can be alleviated by administering synergine (p. 00), but otherwise combine to produce a -2 to IQ and DX for an additional 20-HT minutes after awakening.

If a stunner's power cell is nearly spent, it may still fire, with results similar to those for a range beyond 1/2D.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:Soltoxin Gas

@TEXT-BOX:Developed by the Barrayan military, this war gas was still stocked in some of their armouries around the time of Miles' birth. Soltoxin is a catalytic agent that breaks down cellular walls, progressively dissolving any soft tissue it contacts. Death normally occurs as the lung tissue breaks down and the lungs fill with blood, but soltoxin gas affects *all* tissue it contacts, including the skin.

@TEXT-BOX:Fortunately, soltoxin is water-soluble, and exterior exposure can be treated with a thorough and vigorous shower, if done soon enough. If inhaled, however, the only treatment is a gaseous counter-agent which combines with the soltoxin molecule, rendering it inert. The antidote is very rarely found outside major military facilities.

@TEXT-BOX:*Any* contact with soltoxin will typically cause death in about an hour, though heavy exposure accelerates the process. Roll vs. HT every five minutes, losing 1 hit point on a success, and 2 on a failure. If the victim avoided breathing the gas at all, add a +5 to HT for these rolls; for each breath after the first, use a cumulative penalty of -1 to the HT roll. HT loss stops after thorough washing and use of the antidote gas (if the soltoxin was inhaled).

@TEXT-BOX:Complications from soltoxin exposure in survivors include pneumonia and male infertility. The antidote gas also has side-effects on the body's calcium chemistry, often resulting in arthritic problems later in life. In developing fetuses, it destroys bone development, resulting in severe, and normally deadly, birth defects.

@TEXT-BOX:An experimental in vitro treatment devised by Dr. Vaargan, an ImpMil chemical warfare expert, allowed Miles to survive, despite his exposure to the antidote at a gestational age of five months.

@TEXT-BOX:One dose (p. B132) of soltoxin gas costs \$500. Soltoxin is Legality Class 0, and the only known source is ImpMil.

((END BOX))

## Grenades

All grenades should be used in an appropriate grenade launcher unless the user has a *very* strong throwing arm. (Pistol-sized, or crossbow-style grenade launchers are both available; grenades need to be bought for the style of launcher in question. See pp. B114-115 and B207 for crossbow information; In addition to the grenades from the *GURPS Basic Set*, pp. B121-122 and B209, and *GURPS Space*, p. 78 (though many of those are obsolete and not commonly found in use), the following types of grenades are available:

*Sonic Grenades:* The basic form of these grenades contain a high-power sonic generator that produces a pulse of concentrated sound that liquefies flesh and bone, doing 7d damage to anyone within four yards of the target hex. This damage continues every turn for three turns, after which the grenade burns out. Any armor in the area of effect loses 3 DR per turn. Each turn, anyone in the area of effect must roll against HT or his eardrums will rupture, deafening him until they are replaced. Wearing a sealed helmet protects totally unless the damage rolled exceeds the helmet's DR then a HT roll is needed.

There are other versions of sonic grenades, from ones used for assassinations which do half damage, only within one hex (though nearby bystanders must make an HT roll or be deafened for 1d days), to Class Four sonic grenades which can set up resonance reflections that will emulsify passengers within a sealed groundcar (14d damage, 8 yard radius, and if DR is penetrated, it gives *no* protection!).

Sonic grenades cost \$20 per die of damage that they do (the basic version costs \$140 per grenade), and are LC 1.

*Needle Grenades:* Also known as projectile spine-grenades, these are a larger and more vicious version of the needlegun ammo. They are most effective when impacting the target directly, but have a limited ability to penetrate armor. The initial damage is 2d (crushing), but once it encounters resistance equivalent to a human body, it bursts into dozens of sharp-edged fragments. If it has actually impacted upon (within) an unarmored victim, these do 8d+8 impaling damage to that target only; if it has merely shattered upon armor or a hard surface, it does 8d+8 cutting damage to those within 1 hex. Needle Grenades cost \$30 each, and are Legality Class 1.

## Shock Sticks

These painful, but (usually) non-lethal melee weapons, resembling short batons and based on stunner neuro-tech, are favored by those who wish to take prisoners -- or sadists. Sometimes both. They can be found upon Jackson's Whole "police," or in the hands of honor guards who are denied more dangerous arms. They require Knife or Shortsword skill.

Shock sticks can be set to different levels of stimulation, from merely unpleasant (make an HT roll to avoid being physically stunned) to painful (-1 or -2 penalty to HT rolls), to excruciating (-3 penalty). High Pain Threshold gives a +3 bonus to the roll, while Low Pain Threshold doubles any penalties. Each additional hit lowers the resisting HT roll by 1!

With a successful HT roll (minus any penalties), the victim can still function, but at (setting's penalty -1) to ST, DX, IQ, and all skills based on those attributes for Will-15 turns (minimum one turn). If hit on a limb, the limb is useless for the same time. If the victim *fails* the HT roll, he loses 1d fatigue and is in such agony that he can do *nothing* for this time; a critical failure results in unconsciousness for 20-HT minutes

(minimum 1). With each additional hit, start recovery time over, but penalties to attributes are *not* cumulative.

*(Though very similar to Neurolashes, p. S83, shock sticks have never appeared in a "type II" mode, nor with neural disruptor effects (above).)*

### **Vibra-blades**

These weapons are commonly found as daggers, knives, or surgical scalpels; the blade vibrates thousand of times per second, adding 1d to the regular damage of the weapon. The vibration is so rapid as to be visually invisible, but a Hearing roll made from up to a hex away will detect the characteristic faint whine.

Vibra-blades are powered by B cells; for the duration of power, divide one hour by the weapon's weight in pounds. Thus, a half-pound knife runs for two hours, but a five-pound sword would work for only 12 minutes. (This is likely one reason why larger vibra-blades are custom weapons, not common equipment.)

Turning on the vibra effect takes one turn. A successful Fast-Draw roll activates it as the blade is drawn. When not activated, it performs like a normal weapon. DR protects at 1/5 value versus vibra-blades.

Any cutting weapon can be made in vibra version. Regular knives of all sizes cost \$200 extra in vibra; regular swords of all sizes cost \$400 extra and are generally custom jobs (though some cultures might have a tradition of them). Any other weapons (e.g., a vibra-halberd) would *definitely* be custom work, costing \$1,000 or more over the cost of a regular weapon if you can find someone willing to make it at all. Vibra-blades are LC 3.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:Battlesuits

@TEXT-BOX:Battlesuits are also known as "space armor," "battle armor," or "powered armor," as well as the more informal "armor" or "suits." They include servos to increase the wearer's ST, as well as integral weaponry (typically plasma arcs, p. 00), sonic scrubbers to keep the helmet clean, heads-up displays in the helmets, life support (at least air and waste-disposal), and IFF (Identify Friend or Foe) transponders. The most expensive models have medkits and can be controlled from a central point, such as a ship's Tactics Room or a station's security center; such suits can provide camera views of the battle, or be walked back to safety via remote control, whether or not the occupant is still living. (However, if the enemy manages to subvert the encryption codes, the suits are extremely vulnerable! From the waste pump direction, through the mobility of the suit and aim of weapons, to full control of all the *interesting* drugs in the medkit ... the occupant is essentially helpless until he can use a verbal over-ride to shut off remote control.)

@TEXT-BOX:For basic space armor statistics, use Battlesuit mechanics (p. S85); this does not include integral weaponry, which the GM (or player) should add separately. Some ground security troops (such as those on Jackson's Whole) use half-armor; use the mechanics for Body Armor, Clamshell Cuirasses, or Combat Armor (pp. S84-85).

((END BOX))

## Space Travel and Combat

The characteristics of space travel and space combat have a great influence on the social, economic, and political structure of galactic society. Star travel is reasonably easy, but fairly slow, and constrained to a few routes. This makes star systems defensible, but control of large regions is difficult.

The remainder of this section discusses the details of ships and travel.

### Ships

Ships fall into three main classes: jumpships, in-system ships, and shuttles. Jumpships travel from star system to star system, but never land on planets. In-system ships are space-to-space ships that lack FTL drives, but are otherwise similar to jumpships. Shuttles are short range ground-to-orbit spaceships that operate out of ground shuttleports, orbital transfer stations, or are carried as auxiliary craft on the outside of larger space-to-space ships; they are typified by streamlined hulls and short-duration life support systems.

The function the ship serves, however, shapes it more than its class. There are three primary groups, and an assortment of specialized ship types. The main groups are commercial ships, couriers, and warships.

### Commercial Ships

The driving principle behind a commercial ship design is profit: the ship must perform a service that will pay off its cost, its operating expenses, and give its investors a reasonable return. For this reason, commercial ships rarely have any weaponry, and only carry mass shields, which are required to deal with space debris while moving at half-*c* velocities.

*Freighters* move cargo from place to place. They're big empty boxes with the minimum necessary drive systems and crew, and are optimized for getting cargo on and off as fast as possible. While freighters often have large engines, they tend to be the slowest ships when fully loaded, and maneuver very slowly. Cargo ships vary widely in size, from the space equivalent of trailer trucks to huge ore-carriers, with the larger ships being used primarily on "milk runs" between systems that are heavy trading partners. Hull sizes range from 50,000-10,000,000 cf or more. The RG 132 is about 5,000,000 cf.

Freight runs can be regular routes, speculative trading expeditions, or free-lance "opportunity" deals. Each has its risks and benefits. Trading expeditions are often organized as stock partnerships, with investors buying into a particular run or set of runs. Because of the slow travel of information, trade can be very risky -- or very profitable, if you're the first to hear a key bit of news.

Freighters sometimes have extra cabin space, and can take on passengers who aren't in a hurry; some ports are picky about allowing this, however, due to safety concerns.

### *Passenger ships*

*Liners* are the cream of the crop, and tend to be reasonably fast, comfortable, safe, and expensive. Entertainment of the passengers is a major concern, and crews will be large. Most of the ship is devoted to passenger quarters, common areas, and life support; the "working" part of the ship is relatively small. Due to economics, most passenger ships are designed for a couple hundred to a few thousand passengers. Size ranges from about 150,000 cf for 200 passengers in basic quarters to 2+ million cf for the largest luxury liners.

## Couriers

The critical design parameters of a courier are size and speed. Couriers are small, carrying a very small crew (often one or two) and no more than a handful of passengers or a few tons of valuable, time-critical cargo. Most couriers are around 20,000-50,000 cf in size.

Space on a courier is expensive, and they are primarily owned by governments, though commercial ones exist. The two major cargoes for couriers are important information and VIPs. Most governments use couriers for internal communications, and have scheduled runs throughout their region of control.

Military couriers are used to move tactical and strategic intelligence, and sometimes senior officers. They are likely to carry more weaponry and defenses than regular couriers, though some government ships serve both military and governmental purposes.

Commercial couriers are likely to skip weaponry and defenses, and emphasize maximum speed.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:Designing Ships

@TEXT-BOX:A detailed ship design system is too large to include here. Such a system can be found in *GURPS Space*, or the more detailed rules in *GURPS Vehicles* may be used. Listed here are the technologies available for ship construction using those systems.

@TEXT-BOX:The normal Tech Level for ship components is TL10, with limited TL11 force screen technology, and TL12 thrusters, tractor/pressor beams, and contragravity. FTL sensors and communications are not available, though there are detectors for wormholes and ship jump "trails".

Ships normally use TL12 reactionless "super" thrusters, and accelerate at tens of Gs. Unlike standard *GURPS* thrusters, these require a special compact fuel, rather than electrical power. Fuel tankage for 10 weeks of full-thrust operation is included with the drive; each additional space of fuel tank can power one space of drive for 20 weeks. Thrusters produce no significant exhaust, but do flare brightly when operating at high power.

Nearly all ships (and stations) have artificial gravity generators between decks, which also function as acceleration compensators. Fusion plants are used for power.

@TEXT-BOX:Anti-grav systems ("contragravity" in *GURPS Space*) are not used on interstellar ships, but are common on shuttles and atmospheric vehicles. Tiny units, less than an inch across, are available. If using the design rules in *GURPS Vehicles*, change the weight to (lift/1,000) and cost to \$(lift/40)+\$500.

@TEXT-BOX:Jump drives are used for FTL travel, but don't require an energy bank. Instead, they

@TEXT-BOX:Available ship weapons are listed in the table on p. 00.

@TEXT-BOX:Force screens of various types are common on galactic ships; they are summarized in the table on p. 00. Use the "cheap" cost (multiplier of 0.25) for all force screens.

((END BOX))

## Warships

The defining characteristics of warships are speed, heavy weapons and defense systems, cramped quarters, and an insensitivity to cost (within reason). There are many theories on what makes the best combat ship -- some designs concentrate on firepower, some on defense, and some on maneuverability. All warships will have all three, in some degree. Warcraft come in many sizes and general sub-types. A few are listed here.

*Scouts* are usually one- or two-person variants of the courier, with an emphasis on sensors, stealth, and speed, and relatively light weaponry. Defenses vary more widely. Size is typically 5,000-10,000 cf.

*Cruisers* are workhorse warships, with enough size to pack decent firepower and defenses, but small enough to have reasonable speed. Crew sizes of about 20 are typical, with extra room for a squad of commandos. Cruisers typically carry 2-4 shuttles. Size ranges from roughly 100,000 to 500,000 cf. The *Ariel* is about 300,000 cf.

*Pocket dreadnoughts* are heavy-hitters, but still retain decent speed. They tend to pack heavier weapons than cruisers, and better shielding. They are commonly the centerpiece of a good-sized fleet, and have docking ports for a half-dozen to a dozen shuttles. Crew sizes range from 60 to 100 people, often including a couple squads of commandos. Pocket dreadnoughts range from 1 to 5 million cf. The *Triumph* is about 1.5 million cf.

*Super dreadnoughts* are rare, and are found at the core of the largest planetary fleets. They are usually slow, but extremely well-shielded, and equipped with the most powerful weapons available. Size is 10 million cf and up. The *Prince Serg* is unusual in that its engines are atypically powerful, giving it the speed of a typical cruiser. It is about 20M cf in size.

*Troop carriers* are very similar to civilian passenger ships, but configured with very cramped bunk space, more life support, and decent shielding. Weapons are typically light, since escorts usually provide the offensive capability.

*Drop shuttles* are designed to move troops from space to ground actions, and back. They are winged for enhanced maneuverability in atmosphere, and often include light weapons and armor or shielding, as well as powerful engines and anti-grav. A tractor beam is often included. A typical 2-squad drop shuttle is 50,000 cf in size, and masses 50 tons unloaded; they usually have 4 Gs or more of acceleration, fully-loaded.

*Fighter shuttles* concentrate on firepower and maneuverability, with minimal defenses. They are often winged, and are usually 1- or 2-person vehicles, ranging from 5,000 to 20,000 cf.

## Other Ship Types

There are many specialized ship types. Some are listed here.

*Survey ships* are jumpships designed for wormhole or planetary exploration. They carry extensive sensors, and often a scientific crew and small laboratories for them. They resemble military cruisers in many ways, but mount only light weapons, if any.

*Passenger shuttles* are intended to move passengers over short distances; usually no more than a few hours flight time. They use densely-packed seats instead of quarters, and have limited life support. They operate primarily from ground to orbital transfer stations, or directly to ships. They can also be used for high-speed ground-to-ground transport. Passenger shuttles usually hold 50 to 500 passengers, range from 10,000 to 100,000 cf, and can accelerate at 1 to 2 Gs. There are also small 2,000 cf mini-shuttles, carrying two people.

*Cargo shuttles* move shipments from freighters and orbital stations to the surface, and back, or between stations. They are typically 50,000 to 200,000 cf, with low acceleration, and a crew of one or two. Cargo capacities generally range from 20 to 100 tons.

*Tugs* are space-only vehicles used to move large masses around. They are essentially just big thrusters with tractor beams attached and a primitive cockpit; they come in a wide range of sizes.

*Flitters* are small space-only passenger vehicles; mini-shuttles without the anti-grav or streamlining.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:Stations

@TEXT-BOX:From a technical point of view, a space station is nothing more than a very large ship, with no significant drive systems installed. From a social point of view, stations are to space travel what port cities were to 19th century sea travel -- a hub of traffic and commerce: a place to make deals, warehouse and exchange cargo, and stop over between segments of a trip to far-flung planets.

@TEXT-BOX:Stations are warrens of corridors, quarters, cargo bays, docking ports, and customs checkpoints. Public concourses include hotels and eateries, embassies, shops, banks, and offices.

@TEXT-BOX:Only young stations are designed, older ones tend to *grow*, with new sections being added, and old ones converted or scrapped. Stations are usually located near wormhole hubs, serving as the endpoints of interstellar shipping runs. Some hubs have stations near each wormhole point, serving as a port of entry and defensive outpost for the domain on the far side.

((END BOX))

## Weaponry

Galactic ship weapon development is fairly rapid, with one major weapon type predominating in ship designs for a decade or two, until effective defenses are widely deployed against it.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:Ship Weapon Table

Weapon	Area Req.	Spaces	Mass	Cost	Power	Malf	sAcc
cDAM	1	7	84	8	2000	Ver.	(Crit.) +0 6d+1
Maser Scrambler	1	3	15	1.5	2100	Crit.	-1 3d
Plasma Cannon	1	3	15	3	1800	Crit.	-3 15d+1
Gravitic Imploder	Lance	1	1	5	3600	Ver.	-5 1d-1 (100)

@TEXT-BOX:



((END BOX))

### **Lasers**

The classic ship weapon a few generations before Miles' period, lasers are tightly-focused beams of coherent light. Because of the slow beam spread, lasers are very effective at long range, being useful out to about 50 kilometers.

By Miles' time, lasers are obsolete as ship weapons, due to the Betan anti-laser shield known as Sword-swallower.

### **Maser Scramblers**

These relatives of the laser use microwaves instead of light, and are outside the frequency range of laser shields. Due to the long wavelength, they wreak havoc with electronics by inducing powerful electric currents in any metal they hit. They also cook the flesh of anyone they hit, if they lack metal shielding.

The main drawbacks to maser scramblers are their relatively low damage, high power requirement, and the fact that metal armor is fairly effective against them.

### **Plasma Cannon**

The primary ship weapon of Miles' parents day, and still the most common in Miles' time, the plasma cannon is the ship equivalent of the plasma arc. The beam is composed of high-velocity plasma at ultra-high temperatures, and can easily penetrate both mass shields and laser shields. Plasma cannons are power-hungry, and the particle beam can't be focussed as tightly as a laser, so the range is much shorter.

### **Gravitic Imploder Lances**

This cutting-edge weapon is an offshoot of tractor beams, generating a very tightly focussed, high-intensity gravitic beam. The highly-localized gravitic gradients warp space, causing damage by ultra-powerful tidal stresses. These can warp a ship's beams and hull plates, or tear apart the bodies of the crew. The main drawbacks to the weapon are its enormous power requirements, and the incredibly short range, at least for space combat, of 36 kilometers. (The Prince Serg mounts a larger version with twice that range.)

A group of Komarran rebels inadvertently invented a hyper-powerful, long-range version of the imploder lance, using a resonant 5-space field from an unusual Necklin rod configuration to excite a gravitic wave from a wormhole. Unfortunately, the generated wave is focused back at the generator, making this of limited utility. This development is currently a highly-classified Barrayaran secret.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:Ship Combat

@TEXT-BOX:With weapons limited to lightspeed, ship combat is a close-in thing. If rules are needed for ship-to-ship combat, *GURPS Space* provides a basic system, and *GURPS Vehicles* has rules for highly-detailed, tactical combats.

((END BOX))

## Defenses

While the defense systems described here are intended primarily for ships, some of them are also appropriate for larger planetary vehicles or buildings. There are a number of types of shields, each defending against a different type of weapon. This encourages weapons developers in an arms race to create new types of weapons, which in turn are countered with new shield types.

Shield statistics for use with *GURPS Space* ship design and combat systems are listed in the *Ship Defense Table* box.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:Ship Defense Table

@TEXT-BOX:Shield Type Power Mass

@TEXT-BOX:Mass Shield 1.0 0.2

@TEXT-BOX:Sword-Swallower 0.05 0.1

@TEXT-BOX:Plasma Shield 1.0 0.2

@TEXT-BOX:Plasma Mirror 0.05 0.2

@TEXT-BOX:Power is MW per cDR per ksf; unlike the standard *GURPS Space* force screens, the Sword-swallower and plasma mirror are powered primarily by incoming fire -- the listed power maintains the basic reflection field.

@TEXT-BOX:Mass is in tons per MW of power.

((END BOX))

### Mass Shields

Originally designed to protect ships from debris while moving at half-*c* normal-space velocities, mass shields stop the passage of matter -- the classical "force field" -- but are transparent to energy weapons, including plasma arcs. They effectively stop conventional projectiles and missiles, but nuclear warheads still work if detonated outside the shield, since the radiation gets through.

### Sword-Swallower

More than a simple defense against lasers, the Betan-developed Sword-swallower actually turns back laser energy on the attacker, drawing power for the shield from the incoming fire. This shield resulted in the rapid demise of laser ship weaponry, and the ascension of the shorter-range plasma cannon, which aren't affected by the Sword-swallower field.

### Plasma Shields

The initial defense against plasma cannon, plasma shields defocus and disperse incoming fire. They are power-hungry, requiring more power than the incoming attack does to completely block the attack, and are therefore of limited effectiveness.

## Plasma Mirror

Developed by the Betans for their Escobarran allies during the Escobar-Barrayar war, shortly before Miles' birth, the plasma mirror affects plasma cannon the same way the earlier Sword-swallower did lasers.

The plasma mirror can only handle a limited amount of incoming power, so it can be swamped if several attackers gang up on a single target. Despite this limitation, by the time of Miles' maturity, plasma weapons were being slowly phased out in favor of the recently-developed gravitic imploder lance.

## Artificial Gravity Shields

Various designs for shields against the imploder lance have been proposed, using artificial gravity technology. So far, none has been sufficiently effective.

## Travel and Communication

Interstellar and interplanetary travel is a major element of the universe, and the speed of communication and movement is likely to be a crucial element to any plot. Interstellar messages *are* interstellar travel; communications move at lightspeed in normal space, but must be transported via recordings carried on jumpships between systems. The more active wormholes have special courier ships which jump back and forth, as often as every half-hour. In galactic backwaters, urgent messages may await the appearance of the next freighter.

### Interstellar Travel

All interstellar travel passes through *wormholes*, weak places in 3-dimensional space that are the projections of a vortex in 5-dimensional space ("5-space"). Wormholes always lead to other wormholes, though ships entering a wormhole must traverse a route along 5-space nodes to arrive at the exit point. Most wormholes lead to nowhere useful -- deep interstellar space, or systems with worthless planets -- but if there are other usable wormholes near the exit point, it may be possible to trace a multi-jump route somewhere useful. Most jump routes involve multiple wormhole passages, strung one after another, as quickly as a ship can move from one exit to the next entrance point. It's rare to find more than two or three wormholes in a system that ultimately lead to useful destinations.

Passage through a wormhole requires a jumpship -- a spaceship equipped with Necklin drive rods and vortex focusing mirror. The 5-space fields generated by the Necklin rods enfold the ship, enabling it to "punch through" the weak spot of a wormhole and traverse 5-space. At the end of the passage, the fields unfold, leaving the ship back at a wormhole in normal 3-space. Necklin rods are notoriously fragile, and can result in ships disappearing in jump.

Wormhole passage is relatively uneventful: most people experience a mild dizziness or mental time distortions, a few get actively jumpsick. People with the potential for jump piloting (p. 00) may get hallucinations and severe time distortions. Passage takes only moments, though the mental effects can make it seem longer. Most of the time taken in jumpship travel is actually the time to move from one wormhole to the next through normal space.

Choosing the correct route through a wormhole is a problem in 5-space mathematics, using the Astrogation (Wormholes) skill, following the route requires the Piloting (Necklin jumpdrive) skill, and a piloting implant (p. 00) appropriate to the jumpship model.

Not all wormhole jumps are successful; about 1 in 10,000 jumps results in the utter loss of the ship and everything aboard. In game terms, this requires a critical failure on *both* the Astrogation and Piloting rolls. Otherwise, either the jump pilot, or the ship computer he's interfaced to, will catch the problem before jump. A bent or damaged Necklin rod adds substantial penalties -- at *least* -8 -- to both rolls.

On a normal run, there is no error in the arrival point the ship either appears where it's supposed to be, or it never arrives *anywhere*. Ships traversing wormholes leave behind a 5-space "trail", which can be detected on specialized instruments for some time after passage.

Wormhole nexi volumes are quite small on an astronomical scale, and can easily be blockaded or defended. This is a potential problem for arriving ships, however; ships jumping in close succession can intersect on arrival, with highly-explosive results. Thirty seconds between arrivals is considered the minimum safe spacing, and ships clear out of the arrival nexus as fast as possible. The nexus also needs to be kept free of significant debris, or similar problems will occur.

A wormhole route may be blocked temporarily, by sacrificing a jumpship and pilot at one of the intermediate 5-space nodes. However, this clears relatively quickly, and is rarely worth the loss of a ship. Wormholes also open, close, and shift due to physical events in 3- and 5-space, but these are beyond the control of human technology. As described in *Komarr*, a group of rebel Komarran scientists and engineers developed an experimental "wormhole collapser", but the theory was flawed, and the device produced an entirely different effect. This is currently a highly-classified Barrayaran military secret.

Wormholes can be discovered by certain 5-space effects, but have no direct effect on normal space. Freelance prospectors explore new wormholes, hoping to discover a useful route, jumping blind; this is a dangerous job, and the "wildcatter" jump pilots who undertake it are considered the craziest among the crazy.

### **In-System Travel**

Travel within a star system is done at sub-light speeds, though often at significant fractions of lightspeed. Ships use reactionless thrusters to accelerate and decelerate, and high accelerations can be used, due to the use of artificial gravity compensation. Fast ships use accelerations of 25 Gs or more; heavily-loaded freighters in no hurry may be limited to 1G or less.

Typical transit times from planets to wormholes, or between wormholes, range from a few days to several weeks, depending on the placement of wormholes in the system and the drive acceleration. Transit time is proportional to the *square root* of the drive's acceleration, so a passage that takes a week on one of the

Operating a ship (or shuttle) in normal space requires Piloting skill, specializing in the general type of ship: e.g., freighter, fast courier, shuttle. Various ship types default to each other at -3, and most pilots (including jumpship pilots) have experience with at least shuttles and their primary ship type. Anyone with a normal-space Piloting skill can pilot a jumpship of similar size and performance with no penalty, as long as it stays in-system.

((START BOX))

@B-BOXHEAD:Planetary Vehicles

@TEXT-BOX:Planet-side transport may not be as exciting as spaceships, but it's often more crucial to the surface economy. There are a wide variety of personal and mass-transit technologies. Just a few of the

most common are listed here.

@C-BOXHEAD:Float Bikes

@TEXT-BOX:These are the flying equivalent of the 21st century motorcycle, carrying one or two passengers with anti-grav lift and thruster propulsion. Price range: \$6,000-\$20,000, depending on features and performance.

@C-BOXHEAD:Lightflyers

@TEXT-BOX:The equivalent of sports cars, plus wings, thrusters, and anti-grav units, lightflyers are a common choice for personal transport on most planets. They usually seat two to four people, and emphasize performance and style over utility. Price range: \$25,000-\$150,000, depending on size and performance.

@C-BOXHEAD:Aircars

@TEXT-BOX:Aircars are the anti-grav utility vehicles of most planets. Larger than a lightflyer, they seat four or more passengers, and can carry modest cargoes of a ton or two. Larger cargo versions are known as float trucks. Aircars tend to be somewhat boxy, and can manage speeds of 150 mph or so. Price range: \$20,000-\$100,000, depending on size and extra features.

@C-BOXHEAD:Scat-cats

@TEXT-BOX:These are all-terrain vehicles with anti-grav lift and floater propulsion, used by the military in such environs as Kyril Base (p. 00) or similar hazardous areas. They emphasize utility, seating two to four people, and always carry complete cold-survival kits. A scat-cat is extremely fast, but is guaranteed to remain under control even in the highest winds. Price range: \$20,000-\$50,000, depending on features and size.

@C-BOXHEAD:Groundcars

@TEXT-BOX:While air vehicles predominate, ground transport is still found on many planets. Groundcars are similar to 21st century Earth automobiles in most respects, but normally have hover-fan lift instead of wheels. Most have bubble canopies that open for entry and exit; VIP groundcars are often well-armored. Price range: \$20,000-\$100,000, depending on degree of luxury and performance.

((END BOX))

## Other Technology

Listed here are a few devices in common use. *GURPS Ultra-Tech* and *Ultra-Tech 2* contain many others; most TL10 and lower technologies are likely to be available. However, computers and communication devices are limited to TL9.

### Bod-pod

Used as a cheap "lifeboat" in space emergencies, this is an inflatable plastic bubble about a yard in diameter, with a small air recycler and a locator beacon. It takes 4 seconds to deploy and enter a bod-pod in an emergency. A B power cell runs the recycler and beacon for 12 hours, but the small canister of air used to inflate the bubble limits the useful oxygen supply to about 2 hours. A bod-pod costs \$250, weighs

2 pounds, and is LC6.

### **Breath Mask**

A breath mask must be used in atmospheres that are unbreathable, but otherwise harmless. The mask is extended to cover the eyes if there is insufficient atmospheric oxygen -- the eyes get oxygen directly from the air. The mask includes active filters to recycle oxygen and remove carbon dioxide; this gives a duration of about 12 to 14 hours from a 3 pound oxygen tank, which is worn strapped to the body or belt. A rechargeable power cell is included to operate the filter system.

A breath mask costs \$100, including oxygen tank, and weighs 1.5 pounds, plus 3 pounds for a full oxygen tank. Masks are Legality Class 6.

### **Bug (Miniaturized)**

Many sorts of bugs and communication tap devices exist. A typical miniaturized audio/video recorder is pinhead-sized, with an adhesive back. It is usually placed where it can scan entire room with its camera lens/microphone. It can store two hours of TV-quality digital images, including sound. The mike can pick up voices clearly within 25 yards. The bug may be programmed to run constantly, to listen for a specific voice before switching on, to scan at specific times of day, or to scan when its sensors detect light or body heat in the room.

The bug includes a burst transmitter and radio receiver (range 50 miles) which can transmit all recorded data in a micro-second burst upon receiving a coded radio command (or be set to do so after a specified time has passed). Once it transmits, it may be programmed to either erase everything it has stored and begin recording again, or to self destruct. It will also self destruct if tampered with (Demolitions-3 or Traps-3 roll to defuse). It works for two years on a tiny built-in power cell. The bug costs \$500, has negligible weight, and is LC1.

### **Cold Light**

This pencil-sized tube can be cracked to mix chemicals that produce a bright, blue-green light. One tube will illuminate a 5-foot radius for up to 10 hours. Combat in the lit area is only at a -2 penalty.

Cold light tubes are normally sold in packages of 6, which weigh 1/2 lb., and cost \$10. They are Legality Class 6.

### **Comconsoles**

These are desktop computer/communicator combinations. A typical comconsole includes a holographic screen, a Complexity 3 computer, and a tie-in to the planetary communications network. Such a unit costs \$1,500 and weighs 10 pounds.

### **Comm**

There are numerous models of communicators, with varying ranges and features. All use standard electromagnetic waves (radio or light). Three general types are listed here, plus a secure communication option that can be included in any comm unit. All communicators can have their basic range increased, up to double the base effective range, with an Electronics Operation (Communications) roll at -1 per additional 10% of base range. Any comm can be linked into a planetary comm net, if the proper arrangements are made.

*Short-range comm:* about the size of a cigarette lighter, this unit has an effective range of 500 miles (which includes low-orbit ships and satellites, if they are in line of sight). A short-range comm can be built into a helmet, watch, etc. at 10% additional cost. It uses an A power cell, which lasts for a year. A

*Medium-range comm:* this unit is a "palmtop" size, with an effective range of 500 miles. A B power cell runs the comm for a year. Cost is \$50 (\$100 if a video display is included), weight is 1/4 lb., and Legality Class is 6.

*Long-range comm:* this dictionary-sized unit is normally carried on a shoulder strap, built into vehicles, or is part of a desk unit. The effective range is 5000 miles. It runs for three months on a B power cell. A long-range comm costs \$150 (\$175 with a video display, \$350 if a holographic display is included), weight is 2.5 lbs., and Legality Class is 5.

*Comm scrambler:* this option can be added to any comm unit for an additional \$125, and no additional weight. It scrambles or encrypts the message according to a secret pattern, so that only another comm with the same pattern can translate it. Effectiveness of scramblers vary, and Legality Class varies with it -- a military-grade scrambler would be LC1, while one suitable for defeating casual civilian eavesdroppers would be LC5.

If used for an extended period of time, a particular scrambler pattern may be "cracked" with an Electronics Operation (Communications)-12 roll, with a bonus equal to the Complexity of the computer being used, plus *twice* the LC of the scrambler.

### **Cone-of-silence**

This is a defense against bugging and other sonic eavesdroppers. It generates a sonic interference pattern in a spherical zone, or following the walls of a specially-equipped room. It blocks normal sound waves. No one inside the field's boundaries can hear any sound originating outside the field, and no sounds within the field are audible to anyone outside it. The field only works in an atmosphere. It blocks audio bugs, but won't stop ones inside the field from transmitting, nor does it interfere with the visual spectrum. A portable version generates a spherical field four yards in radius in a standard atmosphere, runs for 90 minutes on a C power cell, costs \$5,000, weighs four pounds, and is LC5. (For an additional \$1,000, specially-designed holographic projectors can be incorporated into walls, floor, and ceiling which *do* slightly blur the speakers; these give a -3 to Vision rolls for anyone attempting lip reading.)

### **Lift Tubes and Null-Gee Bubbles**

Yet another spin-off of Betan gravity-control technology is the null-gee bubble -- usually used as a

Null-gee bubbles are small chambers, typically installed in houses, ships, or stations, and run off of the local power-network. More expensive modules are semi-portable, weighing about 140 pounds and generating a sphere of null-gravity large enough for approximately three people. (A typical portable version, with plastic walls and "roof," will run for about 12 hours, but requires *four* E-cells.) They must be stationary and carefully tuned to operate, requiring five minutes of setup. (Built-in units only require setup if jostled severely, such as by ship combat or earthquakes.) They also come with infrared generators, which can keep the bubble at whatever temperature is desired.

While null-gee bubbles are essentially rich people's toys, lift tubes are favored by everyone. Though relatively expensive, they're *useful*

well-placed space stations) use them. Using gravity technology, a slow rise or fall is generated in a (usually circular) tube. Decent lift tubes have ladders (in case of power failure), or safety straps (moving like TL7 escalator railings) so passengers won't spin out of control and jostle each other. People in the tube can also use these hand/foot holds to pull themselves along faster, or resist the gentle tug of the gravity field. (A tube can also be set for zero-gravity, and the hand-holds used to pull oneself along; this might be typical on a ship where crew were likely to need to pass each other frequently.)

A typical household lift tube is large enough for two people (three if they're small) and has a directional control at the doors. (Like an elevator, it is either set for "down" or "up," but multiple people can use it, from different floors.) Larger, public lift tubes are installed in pairs, one going up and one going down, and are larger -- four to six people can be in the same "level."

A null-gee bubble costs \$8,500 for a built-in module, or \$17,000 for a portable one. A household lift tube costs \$50,000, and public-grade ones are two to three times that, depending on size.

### Power Packs

These are the power cells of the *GURPS Vorkosigan* universe. They function like the usual *GURPS* power cells (pp. B247, UT10-13), except that they *can* be made to catch fire or explode with a roll against Armoury or Electronics Operation skills (any appropriate speciality) at -3. A plasma arc power pack (a "D" cell) will produce a 6d ¥ generate 3d of fire damage.

### Scanners (various)

Scanners are highly-sophisticated, hand-held sensors, each designed to locate and identify one sort of thing. A scanner allows a roll on Electronics Operation (Sensors) skill to detect its general category of item within its scanning range of 1,000 yards; one roll is allowed every ten seconds. If set to pick up a specific item within its category, it searches at -2 to skill (or more, if the user is not exactly certain what he is scanning for), but can detect the item up to 2,500 yards away. Large concentrations can be detected at up to twice these distances. More specific data can be picked up at ranges of 500 yards or less on a roll at skill+2. The device may be used for detailed analysis of an item within 50 yards, but the user must roll against the appropriate scientific skill to properly interpret the data. Divide range by 10 if scanning through significant amounts of dense material (e.g., under the ground). A bio or chem scanner is blocked by solid walls.

Scanners may be set for a specific area sweep, which lets the user scan a 60-degree arc each turn at the ranges listed above. A scanner can be set for a 360-degree scan instead, but all listed ranges are divided by 5. Changing the setting takes one turn. Larger, stationary versions of the basic scanners (*GURPS Space*, pp. 69-70) exist, and are found in secure locations (such as ImpSec). Since they are stationary and may have larger scan-angles than the hand-held versions, they give an additional +1 to skill.

Three common types of scanners are listed here; other specialized types exist (such as medical diagnostic scanners, p. 00).

*Energy scanners:* These pick up energy of all types (such as radio and radar), as well as radiation and power sources such as power packs. They can also pick up the scanning radiation of other types of scanners, but not other energy scanners, since the energy scanner itself is a passive device. Along with chem scanners, energy scanners are the basis for most starport security systems. They can detect power cells: a D cell at 500 yards with a roll against skill+2; modifiers for other power cells are: -11 for AA, -8 for A, -5 for B, -2 for C, and +3 for E cells. Any *operating* power cell will be detected automatically.



Military weapons typically have countermeasures against detection, and have an additional modifier of -2 to detection.

*Chemscanners:* These detect minerals, metals, and chemical compounds. They can detect a single unfired round of chemical slugthrower ammunition at 500 yards on a roll against skill+2. Larger amounts are detected automatically. Chemscanners are often used by security checkpoints to detect illegal substances, usually on a roll against skill+2, modified by amount.

*Mass scanners:* These can pick up the general shapes and densities of masses in the vicinity, giving a limited ability to see into closed crates and through walls. They are often used by customs forces in looking for concealed compartments and contraband items.

### **Scanner Shield**

Various technologies are available to defeat specific kinds of scanners, or to block scanners entirely. Cutting edge devices include a belt-mounted version that blocks all types of scans, rendering the wearer invisible to sensors (but not to vision, cameras, or similar devices). The belt shield affects incoming scanner pulses to give a distorted or false reading of the wearer. Effectively, it gives a -5 penalty to anyone using a scanner to detect the wearer; a failed roll will either detect nothing, or something innocuous. The belt runs for 12 hours on a B power cell, costs \$2,200, and weighs three pounds. Legality Class is 3.

## CHAPTER 7 -- Supporting Cast

*light-pen for emphasis. "I know we've got financial irregularities, but they don't have enough to build an entire dome! Not to mention the fact that it's going to have been seen from orbit, or by someone flying over it. No, this has to be just a handover location for them to exchange the equipment."*

*"You're right about the overflight aspect," Waverd agreed. "I'm not sure about the finances, though. I'm not an expert in terraforming or dome construction, but there might be some way of doing it cheaply, if it's just short-term. Tents wouldn't work, but . . ." He trailed off, muttering to himself.*

*Solone stared at the sheaf of printouts, resting his chin on his hands. If this was just another handover point, then the trail to the true hideout would probably lead even further, and be even better hidden. Depression seized him. He was out of his depth, just as he'd been when he was talking to that herm . . .*

### Lord Miles Naismith Vorkosigan

Lord Vorkosigan is just under 5 feet tall, with an large head set on a short neck, and a faintly hunched stance, lean but solid. He has black hair and grey eyes, strongly marked features, and wears traditional male Vor clothing -- tunic and trousers in a near-military style. There are scars on either side of his neck, and more under his clothing. His hands are strong and short-fingered.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 16 [80]; HT 12 [20].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Wealthy [20]; Status +6 (Auditor) [30]; Alertness +2 [10]; Charisma +3 [15]; Legal Enforcement Power (as Auditor) [15]; Strong Will +4 [20]; Ally Group (Vorkosigans) [15]; Ally Group (Dendarii Mercenaries) [10]; Ally Group (other Auditors) [10]; Patron (Emperor Gregor) [25]; Ally (Ekaterin Vorsoisson) [5]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Code of Honor (Vor) [-15]; Reputation (-4 to Conservative Vor, weird mutie Progressive) [-6]; Epilepsy (controllable with seizure device) [-20]; Stubbornness [-5]; Duty (Barrayar) [-10]; Duty (Emperor Gregor) [-15]; Sense of Duty (Dendarii Mercenaries) [-5]; Sense of Duty (Vorkosigans) [-5]; Social Stigma (-10 on Barrayar, Mutant) [-6]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Animal Handling-14 (Horses) [1]; Riding-14 (Horses) [8]; Bard-15 [1]; Dancing-13 [4]; Free Fall/TL9-13 [4]; Beam Weapon-14 (Stunner) [4]; Beam Weapon-13 (Plasma Arc) [2]; Fencing-12 (Two Swords) [2]; Judo-12 [4]; Karate-13 [8]; First Aid/TL9-16 [1]; Survival-15 (Mountains) [1]; Accounting-14 [1]; Computer Operation/TL9-16 [1]; Electronics Operation/TL9-15 (Weapons) [1]; Law-14 [1]; Astrogation/TL9-15 [1]; 5-Space Math-14 [1]; Meteorology/TL9-15 [1]; Research-16 [2]; Administration-15 [1]; Diplomacy-15 [2]; Fast-Talk-16 [2]; Leadership-16 [2]; Politics-15 [1]; Savoir-Faire-16 (Barrayaran) [1]; Strategy-15 [2]; Tactics-15 [2]; Detect Lies-15 [2]; Escape-13 [8]; Intelligence Analysis-15 [2]; Interrogation-15 [1]; Stealth-13 [4]; Boating-13 [4]; Driving/TL9-13 (Groundcar) [4]; Piloting/TL9-14 (Lightflyer) [8]; Battlesuit/TL9-14 [2]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Languages:** French-14 [1/2]; Russian-14 [1/2]; Greek-14 [1/2]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Manic-depressive swings [-1]; Talks very fast when excited [-1]; Babbles directedly under fast-penta [-1]

(The two sections given below detail Miles' skills and abilities at earlier points in his career, for GMs who wish to set adventures at different times in the history of the Vorkosigan universe. Miles is an evolving and maturing character, as much as any PC, and his attitude and opinions reflect that.)

Miles Naismith Vorkosigan is half-Barrayaran, physically malformed from teratogenic damage in the womb, and a hyperactive achiever who believes in "forward momentum." He is also one of the nine Auditors who report directly to the Emperor Gregor, and the confirmed heir to Count Vorkosigan, with his father's voting rights in the Council of Counts in Count Aral's absence. Against the expectations of many of his peers and elders -- though never those of his parents -- he managed to overcome the Barrayaran prejudice against mutants enough to be accepted by Vor society, and respected -- or feared, or both -- in many quarters. His military career was brilliant, if almost totally classified. Now that he serves as an Auditor, he answers directly to the Emperor -- which, if nothing else, means that he no longer has to complain about superiors who are less intelligent than he is. Miles is happily engaged to Ekaterin Vorsoisson, and is pushing for a large and ornate marriage as soon as is possible and seemly -- though Ekaterin has slightly different ideas about its size and scale.

@PULLQUOTE:"Quite. Plus your rather irritating habit of treating your superior officers as your, ah..." Cecil paused, apparently groping again for just the right word.

@PULLQUOTE:"Equals?" Miles hazarded.

@PULLQUOTE:"Cattle," Cecil corrected judiciously. "To be driven to your will."

@PULLQUOTE:-- *The Vor Game*

When a disaffected young aristocrat attempted to murder Aral Vorkosigan with a soltoxin gas shell, Miles' bone structure was irrevocably damaged. Although he was transferred from Cordelia's womb to a uterine replicator and given calcium treatments, his bones would never be normally strong. Throughout his childhood, Miles constantly managed to break arms, legs, shoulderblades, collarbones, and other parts of his skeleton. He was a stooped child, abnormally short, and was mocked and scorned as a "mutie" by most other children. Sergeant Bothari was his constant protector and companion, assigned by Cordelia Vorkosigan. Crippled by his body's restrictions, Miles threw his energy into mental development and charm, soaking up information and technique like a sponge from everyone around him.

Miles failed the examinations for the Imperial Academy, risking an obstacle and breaking both his legs. While attempting to help Elena Bothari find out the truth about her mother, he became involved in smuggling weapons to Tau Verde in order to raise money, and ended up accidentally creating the "Dendarii Mercenaries." When he returned to Barrayar, he was charged with violating Vorloupoulos' Law. With flair and speed, Miles succeeded in dodging the charges and presented the "Dendarii Mercenaries" as a private troop to Gregor. In consideration of his energy and undoubted talent, he was enrolled in the Imperial Academy.

Miles' career in the mainstream military was cometary and brief. After finishing at the Academy, he was assigned to Kyril Island (p. 00), to prove that he could serve under normal circumstances and in a chain of command. This went drastically wrong when he publicly mutinied against his commanding officer in

order to prevent mass murder. He ended up reassigned sideways to ImpSec, and used the Dendarii Mercenaries to prevent a Cetagandan invasion in the Hegel Hub. After this, he was assigned to ImpSec fulltime, and as "Admiral Naismith" led the Dendarii on private, deniable missions for Captain Illyan. These included anti-Cetagandan ops, prison breakouts, and daring rescues. He also visited Cetaganda, foiled a conspiracy to split the Empire, fell in love with the future Cetagandan Empress, and received the Cetagandan Order of Merit from the Emperor Fletchir Giaja. Miles developed his Naismith identity, and acquired more than one lover as the "little admiral" -- but at the same time, Lieutenant Vorkosigan had no interests and no personal life. He played the Vor when he needed to, and the Admiral when he needed to, keeping the two identities separate.

@PULLQUOTE: "Naismith is me with no brakes, no constraints. He doesn't have to be a good little Vor, or any kind of Vor. He doesn't have a problem with insubordination, he isn't subordinate to anyone."

@PULLQUOTE: -- Miles Vorkosigan, *The Vor Game*

At 24, Miles ran afoul of Ser Galen, and met his clone-brother, Mark Pierre Vorkosigan. He found himself delighted by the concept of a brother. While he was able to secure Mark's freedom, and used the opportunity to convince the Cetagandans that Admiral Naismith and Lord Vorkosigan really were two separate people, the incident forced him to juggle both his identities, and to consider for the first time who he really was -- the Vor or the Admiral.

Four years later, Miles became involved when Mark impersonated him and "borrowed" a shipful of Dendarii Mercenaries to raid Jackson's Whole. By now, all the long bones in Miles' body (arms and legs) had been replaced with plastic prosthetics. Miles took a direct shot to the chest, and died. Fortunately, he was given immediate cryo-treatment, and his body was sent to a safe place. When he was revived, he suffered temporarily from cryo-amnesia, and although he later recovered, there were lingering physical after-effects: mainly seizures, in moments of stress. He kept these secret from Captain Illyan, afraid of being relieved of duty. Unfortunately, he had a seizure in the middle of a combat mission, and then falsified his report to Illyan. Illyan recalled him to Barrayar immediately, and offered him a medical discharge without prejudice -- in consideration of his previous service.

Miles took the discharge, and retreated to Vorkosigan House to ponder suicide. Admiral Naismith had assumed all the important parts of his life: with the Dendarii Mercenaries now denied to him, he was left with the identity of Lord Vorkosigan, who had few interests, few friends, and who wasn't *real* to him in the way that Naismith had been. Miles was roused from this situation when Illyan began to suffer from memory problems as his memory chip broke down. Miles was reminded of his duty as a Vor lord to a family liegeman, and took up that duty. The Emperor named Miles as an Auditor, and Miles found that he was capable of defining his identity again, through his actions and intentions. He made Lord Vorkosigan someone who he could be proud of being, and found a new measure of contentment.

@PULLQUOTE: Naismith was obsessed with winning at all costs, and being seen to have won. But Vorkosigan . . . Vorkosigan couldn't surrender.

@PULLQUOTE: -- *Memory*

Continuing in his work as an Auditor, Miles met Ekaterin Vorsoisson on Komarr, and rapidly fell in love with her. When she returned to Barrayar, he promptly tried to woo her, but managed to damage his own prospects due to unscrupulous tactics on his part. The two of them eventually managed to build a relationship based on honesty from both sides. When she proposed to him, he accepted without hesitation, and the two are to be married as soon as is proper -- or as soon as Miles can persuade Ekaterin that it is proper.

Miles has matured into an intelligent adult, with strong Vor beliefs and habits, but with a leavening of galactic open-mindedness. He has a ridiculous amount of medals (won as Admiral Naismith) which he can never wear publicly, and a strong sense of service to Barrayar. (To him, this duty is symbolized by Raina Csurik, a baby who was killed by her grandmother for being born with a harelip, and ostensibly a mutant: she represents, to him, his task of protecting his people, and helping them reach a better state.) His philosophy used to be, "if you can't win, change the rules," and he had a history of dealing with situations by inventing a suitable lie, and then making it true -- as with the Dendarii. He has come to realize that these methods aren't always appropriate, that some situations cannot have their rules bent, and that some lies should never be told. (Of course, that's not to say that they aren't appropriate some of the time . . .) Even now, he is only capable of 2 speeds: "off" and "flat out." He also still suffers from seizures, and requires regular use of a small electronic focal device to lower the electrotransmitter levels in his brain, and prevent further fits. Miles used to want to be famous: now he wants to be someone in his own right, and not just his father's son. He now defines himself as a Vor Lord, protector of his District, a Vorkosigan, and an Auditor of the Emperor, and intends to make good on all those definitions.

## Lord Miles Vorkosigan

Miles is a young man of 17, with a large head and pronounced stoop. He wears dark civilian clothes, with metal braces on his legs.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 15 [60]; HT 11 [10].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Charisma +3 [15]; Strong Will +4 [20]; Status +3 (Minor Vor Lordling) [15]; Ally Group (Vorkosigans) [15]; Ally (Sergeant Bothari) [10]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Code of Honor (Vor) [-15]; Reputation (-4 to Conservative Vor, weird mutie) [-6]; Impulsiveness [-10]; Overconfidence [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; Youth [-2]; Duty *GURPS Compendium*, p. 102 [-20]; Social Stigma (-10 on Barrayar, Mutant) [-6]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Animal Handling-13 (Horses) [1]; Riding-11 (Horses) [2]; Bard-15 [2]; Dancing-10 [1]; Free Fall/TL9-10 [1]; Beam Weapon-12 (Stunner) [2]; Fencing-10 (Two Swords) [1]; Brawling-12 [2]; First Aid/TL9-14 [1/2]; Survival-14 (Mountains) [1]; Accounting-14 [2]; Computer Operation/TL9-16 [2]; Astrogation/TL9-14 [1]; Diplomacy-14 [2]; Fast-Talk-15 [2]; Leadership-14 [1]; Savoir-Faire-15 (Barrayaran) [1]; Strategy-14 [2]; Tactics-13 [1]; Driving/TL9-11 (Groundcar) [2]; Piloting/TL9-12 (Lightflyer) [4]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Languages:** French-12 [1/2]; Russian-12 [1/2]; Greek-12 [1/2]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Constantly hyper [-1]; Wears grandfather's dagger [-1]

Young Miles is brash, impulsive, and desperate to prove himself worthy of his family and the Vorkosigan name. He gets bleeding ulcers under stress, and has pronounced manic-depressive mood swings. Miles is in love with Elena Bothari, and broken-hearted to lose her. He admires and respects Sergeant Bothari, even if he suspects that there is something hidden about the man's history. His usual response to trouble is a combination of bluff and fast-talk, followed by an attempt to retrofit the universe to match up afterward. His driving passions are to join the Service, and to prove himself worthy of his father and grandfather. Childhood life with the Emperor Gregor as a playmate has given him a rather relaxed attitude towards high rank and status.

## Admiral Naismith

Miles is in his 20s, with less of a stoop than before, and without his leg braces. He wears Dendarii Mercenary Fleet uniform in grey and white, or his personally sized suit of battle armor.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 16 [80]; HT 12 [20].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Comfortable [10]; Status +3 (Minor Vor Lordling) [30]; Alertness +1 [5]; Charisma +3 [15]; Military Rank +8 (Dendarii Mercenaries only) [40]; Strong Will +4 [20]; Ally Group (Vorkosigans) [15]; Ally Group (Dendarii Mercenaries) [10]; Patron (ImpSec) [20]; Ally (Emperor Gregor) [10]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Code of Honor (Vor) [-15]; Reputation (-4 to Conservative Vor, weird mutie) [-6]; Reputation (-2 to own generation in Service, sinecure job) [-6]; Stubbornness [-5]; Duty (Barrayar) [-10]; Duty (ImpSec) [-15]; Sense of Duty (Dendarii Mercenaries) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Vorkosigans) [-5]; Overconfidence [-10]; Stubbornness [-5]; Fragile (*GURPS Compendium*, p. 102) [-20]; Enemy (Baron Ryoval of Jackson's Whole) [-10]; Enemy (Cetagandans) [-40]; Social Stigma (-10 on Barrayar, Mutant) [-6]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Animal Handling-14 (Horses) [1]; Riding-14 (Horses) [8]; Bard-15 [1]; Dancing-12 [2]; Free Fall/TL9-13 [4]; Beam Weapon-14 (Stunner) [4]; Beam Weapon-13 (Plasma Arc) [2]; Fencing-12 (Two Swords) [2]; Judo-12 [4]; Karate-13 [8]; First Aid/TL9-16 [1]; Survival-15 (Mountains) [1]; Accounting-14 [1]; Computer Operation/TL9-16 [1]; Electronics Operation/TL9-15 (Weapons) [1]; Law-14 [2]; Astrogation/TL9-15 [1]; 5-Space Math-14 [1]; Meteorology/TL9-15 [1]; Research-15 [1]; Administration-15 [1]; Diplomacy-14 [1]; Fast-Talk-16 [2]; Leadership-16 [2]; Politics-15 [1]; Savoir-Faire-16 (Barrayaran) [1]; Strategy-15 [2]; Tactics-15 [2]; Detect Lies-15 [2]; Escape-12 [4]; Intelligence Analysis-15 [2]; Stealth-13 [4]; Boating-13 [4]; Driving/TL9-13 (Groundcar) [4]; Piloting/TL9-14 (Lightflyer) [8]; Battlesuit/TL9-14 [2]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Languages:** French-14 [1/2]; Russian-14 [1/2]; Greek-14 [1/2]

Admiral Naismith has learned from experience that anything can be managed, given sufficient forward momentum and quick thinking, and that anyone can be manipulated. He is of the opinion that superior officers should be treated as cattle, and that reports at the end of missions should be slanted to promote the Dendarii Mercenaries. While he is still totally devoted to Barrayar and the Emperor, he has a hunger for recognition and identity, and suffers from post-mission sulks. He will acknowledge that he's "a little manic-depressive," but doesn't care to be reminded of it. His greatest fear is the loss of his mind: without his brains he's nothing, as they're what he uses to force acceptance of his body on those around him. He fulfils family duties as Lord Vorkosigan when necessary, but at this point of his life most of his drive centers on "the little Admiral." Miles will attempt to politely take over all operations in which he is involved, organizing those around him and arranging their lives for them. He knows his duty to Barrayar, but he believes that he serves it best as Admiral Naismith, and he's very proud of doing so.

## Using Miles In The Game

Miles is liable to attempt to take over any situation in which he is involved. As a PC, he is hyper, motivated, and given his wide range of capabilities, liable to steal the storyline. (If he doesn't at least *try* to sort everything out himself, then he's not being played right.) If he is being used by one player as a PC, then the GM should take care to create situations and complications for which Miles lacks experience or skills, and where other characters can show to advantage.

As a NPC, Miles Vorkosigan makes a wonderful plot device. His wide range of interests, and frequent leaps into the unknown on missions for ImpSec or Gregor -- or even Dendarii jobs without a secret Barrayaran motive -- mean that he can turn up literally anywhere. The aim here, however, is to keep the focus on the characters as the heroes, rather than to let Miles conveniently save the day, rout the villain, and end up with the tall brunette. After all, the characters are the protagonists -- Miles may be a major character in the campaign, but ultimately the PCs should expect to make the vital difference.

Miles can serve as an employer, supervisor, or superior officer; he will generally allow junior officers serving under him a reasonable amount of *laissez faire*, and doesn't try to second-guess his field commanders. It wouldn't be out of character for him to hand an entire avenue of investigation over to them, if they are junior officers or allied experts. He is also extremely busy these days, as an Auditor, and might well ask the PCs, as subordinates, colleagues, or friends, to look into something which has come to his attention but which he doesn't have the time to investigate. However, it is *not* recommended that he be a junior officer serving under one of the PCs, unless the GM feels that the PC in question deserves such a disadvantage! Miles has a record of reorganizing tasks to suit his own priorities or judgment, taking command of field missions and reinterpreting the orders, second-guessing his superior officers, and so on. While he may do his job extremely well, any PC in his vicinity is liable to develop a nervous twitch, or worse.

Miles can also provide a good start to an adventure or campaign -- by vanishing in the line of duty. He has needed rescuing more than once after getting into a situation which turned out to be unexpectedly dangerous: characters might well be given the "last known information" and turned loose to try to find him. This might be a job for a team working with ImpSec, the Dendarii Mercenaries, or on a private commission for Lord Mark or for Miles' parents. They might even be working on what they believe to be a totally unrelated area of investigation, when they discover a rather short Vor Auditor locked up in the house they just raided -- and Miles will be delighted to explain to them how helping him serves their best interests.

Although Miles has learned how to rein himself back to some extent, he still tends to be extremely manic and hyper when in full operating mode. He is liable to burst onto the scene, hand out assignments or request information, and then vanish -- for a while. Just because he is personally averse to handing in reports until the end of a case doesn't mean that he'll accept such behavior in other people. Characters interacting with him should see his very real concern for Barrayar and its people, and the qualities which make him an excellent tactician and leader of men. They may also soon be wishing him at the other end of the galaxy, if his view on how to approach the current situation differs from theirs. Finally, Miles has a good memory for contacts and useful people -- if the characters show themselves to be talented and capable, then he or ImpSec may well be calling on them for assistance at some point in the future . . .

## Ekaterin Nile Vorvayne Vorsoisson

Madame Vorsoisson is a tall, softly spoken brunette in her thirties with ivory-pale skin and pale blue eyes. She dresses with quiet, understated elegance, and is currently wearing blacks and greys for her mourning year.

@TEXT-CSTATS:*Attributes:* ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 15 [60]; HT 12 [20].

@TEXT-CSTATS:*Advantages:*

**@TEXT-CSTATS:Disadvantages:**

Stigma (woman, valuable property) [-10]; Honesty [-10]; Dependent (Nikki) [-16]; Duty (Family) [-5]; Sense of Duty (Miles Vorkosigan) [-5]

**@TEXT-CSTATS:Skills:** Artist-14 [2]; Dancing-13 [4]; Brawling-12 [2]; Naturalist-15 (Barrayar) [4]; Accounting-14 [2]; Computer Operation-15 [1]; Agronomy-15 [2]; Botany-14 [2]; Ecology/TL9-14 [2]; Research-14 [1]; Savoir-Faire-15 (Barrayaran) [1]; Driving/TL9-12 (Groundcar) [4]; Piloting/TL9-12 (Lightflyer) [4]

**@TEXT-CSTATS:Quirks:**

Ekaterin Vorvayne Vorsoisson is an intelligent, educated woman with a growing expertise in landscape and garden design, and a widow with a 9-year-old son. She also happens to be engaged to Lord Miles Vorkosigan. She is a woman of absolute taste -- sufficiently so for Lady Alys Vorpatril to approve it -- and has served as an aesthetics consultant to Mark Vorkosigan (on butter bug design), as well as designing a garden of native Barrayaran plants for Miles Vorkosigan, next to Vorkosigan House. Although her first marriage was extremely traumatic, Ekaterin has managed to recover her sense of self-worth and ability, and is currently living, with her son Nikki, at the residence of her uncle and aunt Professor and Professora Vorthys. She intends to continue with her education and with landscape design, as well as assuming the position of Lady Vorkosigan -- and Miles Vorkosigan wouldn't have it any other way.

Ekaterin's father, Sasha Vorvayne, was a minor provincial bureaucrat in Vandeville, a Southern Continent frontier town: he kept a very traditionally Vor household, and Ekaterin's mother taught her a Vor woman's proper duties towards men. She also taught the young Ekaterin to "become stone" and to react passively towards aggression and irrationality from others, accepting it and dealing with it. Shortly after her mother's death, at the age of 20, Ekaterin married Etienne (Tien) Vorsoisson, a young bureaucrat with a promising career. Ekaterin bore a son, Nikolai (Nikki), by traditional body-birth. However, Tien turned out to have Vorzohn's Dystrophy, a Barrayaran genetic disorder. He refused to investigate treatment for himself -- or for Nikki, who might also have it -- for fear of being exposed as a "mutant". He also began shifting from job to job, and became more and more difficult to live with, oscillating between suspicions, arguments, accusations, and a desperate need for attention. Ekaterin herself slowly lost her love for him, but remained with him, bound by her duties and incapable of abandoning her marriage vows.

Eventually the couple moved to Komarr, where Tien took a post as an Administrator, and secretly accepted a bribe to cover up a large-scale piece of embezzlement. Tien himself did not realize that the group bribing him was a revolutionary conspiracy, with a plan to destroy the Komarr-Barrayar wormhole. When the conspiracy began to come to light, Ekaterin discovered Tien's crime while checking his accounts. She could no longer tolerate life with Tien, and couldn't accept risking Nikki's health any further. She told Tien that she was leaving him, causing Tien to betray the conspiracy to Lord Auditor Miles Vorkosigan. The Komarrans involved tied Miles Vorkosigan and Tien up outside the domes while escaping; Tien, who had carelessly forgotten to refill his breath mask, suffocated.

While grieving for her husband, Ekaterin also now found herself free of obligation to him, or any sort of responsibility for his actions. She arranged for Nikki to have treatment for his incipient Vorzohn's Dystrophy. However, she then accidentally came into contact with the plotters, and was taken hostage. She managed to smash their wormhole-destroying device, forcing them to surrender to Miles Vorkosigan later.



Vorthys while planning serious study of landscape gardening and terraforming at the Imperial University, in the hopes of making a genuine career out of a hobby which she loved. Miles Vorkosigan attempted to get closer to her through her gardening, but almost destroyed their budding romance by plotting her conquest like a military campaign. A very sincere apology from Miles helped to redress Ekaterin's annoyance with him, and she realized that she was genuinely in love with him. Her proposal to him was somewhat dramatic, taking place in the middle of the Council of Counts, at Vorhartung Castle. He accepted.

@PULLQUOTE:Ekaterin was one of those *show once* people whom Miles, in his mercenary days, had found more precious than unexpected oxygen in the emergency reserve. And she didn't even know she was unusual.

@PULLQUOTE:-- *A Civil Campaign*

Ekaterin is an intelligent and competent woman, with the ability to stand up to Miles Vorkosigan and puncture his tendency to forward momentum, where necessary. For most of her life, she hasn't had opportunities to grow or develop: now that she has, she's taking them. Both Miles and Nikki are very dear to her: any attempt to manipulate her through her son will cause her to react against the culprit, in a focused, practical, and effective way. (Nikki has now had full retro-gene treatment for Vorzohn's Dystrophy: developmentally, it will be as though he'd never inherited it. He is a typical 9-year-old boy, and wants to be a jump pilot.) She is likely to take to her new role as Countess, after the marriage, with the same practicality and speed in learning which she has displayed elsewhere. Oaths and honor are extremely important to her: she will sympathize with people, Vor women or others, who find themselves torn between a given oath and a personal sense of honor.

## Captain Ivan Vorpatril

Ivan Vorpatril is tall and startlingly handsome in the classic Vor style, with dark hair, brown eyes, and a lazy smile. As a military man, he wears either full uniform, with Ops pins, or undress greens.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 14 [45]; DX 13 [30]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 13 [30].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Status +3 [15]; Alertness +1 [5]; Handsome Appearance [15]; Eidetic Memory [30]; Luck [15]; Military Rank (Captain) [20]; Patron (Vorkosigan) [15]; Ally (Alys Vorpatril) [10]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Code of Honor (Vor) [-15]; Laziness [-10]; Lecherousness [-15]; Dislike (confined spaces) [-1]; Sense of Duty (Miles Vorkosigan) [-5]; Duty (Barrayar) [-10]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Dancing-15 [8]; Erotic Art-13 [4]; Free Fall/TL9-14 [4]; Beam Weapon-15 (Stunner) [4]; Beam Weapon-15 (Plasma Arc) [4]; Fencing-15 [8]; Judo-15 [16]; Karate-14 [8]; First Aid/TL9-14 [1]; Survival-14 (Mountains) [2]; Accounting-13 [2]; Computer Operation-14 [1]; Astrogation-14 [4]; 5-Space Math-14 [4]; Administration-14 [2]; Carousing-15 [8]; Diplomacy-13 [2]; Leadership-14 [2]; Savoir-Faire-16 (Barrayar) [4]; Sex Appeal-15 [4]; Strategy-14 [4]; Tactics-14 [4]; Fast-Talk-13 [1]; Interrogation-14 [2]; Stealth-14 [4]; Piloting/TL9-15 (Lightflyer) [8]; Driving/TL9-15 (Groundcar) [8]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Languages:** French-13 [1/2]; Greek-13 [1/2]; Russian-13 [1/2]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Rapid and violent driver [-1]; Flirt [-1]

Of all the noble Vor, Lord Ivan Vorpatril is one of the *least* interested in politics. Unfortunately for him, he's been involved in them from his birth; and if his rank and bloodline weren't enough, he is also frequently involved with Miles Vorkosigan. This has led to him being drugged, shot at, shipped halfway across the galaxy, shut inside a pumping chamber in the Thames Barrier on Earth, and -- far too frequently to mention -- being manipulated into going along with whatever Miles' current scheme is. (Ivan is actually finding the current situation, with Miles actually trying to cut back on talking him into things, rather strange. It has even prompted him into occasionally acting of his own volition.) He's lazy, cheerful, often deliberately obtuse, doesn't live up to his full potential, flirts with any attractive woman, and tries to avoid any kind of responsibility. He's also one of Miles' oldest friends. Other family members often regard him affectionately as something of an idiot -- especially when compared with Miles.

Ivan was born during the Vordarian Rebellion, in the back room of a disused warehouse, with Sergeant Bothari as a midwife, and his father less than an hour dead -- shot by the Pretender's forces. As Lady Alys Vorpatril raised him, she planned his triumphant progress through school and military academy, his climb to high rank, and his marriage to a nice young Vor girl. Ivan's reaction to these plans for his future -- and, indeed, to all attempts to push or persuade him into actual achievement -- was one of passive resistance. Even though he rose smoothly (with no major indiscretions on his record) to the rank of Captain in Ops, and is frequently assigned to important political duties (particularly those involving Miles), it isn't due to any outstanding merit or achievement on his part. He's also next in line for the Vorkosigan title after Miles and Mark, though he has absolutely no interest in it.

@PULLQUOTE:Ivan played the upper-class lout with the same cultivated thoroughness with which he played the Imperial lieutenant, or any other role his world demanded of him.

@PULLQUOTE:-- *Mirror Dance*

This laziness on his part -- and, in particular, his frequent but non-matrimonial arrangements with women -- have been a constant grievance to Lady Alys, who reacted by frequently trying to matchmake for him. Her recent relationship with Simon Illyan has caused her to leave Ivan alone on this point. However, now that he's in his 30s, he has begun to realize that there is a shortage of women around to marry, and that younger women are either too galactically open-minded for him, or treat him as an uncle, or both. (Ivan is traditionally Vor enough to expect an eventual marriage to a nice woman, even if he resisted all Lady Alys' efforts to urge him towards one.)

However, Ivan Vorpatril has certain strengths. His long association with Miles has rendered him effectively unfazeable -- after sharing a number of his cousin's adventures, it takes a great deal to shock or surprise him. His long-term exposure to Lady Vorkosigan, combined with his galactic travels, has made him more receptive to different cultures than many other Barrayarans. He knows Miles better than most people, and is able to prick his cousin's vanity -- or to administer shock treatment, where necessary. Also, he *is* capable, and well-informed about current political ongoings, little as he chooses to show it. He's intelligent, and he spends a lot of time in the company of members of the Vorkosigan family, or working in Ops, both of which result in him being well up-to-date with galactic affairs.

Fortunately, he is also extremely good at keeping silent and projecting vague ignorance. The Emperor Gregor trusts him enough to have given him his private comm-number (one of a handful of people to be so honored), which gives Ivan the ability to contact the Emperor at any time -- and be put straight through

to him. Finally, Ivan has a definitely Vor, deeply embedded sense of what is *right*, and what is *wrong* -- enough to force him, if nobody else is around to take the responsibility, to act decisively, and with surprising political acumen.

## Professor Vorthys

Professor Vorthys is in his 60s, with white hair, and big nose and ears. He tends to wear rumpled, oversized clothing that always looks slept in, and has a deep laugh.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 12 [20]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 17 [100]; HT 12 [20].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Status +6 (Auditor) [30]; Reputation (+4 to academics, authority on engineering failure analysis) [3]; Legal Enforcement Powers (as Auditor) [15]; Longevity [5]; Mathematical Ability [10]; Ally Group (other Auditors) [10]; Patron (Emperor Gregor) [25]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Age (in 60s); Code of Honor (Vor) [-15]; Duty (Barrayar) [-15]; Duty (Emperor Gregor) [-15]; Duty (Imperial University) [-10]; Duty (Family) [-5]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Dancing-12 [2]; Accounting-16 [2]; Computer Operation/TL9-17 [1]; Electronics Operation/TL9-17 (Engineering) [2]; 5-Space Math-17 [4]; Computer Programming-17 [4]; Electronics/TL9-17 [4]; Engineer/TL9-16 [2]; Mathematics-18 [6]; Physics/TL9-18 [6]; Administration-16 [1]; Diplomacy-15 [1]; Savoir-Faire-16 (Barrayaran) [1/2]; Teaching-16 [1]; Detect Lies-15 [1]; Driving/TL9-13 (Groundcar) [4]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Rumpled [-1]; Fond of splendid desserts [-1]; Rarely acts high Vor [-1]

Professor Vorthys' main claim to fame is as one of the Emperor Gregor's Auditors: however, he is an authority on engineering in his own right, and has taught it as a professor at the Imperial University in Vorbarr Sultana for over 30 years. His specialty is engineering failure analysis, and he is often called upon -- both by the other Auditors, and by civil or military authorities -- to investigate unusual cases, such as suspicious accidents. He is married to the Professora Helen Vorthys, who teaches Barrayaran history at the Imperial University. The Professora is a historian, teacher, and scholar in four languages. The two of them have three children and numerous grandchildren, and have also encouraged a great many students at the University, whether as teachers or in a more personal capacity. Ekaterin Vorsoisson (p. 00), the Professor's recently widowed niece, is currently living with them during her year of mourning.

The Professor is one of the Emperor's recent appointees to Auditor who isn't in the traditional military mold. Late in his career, he became philosophically interested in the connections between sociopolitical and engineering integrity. His usual function among the Auditors is to provide engineering expertise when called for, though he may ultimately be called upon to investigate any matter regarding Auditorial attention. He has a deep, long-lasting affection for the Professora, to whom he has been married for nearly 50 years. Both of them are willing to encourage and help students of both sexes, and can provide off-planet contacts as well if necessary.

@PULLQUOTE:It was just like Uncle Vorthys to have provided this comfort for her; he did nothing by halves. *No artificial shortages* she could almost hear him enthusiastically booming, though he usually recited that slogan in reference to desserts.

@PULLQUOTE:-- *Komarr*

Professor Vorthys is a friendly man, easy to get along with, jovial and open. None of this should be confused with sloppy practice in engineering, or with a less than acute mind. He personally believes that a man's library tells a lot about the man's mind, and has the habit of inspecting the bookcases of subjects under investigation. Should he be investigating an Auditorial case which deals with matters beside engineering failure, he may well be teamed with another of the Auditors who has appropriate experience. During term time, he is usually to be found at the Imperial University, though his galactic reputation often has him going off-world to lecture elsewhere. He is an example of Vorish authority in a non-military field, and of the growing importance of scientific expertise on Barrayar. The Emperor Gregor's choice of him as an Auditor says a great deal about Gregor's administration and policies.

Aral is a stockily built man of average height, but his hair is completely white by now. He usually wears his House colors, now that his naval career is over.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 14 [45]; DX 12 [10]; IQ 16 [80]; HT 11 [10].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Wealthy [20]; Alertness +1 [5]; Charisma +2 [10]; Danger Sense [15]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Legal Enforcement Powers (on Sergyar) [15]; Legal Enforcement Powers (in Vorkosigan District) [10]; Reputation (ex-Regent, +2 to Barrayarans) [10]; Strong Will +2 [8]; Patron (Gregor Vorbarra, Emperor of Barrayar) [15]; Ally Group (Vorkosigan Family) [30]; Status 6 (Viceroy of Sergyar) [30]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:**

("Butcher of Komarr", -3 to Komarrans, -1 to most other galactics) [-10]; Duty (Sergyar) [-20]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Riding-13 (Horses) [4]; Artist-13 (Drawing) [1]; Free Fall/TL9-13 [4]; Beam Weapon-15 (Stunner) [8]; Beam Weapon-14 (Plasma Arc) [4]; Beam Weapon-14 (Nerve Disruptor) [4]; Judo-15 [16]; Karate-15 [16]; Fencing-14 (Two swords) [8]; First Aid/TL9-16 [1]; Survival-15 (Mountains) [1]; Computer Operation-16 [1]; Astrogation-16 [2]; 5-Space Math-15 [2]; Administration-18 [6]; Diplomacy-16 [4]; Leadership-17 [4]; Politics-16 [2]; Savoir-Faire-16 (Barrayaran) [1]; Detect Lies-16 [4]; Stealth-14 [8]; Boating-14 [8]; Piloting/TL9-13 (Lightflyer) [4]; Driving/TL9-13 (Groundcar) [4]; Strategy-18 [8]; Tactics-16 [4]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Languages:** Russian-14 [1/2]; Greek-14 [1/2]; French-14 [1/2]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Aversion to closed doors ("You never know what's on the other side") [1]; Aversion to stunners (nobody hesitates before rushing them) [1]; Tendency to bleeding stomach ulcers from stress [1]; Insults senior officers but never junior ones [1]; Grows angry at suggestion that Miles' deformity was his reason for not making a bid for the Imperium [1]

(These statistics reflect the Viceroy's abilities after recovery from his heart attack and heart transplant during *Mirror Dance*. Before these took place, he had a ST of 15, DX of 14, and HT of 13.)

Aral Vorkosigan has managed to become a living legend on Barrayar -- partly by actually managing to survive the end of his Regency, since it is customary for great men to avoid problems with their successors by dying in office. Although he technically had a better right to the throne by blood than did Ezar Vorbarra, the late Emperor (though only by Salic descent) he chose to remain loyal to the Emperor, sacrificing his own honor to his master's demands. He survived Mad Yuri's Massacre, in which his mother, elder brother, and sister died, and took part in the later execution of Mad Yuri when Ezar

Vorbarra took power. Aral has seen the worst in Barrayaran history -- insanity, dictatorship, rebellion, invasions of other planets which he knew could not succeed, massacres of civilians for which he had to take the blame. And yet, despite all this, he has managed to keep the most vital part of his integrity and not betray his oaths to Emperor and to Barrayar.

Aral served in the military, as every young Vor should. His career was notable for clashes with the Ministry of Political Education, but he could never be faulted in his loyalty to the new Emperor. He became the youngest admiral in the history of the Barrayaran fleet, and directed the invasion of Komarr. During the fighting, the fleet Political Officer ordered the execution of 200 Komarran Councillors (the infamous Solstice Massacre, p. 00). This was directly against Aral's orders, and when he found out, he killed the Political Officer with his own hands: however, public opinion held that he had been behind it, and that the Political Officer's death was merely a cover-up. From then on, Aral Vorkosigan was known to the rest of the galaxy as the Butcher of Komarr. Later political turmoil after the Komarran invasion saw him demoted to the rank of Captain, and spending several months on remote patrol with other politically disgraced or generally dubious officers, on the frigate *General Vorkraft*. When the Escobaran venture began, he was given command of the mission to Sergyar, where he met Cordelia Naismith and fell in love with her. The Escobaran war nearly destroyed him: he was forced to wait on the sidelines, on the Emperor's secret orders, as Prince Serg led the Barrayaran forces into a position which they could not possibly hold. By doing so, he was able to bring the Emperor's plan to fruition -- Prince Serg died, and the military party and Ministry of Political Education fell -- but it was at the cost of many Barrayaran lives, and of his own honor, in betraying so many of his men. Had Cordelia not married him, he would probably have drunk himself to death in retirement.

These days, the Viceroy is generally occupied with the business of governing Sergyar, supervising its settling by Barryaran colonists, and dealing with the inevitable crises of a planet in development, both political and ecological. He pays frequent visits to Barrayar, for state events (such as the Emperor's recent wedding), to report to the Emperor, or for personal or political reasons. While he still takes a great interest in the development of the Vorkosigan district, Miles has to some extent shouldered its responsibilities. There is plenty of scope for young Barrayaran or Sergyaran officers to rise in his service, as he values talent and integrity.

Count Aral's attachment to his family and to old friends, such as Captain Koudelka and Captain Illyan, is well known, and he has an (entirely justified) reputation as a Vor who maintains the old virtues of loyalty to his armsmen and protection of those who serve him. However, this does not negate the fact that he is a soldier and a killer, experienced on far too many battlefields. He saw his mother killed when he was eleven, and led thousands to their deaths at Escobar in a fight which he knew they could not win, on the Emperor's orders. Aral Vorkosigan is capable of anything, however bloody or lethal, for the safety of Barrayar or the well-being of his family, and he is one of the great political figures of his generation.

## Count Piotr Pierre Vorkosigan

Count Piotr is clearly a Vorkosigan, but his face is lined by age and his hair is grizzled. He has a military bearing, and usually wears the house colors of brown and silver.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 12 [20]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 13 [30].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Alertness +1 [5]; Animal Empathy [5]; Legal Enforcement Powers (in Vorkosigan District) [10]; Longevity [5]; Strong Will +2 [8]; Ally Group (Armsmen) [20]; Ally Group (ex-servicemen in Vorkosigan District) [20]; Ally (Aral Vorkosigan) [15]; Very Wealthy [30]; Reputation

(heroic old nobility, +1 to Barrayarans) [5]; Reputation (dangerous opponent, -1 to Cetagandans) [5]; Status 5 (Count) [20]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:**

(Barrayar) [-15]; Intolerance ("Mutants") [-10]; Duty (Vorkosigan District) [-10]; Duty (Armsmen) [-5]; Duty (Emperor) [-10]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Animal Handling-14 (Horses) [4]; Riding-14 (Horses) [16]; Veterinary-13 (Horses) [2]; Beam Weapon-12 (Stunner) [2]; Beam Weapon-12 (Plasma Arc) [2]; Brawling-12 [2]; Fencing-14 [8]; Knife-12 [2]; First Aid/TL9-14 [1]; Survival-16 (Barrayar) [4]; Tracking-16 [4]; History-14 (Barrayar) [4]; Administration-13 [1]; Leadership-16 [6]; Savoir-Faire-14 (Barrayar) [1]; Strategy-15 [6]; Tactics-15 [6]; Demolition-14 [2]; Intelligence Analysis-15 [6]; Piloting/TL9-11 (Lightflyer) [2]; Driving/TL9-11 (Groundcar) [2]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Languages:** Russian-14 [1/2]; Greek-14 [1/2]; French-14 [1/2]; Cetagandan-14 [2]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Bore about horses [1]

**Shards of Honor and Barrayar novels.** He died

20 years later at the age of 92, in bed.)

Count Piotr Vorkosigan is a complicated character: given his pride in his family, his concern for Barrayar, and his disapproval of mutants and modernizations, he can be easily stereotyped as an old warrior who's been left behind by the new era. That is unjust . . . and dangerous. The Count has already changed the face of Barrayar twice -- first as a leader of the resistance against the Cetagandans, and then as chief architect in the removal of Mad Emperor Yuri and his replacement by Ezar Vorbarra -- and he led his world in adopting the new technologies available after the Time of Isolation ended. When Barrayar's armies were changing from cavalry units to lightflyers, he was one of the young Vor leading the way. Although there are some changes in society that he is unwilling to accept, he is still the man who helped shape Barrayar, and it is unwise to forget it.

Count Piotr is, above all, a stalwart defender of his world and its traditions. The great history of the Vorkosigan family only strengthened his belief that no mutant should ever claim the name of Vorkosigan. When he discovered that Miles would be born deformed, he appealed to Aral and Cordelia to have the child aborted, certain that they would agree. Upon Cordelia's decision to bear Miles via uterine replicator, he tried to bribe the doctors to kill Miles, and later attempted to smother the child in his cradle. His later acceptance of his grandson was slow and gradual, and dependent on the boy proving himself in the traditional way for a Vor man -- the military. Old and weary as he was, Count Piotr's death directly after Miles washed out of officer training was not a coincidence.

@PULLQUOTE:"My grandfather . . . learned his political science from the Cetagandans. Mad Emperor Yuri offered him postgraduate instruction after that. My grandfather schooled my father. By the time I knew Piotr, Vorbarr Sultana party politics were just an amusing pastime to him, to entertain him in his old age."

@PULLQUOTE: Miles Vorkosigan, *A Civil Campaign*

By the time of **Barrayar**, Count Piotr is viewed by some as an anachronism, disapproving of his son's Centrist coalition (even if he does not actively move against it). However, he is quite capable of holding his own in Barrayaran politics, and is still supported solidly by his District, who remembers how he led them against the Cetagandans. While it would take an unusual incident for him to come into direct contact

with young officers, he would make an excellent patron for orthodox young Barrayarans with a military career. He also remains concerned with the affairs of his District, and might sponsor a gifted boy into the military. Politically, even though he separates himself from his son for several years after the birth of Miles, he would not act directly against him, and would certainly not in any way betray the Emperor. One of his main leisure interests (if not the only one) is horse-breeding and training: he maintains a full polo team, and has imported several specimens to improve the quality of the local breed.

## Commodore Clement Koudelka ("Kou")

The Commodore is in his early sixties, and moves with a loose-kneed gait, the result of injuries to his nervous system. He is six feet tall, though slightly stooped, with gray hair: when encountered, he will usually be wearing his green Service uniform, and leaning on his cane (actually a swordstick.)

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 9 [-10]; DX 6 [-30]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 10 [0].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Alertness +2 [10]; High Pain Threshold

(due to prosthetic nerves) [10]; Military Rank (Commodore) [30]; Patron (Vorkosigans) [15]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Social Stigma (Cripple) [-10]; Age (mid-60s) [-30]; Lameness [-15]; Dependents (Delia, Olivia, Martya) [-18]; Duty (Barrayar) [-10]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Free Fall/TL9-8 [8]; Beam Weapon-10 (Stunner) [16]; Beam Weapon-10 (Plasma Arc) [16]; Fencing-10 [24]; Karate-8 [16]; Survival-14 (Mountains) [2]; Accounting-14 [4]; Computer Operation/TL9-15 [2]; Administration-20 [14]; Area Knowledge-16 (Vorbarr Sultana) [4]; Diplomacy-15 [6]; Fast-Talk-14 [2]; Leadership-14 [2]; Merchant-13 [1]; Savoir-Faire-15 (Barrayar) [2]; Strategy-16 [8]; Tactics-14 [4]; Intelligence Analysis/TL9-14 [4]; Driving/TL9-10 (Groundcar) [24]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Dislikes his real name Clement [-1];

Commodore Koudelka is a man who has swum against the Barrayar mainstream in several ways. He is a grocer's son who rose to high rank and status in the military, and a crippled war veteran who is still alive and a respected member of society. For a long time he served as Aral Vorkosigan's personal secretary -- with the ex-Regent now Viceroy of Sergyar, Koudelka has chosen to remain on Barrayar, and still holds a high position in the Service.

Clement Koudelka rose through the only place on Barrayar where a man can achieve promotion purely by merit -- the Service. His loyalty to his commander, Aral Vorkosigan, had him following that gentleman through his fortunes and misfortunes, including Vorkosigan's virtual exile on the *General Vorkraft*. On the mission to Sergyar, Koudelka was shot with a nerve disruptor. This caused widespread neural damage, to a degree that would normally have invalidated a soldier out of the Service -- and would probably have resulted in suicide, on Barrayar. However, Vorkosigan (as Regent-elect) gave Koudelka a position as his secretary, together with a promotion to lieutenant, and prosthetic nerve implants restored most of Koudelka's nervous functions.

During Vorkosigan's time as Regent and the Vordarian Rebellion, Koudelka met and married Ludmilla Droushnakovi, who was then acting as Cordelia's bodyguard. They have four daughters: Delia, Olivia, Martya, and Karen. They are all tall, blonde, and attractive, and they are often referred to by junior officers from HQ as "Commodore Koudelka's all-blond commando team." All four girls are now engaged, and the question of who gets married *first* under discussion.

Commodore Koudelka is an excellent patron for junior officers, and is likely to be a particularly sympathetic contact for any Barrayarans who have been invalidated out of spaceship duty. (Alternatively, he may end up having such characters dumped on him by other officers wanting to dispose of them, which will mean that the injured officers have to prove themselves . . .) He is still fully employed at HQ, in an administration/strategy position, and his career is by no means over. However, having several weddings to arrange in the near future (and recently funding Kareen's study on Beta Colony) has strained his finances. It is possible that old enemies of the Vorkosigans might see this as an opportunity to damage someone affiliated with the family, or that a particularly foolish spy might believe that he would be susceptible to blackmail or bribery.

Cordelia is tall and has a sturdy frame: her hair is chestnut-red, streaked with grey, and she walks with a stride more appropriate to trousers than long skirts, although she wears the dresses appropriate to a Barrayar countess.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 11 [20]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 16 [80]; HT 12 [20].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Reputation (war heroine, +2 to Betans) [10]; Reputation (war heroine, +1 to older Barrayarans) [5]; Wealthy [20]; Common Sense [10]; Empathy [15]; Ally (Gregor Vorbarra, Emperor of Barrayar) [25]; Ally Group (Vorkosigan Family) [30]; Status 6 (Vicereine of Sergyar) [30]; Unfazeable [20]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Barrayarans [-5]; Age (in 60s) [-30]; Honesty [-10]; Duty (Sergyar) [-10]; Odious Personal Habit (delivering Betan-style psychoanalysis at the least provocation, and usually accurately) [-5]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Free Fall/TL9-13 [4]; Beam Weapon-15 (Stunner) [8]; Beam Weapon-12 (Plasma Arc) [1]; Brawling-13 [2]; Fencing-11 [1]; First Aid/TL9-16 [1]; Survival-16 (desert) [1]; Computer Operation-16 [1]; Astrogation/TL9-18 [8]; 5-Space Math-17 [6]; Ecology/TL9-16 [4]; Knowledge-18 (Astrocartography) [8]; Mathematics-16 [4]; Psychology-16 [4]; Administration-16 [2]; Area Knowledge-16 (Beta Colony) [1]; Strategy-14 [1]; Detect Lies-15 [2]; Piloting/TL9-14 (Lightflyer) [8]; Driving/TL9-14 (Groundcar) [8]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Absolutely no inhibitions about discussing sexual matters [1]; Considers Vor system to be a planet-wide mass hallucination [1]; Believes that tests are given to us to be faced, and should not be refused [1]; Theist (variant on Presbyterian Christianity) [1]; Vegetarian -- only eats meat if vat-grown protein or in emergencies [1]

Cordelia Vorkosigan, born Naismith, is Betan by birth, with all the democratic beliefs and lack of prejudice idealized in that culture, and yet she has managed to adapt to the feudal, stratified world of Barrayar, forcing it to accept her, and to accept her son. While she is frequently exasperated by the world which her family calls home (her favorite swearword is, "Barrayarans!") she has done her best to improve matters around her and for those she cares about. As far as she's concerned, a home isn't a place -- it's people, and for her, here and now, it is her husband and children. The only reason that she chose to live on Barrayar or with Barrayarans was to be with her family: her opinion is that the world is a monster which devours its children, and which has nearly taken her husband and sons from her more than once.

Cordelia extends a great deal of trust to other people, expecting the best of them, and is frequently gratified in her expectations. Her faith in other people, and her ability to extend mercy, are two of her



most striking characteristics. She is often glad to help others arrange their lives and sort out their problems, although she will not involve herself without some sort of invitation to do so. When convinced of the rightness of her course, or the lack of other choice, she is capable of a cold-blooded integrity and ruthlessness which can come as a surprise to those who have only seen her merciful side. She is capable of calmly dissecting a person's motivations and personality in a way that can be extremely disconcerting -- both to the target, and to any other listeners.

Cordelia Naismith was born on Beta Colony via the "natural method" (her brother was born by uterine replicator). While serving as a captain in the Betan Astronomical Survey, she discovered and surveyed the planet later to be named Sergyar. It was there that she met and fell in love with Aral Vorkosigan, as the Barrayarans had also discovered the planet and were using it as a forward base. The war against Escobar caused them to fight on opposite sides, both being constrained by their honor and by their duties to their own planets. It was only after the war was ended that Cordelia was free to choose for herself. Angry at her treatment by the Betan psychologists, who believed she had been programmed as a Barrayaran spy, she left Beta Colony one step ahead of the Mental Health Board, and married Aral Vorkosigan on Barrayar.

@PULLQUOTE: "How did your mother cope, Lord Vorkosigan?" "You mean, being an egalitarian Betan and all? No problem. She says egalitarians adjust to aristocracies just fine, as long as they get to be the aristocrats."

@PULLQUOTE: Miles Vorkosigan, *Cetaganda*

Cordelia's life on Barrayar was complicated by Aral being declared Regent by the dying Emperor Ezar, her soltoxin poisoning during an assassination attempt on Aral, Miles' physical problems, and the natural difficulties of trying to assimilate a foreign culture. Her responsibility for Gregor's education as a child gave her a great deal of influence over him, and he owes much of his broadmindedness and mental stability to her influence. Even today, they maintain a friendly relationship, though it may be fortunate that she and Aral are on Sergyar and away from close, frequent contact with the Emperor. Both sides are aware that it would be difficult for Gregor, now that he is a grown man, to have his mentors constantly present in the Capital. Cordelia, for her part, is glad of the new area to apply her talents and energy, and her Betan influence is likely to show itself in Sergyar's development.

The Vicereine of Sergyar is a moderately frequent visitor to Barrayar, and has also been known to very occasionally travel to Beta to see her family there. She is an ideal Patron for young Sergyarans or Barrayarans of both sexes -- indeed, young women may see her as a role model and inspiration. Her love for her husband and her sons (both Miles and Mark) are absolutes in her life, and are widely known, as is her rescue of Miles as a baby during the Vordarian Rebellion. Should politics or her family require it, she would be ready to take a more central political role, with Aral at her side: however, his recent heart condition has caused her a great deal of concern, and she is currently happier to have him well away from Barrayar and the associated stress. She does not consider herself to be bound by the strata of Barrayaran society, and treats all others as equals -- even Simon Illyan, when he was Head of ImpSec -- giving respect where it is earned, by ability or by achievements.

(It is likely that Cordelia will outlive her husband: in this case, there is a strong possibility that she would retire to Beta Colony with a genetic sample from Aral, and use it to have a daughter via uterine replicator.)

## Sergeant Konstantin Bothari

Sergeant Bothari is a tall man, over six feet, with a closed, wary, beak-nosed face, and dark hair cut

brutally short in a military crop. He wears the uniform of a Vorkosigan armsman in brown and silver, and is almost always armed.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 15 [60]; DX 15 [60]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 15 [60].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Alertness +2 [10]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Military Rank (Sergeant) [5]; Rapid Healing [5]; Patron (Vorkosigans) [15]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Reputation (Vorrutyer's torturer, to Escobaran war veterans) [-8]; Bloodlust (controlled by drugs) [-5]; Fanaticism (Vorkosigans) [-15]; Weak Will/5 (in proximity to strong personalities in positions of authority) [-20]; Dependent (Elena Bothari, daughter) [-6]; No Sense of Humor [-10]; Secret (Vorrutyer's torturer) [-10]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Free Fall/TL9-13 [1/2]; Swimming-15 [1]; Beam Weapon-16 (Stunner) [2]; Beam Weapon-16 (Nerve Disruptor) [2]; Beam Weapon-17 (Plasma Arc) [4]; Beam Weapon-16 (Plasma Rifle) [2]; Judo-16 [8]; Karate-16 [8]; Knife-17 [4]; First Aid/TL9-11 [2]; Survival-12 (Mountains) [6]; Electronics Operation/TL9-12 (Weapons) [6]; Area Knowledge-12 (Vorbarra Sultana slums) [2]; Tactics-11 [6]; Camouflage-12 [2]; Demolition-12 [4]; Intimidation-14 [10]; Stealth-16 [4]; Streetwise-11 [4]; Piloting/TL9-14 (Lightflyer) [1]; Driving/TL9-14 (Groundcar) [1]; Riding-14 (Horses) [1]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Picks up dropped coins to save them for Elena's dowry [-1]; Abnormally sensitive to the word "bastard" [-1]; Extremely old-fashioned in the way that he treats Elena [-1]; Says, "Right and proper," a lot [-1]

(These statistics reflect Sergeant Bothari's abilities during the *Shards of Honor*, *Barrayar*, and *The Warrior's Apprentices* novels.)

Sergeant Konstantin Bothari is a troubled soul, schizophrenic and depending on those around him for identity. He is absolutely loyal to the Vorkosigans, absolutely deadly, but by no means absolutely sane. Bothari is formally an armsman belonging to Count Piotr, but was transferred to Cordelia's service by Count Piotr, and she gave him the position of Miles' bodyguard. (The fact that this was partly to guard Miles from Count Piotr himself was not mentioned.) He performed his duties effectively and with dedication, until he was killed by Elena Jesek, the Escobaran mother of his daughter.

Konstantin Bothari was born a bastard and the child of a prostitute, in the slums of Vorbarra Sultana. When he was young, he was sold to her customers: at the age of 12, he ran with the gangs, and when he reached 16, he lied about his age and joined the Service. He has a very poor sense of self, depending on the people around him for identity and personality. As a soldier, he could shape himself by the rules and standards of military life. In the company of people who demanded much more of him, or much worse, he became a hero -- or a torturer.

During his time in service, Bothari came under the command of Admiral Ges Vorrutyer, who discovered Bothari's weakness, and used it to mold Bothari into his personal torturer. However, Bothari also served under Vorkosigan -- who expected, and got, the behavior and ideals of a good soldier -- and met Cordelia, who saw the potential to heroism in him, offering him the possibility of becoming something more than he could ever imagine for himself. Bothari killed Vorrutyer in order to save Cordelia.

Bothari's daughter, Elena Bothari-Jesek (p. 00), became the center of his life. She was the child of an Escobaran ensign, Elena Visconti, whom he raped under Vorrutyer's orders, and whom he fixated upon, imagining that they were truly married. But when Elena Visconti met Bothari again, eighteen years later,

she killed him, claiming simple justice. Although Bothari had a loaded weapon in his hands at the time, he didn't try to fire it.

Bothari's behaviour patterns are very straightforward, and depend on the person by whom he is most influenced at the time. While serving under Count Piotr and Aral Vorkosigan, he was a perfectly loyal soldier, reliable and brave. As Miles' guardian, he was cold-bloodedly loyal and utterly protective of the boy. He was given proper medical treatment after the Vordarian Rebellion, which mostly suppressed his schizophrenic tendencies, silencing the "voices in his head." Should he be deprived of his medication for more than a short period, the consequences are unpredictable. Bothari *is* a sick man, and knows that his feeling that "killing is better than sex" is wrong: he relies on military discipline, and on the orders of people like Aral and Cordelia, to keep himself on track. Any contact between him and PCs is likely to be brief and military, unless they are serving on the same mission, or somehow involved in the affairs of the Vorkosigans. People around him often feel that he is dangerous, but his history is known only to Aral and Cordelia, and ImpSec -- and, later, to Miles and Elena.

## Madame Ludmilla Koudelka, nee Droushnakovi ("Drou")

Madame Koudelka is an elegant, tall blonde woman in her late 50s. She wears the clothing of a proper Barrayar matron, which conceals a well-muscled body.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 14 [45]; DX 15 [60]; IQ 12 [20]; HT 14 [45].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:**

Reputation (war heroine, +1 to older Barrayarans) [5]; Unusual Background (Judo Training) [10]; Patron (Vorkosigans) [15]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Age (late fifties) [-15]; Social Stigma (woman, valuable property) [-10]; Dependents (Delia, Olivia, Martya) [-18]; Duty (Barrayar) [-10]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Acrobatics-15 [4]; Running-15 [4]; Beam Weapon-17 (Stunner) [4]; Beam Weapon-16 (Plasma Arc) [2]; Judo-18 [24]; Karate-17 [16]; First Aid/9-14 [4]; Computer Operation/9-14 [4]; Area Knowledge-20 (Imperial Residence) [16]; Savoir-Faire-16 (Barrayar) [8]; Tactics-12 [4]; Teaching-15 [8]; Holdout-16 [10]; Stealth-16 [4]; Piloting/TL9-14 (Lightflyer) [1]; Driving/TL9-14 (Groundcar) [1]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:**

Madame Koudelka is a trusted ally to the Vorkosigans, an ex-bodyguard to the Emperor, two years all-Barrayar women's judo champion, and a happily married woman with a suitably (for Barrayar) large number of children. Cordelia Vorkosigan has been known to remark that if Drou had been Betan, she would have been leading a commando team. But as matters stand, Madame Koudelka is very happy with her life -- and trying, like her husband, not to interfere too much with her children's lives and futures.

@PULLQUOTE:"But, Cordelia . . . we want our children to do *better* than we did. To *not* make the same mistakes!" *A Civil Campaign*

Ludmilla -- or, as she is normally called, Drou -- was the youngest of four, and her father and three brothers were all in the Service. She used to practice judo with her brothers, when she was younger, and they helped by sneaking her into the men's classes -- judo was not considered a particularly proper hobby for a young woman. She was good enough to win the all-Barrayar womens' judo championship for two years running: this brought her to the notice of Captain Negri of ImpSec, as Princess Kareen had been

asking for a female guard. Drou was delighted by the position of bodyguard, as it was as close as she would ever get to "being a real soldier . . ."

Shortly after Cordelia's arrival on Barrayar, Princess Kareen transferred Drou to act as bodyguard to the new Countess Vorkosigan. When the Vordarian Rebellion hit, Drou assisted Cordelia in her attempt to rescue Miles, in return for an equal attempt to rescue the Princess. During her service to Cordelia, Drou met and fell in love with Koudelka. Eventually (and with Cordelia's help) they established their relationship, and were finally married under the auspices of Lady Alys Vorpatril.

These days, Madame Koudelka is a perfect Barrayaran matron -- well enough established in society to be able to act as Gregor's hostess, if Lady Alys or Dr. Toscane is away. However, she still does isometric exercises every night before sleeping, and teaches self-defense and security classes to Ministerial employees. Her four daughters (Delia, Olivia, Martya, and Kareen) are very dear to her, and she has done what she can to give them the best education available. Even though she has no official rank in ImpSec or the Service, and is apparently just another society matron, she should not be discounted: she still has the muscle tone of a trained acrobat, the reflexes of a soldier, the Emperor's trust, and regular contact with the Vorkosigans. Madame Koudelka might well give help and patronage to any Barrayaran woman with unusual hobbies or skills. She is the ideal person to recommend a suitably qualified would-be soldier of the "wrong gender" to people such as Gregor, Miles, or Cordelia. These days, Barrayar needs women too . . .

## Lord Mark Pierre Vorkosigan

Lord Mark is the same height as Miles, but is visibly far plumper, and lacks Miles' scars. He wears well-cut civilian clothes, and deliberately works to look as unlike Miles as possible. His accent is an amalgam of Barrayaran and galactic.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 12 [20]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 16 [80]; HT 13 [30].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Status +3 (Barrayaran Lord) [15]; Wealthy [20]; Lightning Calculator [5]; Strong Will +2 [8]; Unusual Background (Jacksonian clone) [10]; Ally Group (Vorkosigans) [15]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Reputation (-2 to Barrayaran high society, fat clone) [-3]; Social Stigma (Mutant) [-10]; Fast-Penta Allergy [-5]; Fat [-10]; Bloodlust (only as Killer) [-10]; Compulsive Behaviour (masochism, only as Howl) [-15]; Gluttony (only as Gorge) [-5]; Intolerance (Jackson's Whole clone traders) [-5]; Lecherousness (only as Grunt) [-15]; Split Personality (Killer, Gorge, Grunt, and Howl) [-10]; Unluckiness [-10]; Sense of Duty (Vorkosigans) [-5]; Sense of Duty (Kareen Koudelka) [-5]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Dancing-12 [2]; Free Fall/TL9-13 [4]; Beam Weapon-15 (Stunner) [8]; Beam Weapon-15 (Plasma Arc) [8]; Beam Weapon-14 (Nerve Disruptor) [4]; Judo-12 [4]; Karate-16 [32]; First Aid/TL9-16 [1]; Accounting-15 [2]; Computer Operation/TL9-16 [1]; Electronics Operation/TL9-16 [2]; Economics-17 [6]; Astrogation/TL9-14 [1]; 5-Space Math-14 [1]; Research-16 [2]; Area Knowledge-16 (Jackson's Whole) [1]; Fast-Talk-15 [1]; Leadership-14 [1/2]; Savoir-Faire-16 (Barrayaran) [1]; Strategy-14 [1]; Tactics-14 [1]; Detect Lies-16 [4]; Intelligence Analysis-16 [4]; Stealth-14 [8]; Driving/TL9-13 (Groundcar) [4]; Piloting/TL9-13 (Lightflyer) [4]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Languages:** French-14 [1/2]; Greek-14 [1/2]; Russian-14 [1/2]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Works hard not to be mistaken for Miles [-1]

Lord Mark Pierre Vorkosigan is a clone of Miles Vorkosigan, created as the keystone of a Komarran conspiracy to destroy the Vorkosigan family and all Barrayar. After escaping from his creators' control, he spent a briefly disastrous period attempting to outdo Miles at heroism. This went horribly wrong, resulting in Miles' death and cryo-preservation. Mark was involved in the rescue of the revived Miles, but suffered in the process, developing a partly fractured personality. Even though he is now functional in society, is accepted into the Vorkosigan family, and has a firm relationship with Kareen Koudelka, he is still a deeply troubled man, with a tendency to revert under stress.

Ser Galen (p. 00) used tissue samples from Miles Vorkosigan to have a clone created on Jackson's Whole. Since the clone had the same basic genotype as Miles, he should naturally have been the same height as Ivan Vorpatril; as it was, drugs and surgery was used to keep him at Miles' height and weight. He was drilled in all the things that Miles would be expected to know. He always knew what he was -- a clone, an imitation -- and what his purpose was to be. At best, Galen treated him coldly; in the worst moments, he became a surrogate for Galen's hatred of the Vorkosigans.

When Galen finally activated his plot, the clone was ready to seize his opportunity. However, on meeting Miles, he began to realize that other horizons might be possible. Miles gave him a name of his own -- Mark Pierre, according to the Barrayaran tradition of the secondborn son taking the second name of both grandfathers -- and offered him the chance to find out who he really was. When pushed to a decision, Mark shot Ser Galen and fled.

Three years later, Mark concluded that he wanted to destroy the clone-makers of Jackson's Whole. He impersonated Miles and took a shipful of Dendarii Mercenaries in order to kidnap -- or rescue -- a group of clones who were waiting to be used in brain-body transplants. The raid went badly wrong, and though Miles arrived with more Dendarii in time to prevent a total debacle, Miles himself was killed. In this atmosphere of failure and guilt, Mark was sent to Barrayar, where he met Aral and Cordelia Vorkosigan, Ivan Vorpatril, and the Emperor Gregor. He gained sufficient stability to try and rescue Miles, and his knowledge of Jackson's Whole, together with his growing talent for intelligence research, allowed them to find the recovering Miles.

However, Mark was captured by Baron Ryoval, who assumed that he was Miles, and who had been seeking revenge on Miles for a long time. Ryoval systematically tortured Mark, causing Mark's personality to fragment into four subsidiary personas, each of which expressed a darker side of his personality. Unfortunately for Ryoval, one of these sub-personas, Killer, was the part of Mark who had been trained as an assassin by Galen. Killer disposed of Ryoval, and Mark escaped, and made a Deal with Baron Fell to help the Duronas escape Jackson's Whole -- and came out of it with 2,000,000 Betan dollars in his pocket.

@PULLQUOTE:He rolled near to Ryoval's ear. "I am *too* a Vorkosigan. The one who was trained as a deep-penetration mole and assassin. It really pisses me off when people underestimate me, y'know?"

@PULLQUOTE:-- *Mirror Dance*

Mark isn't a mentally healthy man. However, he has his mental disorders mostly under control, with the help of Betan therapy, family support, and Kareen Koudelka's love. He is twitchy about asking his family (and Miles most of all) for favors. His first main venture into financial entrepreneurship -- founding a company to produce the "butter bugs" (p. 00) with the help of the Escobaran scientist, Dr Enrique Borgos -- has succeeded. He is doing extremely well at his economic studies at the University of Silica on Beta Colony, and he has permission from the Koudelkas to continue his relationship with Kareen. Now that he has succeeded in rescuing Miles, just once, he feels that he can choose his own direction in life. Mark

plans to expand economically, and in particular, to find cheaper life-extension therapies in order to undercut and ultimately destroy the clone-butchers of Jackson's Whole. His aggressive expansion may well bring him into contact with other financial experts, or with innovative scientists -- whether legal or illegal -- on Barrayar, or on other planets. While he has a claim on the throne second only to Miles (according to some reckonings of the line of descent) he has absolutely no interest in it: quite the contrary.

(Mark's "Black Gang" is his private term for his four subsidiary personas: Gorge, Grunt, Howl, and Killer. These are not so much full separate personalities, but darker sides of his personality which may emerge if he is under stress. Each of them is tied to past traumatic history, and to a particular type of behavior. Gorge is linked to the constant body-modification he underwent while being forced to imitate Miles, where he was alternately starved and force-fed, and had no control over his own body. When Gorge comes out, Mark overeats, far past the point of satiation, and sometimes to the point of actual physical damage. Howl represents the masochistic side of Mark's nature, which believes -- mainly due to Ser Galen's indoctrination -- that he deserves to be punished, and will accept any source of pain that will let him suffer appropriately. Howl often operates in tandem with Gorge. Grunt is linked to Mark's sexuality, which was first repressed and then abused under Galen: Grunt has benefited the most from Betan therapy, and is quite civilised when he emerges. Killer is the part of Mark which contains all his honed assassin-reflexes: when Killer starts emerging, Mark is at his most dangerous. Kareen and Mark's therapist are aware of the way that Mark views these aspects of his personality, but he keeps them otherwise secret.)

## Ser Galen

Ser Galen is clearly in his sixties, with blue eyes, clipped greying hair, a lined face, and a body thickening with age. He wears typical conservative clothing for whatever planet he is currently living on.

@TEXT-CSTATS:*Attributes*: ST 10 [0]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 12 [20].

@TEXT-CSTATS:*Advantages*: Reputation (Revolutionary hero, +4 to other Komarran revolutionaries) [3]; Strong Will +3 [12]; Ally Group (ageing Komarran revolutionaries) [20];

@TEXT-CSTATS:*Disadvantages*: Reputation (Komarran revolutionary, -5 to Barrayaran authorities and to most Komarrans) [-6]; Age (in 60s) [-30]; Bad Temper (if Vorkosigans involved) [-5]; Fanaticism (Komarr) [-15]; Intolerance (Barrayarans) [-10]

@TEXT-CSTATS:*Skills*: Beam Weapon-14 (Stunner) [4]; Beam Weapon-15 (Nerve Disruptor) [8]; Brawling-12 [1]; First Aid/TL9-14 [1]; Accounting-13 [4]; Computer Operation-15 [2]; Acting-14 [2]; Administration-15 [4]; Fast-Talk-16 [6]; Leadership-16 [6]; Savoir-Faire-14 (Komarran) [1]; Strategy-14 [4]; Demolition/TL9-15 [4]; Detect Lies-15 [6]; Holdout-14 [4]; Interrogation-16 [8]; Shadowing-13 [2]; Stealth-12 [2]; Driving/TL9-12 (Groundcar) [2]; Piloting/TL9-12 (Lightflyer) [2]

@TEXT-CSTATS:*Quirks*: Convinced the Vorkosigans are sexual deviants [1]; Vengeful [-1]; Refuses to accept Barrayaran presence on Komarr [-1]

(These statistics reflect Ser Galen's abilities during **Brothers in Arms**.)

Ser Galen is a Komarran rebel, and bears a deep and personal loathing towards the Vorkosigan family. This sustained him through 17 years of conspiracy after the Komarran Rebellion, during which he reared a clone of Miles Vorkosigan, intending to have the clone replace Miles, attempt to seize the Imperial throne, cause chaos on Barrayar, and allow Komarr to rebel during the confusion. He nearly managed to succeed in his plot, taking advantage of Miles visiting Earth to kidnap him and substitute the clone.

However, Miles managed to convince Mark that he could have a life of his own, and that the plot was hopeless. When Ser Galen tried to force Mark into murdering Miles and Duv Galeni, Mark shot and killed Ser Galen instead.

Ser Galen was born into the Galen Orbital Transshipping Warehouse Cartel, one of the oligarchy which ran Komarr before the Barrayaran invasion. His sister, Rebecca Galen, was a Komarran Counsellor who died during the Solstice Massacre, rousing a permanent hate for all Barrayarans in Ser Galen, and particularly for Aral Vorkosigan and all his line. Galen joined the Resistance, becoming an active leader, and took part in the Komarran Revolt six years later, assisted by his sons. He was believed to have died in the Revolt. His younger son took the name Duv Galeni, and emigrated to Barrayar to study military history, and later joined the Service (p. 00).

@PULLQUOTE:"He can't quit. Above life itself, he has to prove himself right. To be right redeems his every crime. To have done all that he's done, and be wrong -- unbearable!"

@PULLQUOTE: Duv Galeni, *Brothers In Arms*

Ser Galen is a bitter, hollow man who *must* order to justify all his actions. While he does not perceive himself as evil, there is no action that he is not prepared to take in order to achieve his aims. Galen will descend to any depth in pursuit of his high principles of liberty. He feels that foreign domination of Komarr is not only prone to abuse, but evil by first principle. Attempts to make it non-foreign by integration are unacceptable -- such compromises are collaboration and capitulation.

Ser Galen's conspiracy began shortly after the failed Revolt. He obtained a tissue sample from the infant Miles, and had a clone (Mark Vorkosigan, p. 00) made on Jackson's Whole. Galen seized the chance to perform a substitution while Miles Vorkosigan was visiting Earth. When he discovered that Duv Galeni was serving as a Captain in the Barrayaran Embassy on Earth, he approached his son to ask for cooperation -- and kidnapped Galeni when it was refused. Ultimately, the plot was revealed, and Galen was killed.

One of Galen's greatest grievances is what he sees as his son's lack of loyalty. Ser Galen hates the fact that Galeni is "dazzled by the glittering tinsel of neo-fascism," and particularly loathes the fact that his own son is loyal to a Vorkosigan. His son is one of the two areas on which he is irrational, the other being the Vorkosigan family (and Barrayar by implication). If Mark had not killed Ser Galen, then Galen would undoubtedly have continued to try to liberate Komarr and get revenge on Barrayar. Since the Komarran resistance groups are dying out through old age and lack of support, and the Galen family fortune is long gone, Ser Galen would have to take some sort of action soon. It would have been a particularly nasty situation if he had somehow come into contact with the group of engineers who planned to attack the Komarr-Barrayar wormhole . . .

## Commodore Duv Galeni

Duv Galeni is a saturnine man of slightly taller than average height, with dark hair, hooded brown eyes, and an aquiline profile. He usually wears standard Barrayaran green uniform, with ImpSec silver eyes.

@TEXT-CSTATS:*Attributes:* ST 15 [60]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 13 [30].

@TEXT-CSTATS:*Advantages:* Alertness +2 [10]; Common Sense [10]; Eidetic Memory [30]; Military Rank (Commodore) [30]; Strong Will +2 [8]; Ally (Miles Vorkosigan) [25]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Unluckiness [-10]; Duty (Barrayar) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Komarr) [-10]; Social Stigma (Komarran on Barrayar) [-5]; Berserk (under extreme stress) [-5]; Secret (Komarran revolutionary background of father and self) [-10]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Beam Weapon-14 (Stunner) [4]; Beam Weapon-14 (Nerve Disruptor) [4]; Beam Weapon-14 (Plasma Arc) [4]; Judo-12 [4]; Karate-14 [16]; First Aid/TL9-14 [2]; Accounting-12 [4]; Computer Operation-15 [6]; Administration-15 [4]; Law-14 [4]; Astrogation-13 [1]; History-16 (Barrayar) [8]; Diplomacy-14 [4]; Fast-Talk-13 [1]; Leadership-15 [4]; Savoir-Faire-14 (Barrayarran) [1]; Strategy-15 [6]; Tactics-14 [4]; Demolition/TL9-13 [1]; Detect Lies-14 [4]; Intelligence Analysis/TL9-16 [8]; Interrogation-13 [1]; Stealth-12 [2]; Driving/TL9-12 (Groundcar) [2]; Piloting/TL9-12 (Lightflyer) [2]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Accent goes street-Komarran under stress [-1]; Freezes under social stress [-1]

Duv Galeni is a Komarran who has managed to reach the rank of Commodore in ImpSec, where he is chief of Komarran affairs. He rose through the Barrayaran Service, and achieved respect and position through his abilities. Despite the handicap of a revolutionary father who was engaged in anti-Barrayar conspiracies till the moment of his death, Galeni has managed to succeed in both his career and in his personal ambitions, and is currently engaged to Delia Koudelka, daughter of Commodore Koudelka (p. 00).

Galeni was born David Galen, the son of Ser Galen of the Galen Orbital Transshipping Warehouse Cartel. He was four years old when his aunt Rebecca Galen was killed in the Solstice Massacre. At ten years old, he was following his father in the Komarran Revolt, and before his 14th birthday he had helped to kill men. He was 15 when the last spasms of the Revolt died down, and his father and older brother were believed dead.

Changing his name to Duv Galeni (the Barrayaran form of David Galen), he moved to Barrayar, and took a Ph.D. with honors in Modern History and Political Science from the Imperial University at Vorbarr Sultana. (His Ph.D. thesis was 'The Barrayaran Imperial Service: A Century of Change.') He gave up a faculty position at the College of Belgravia in order to attend the Imperial Service Academy within weeks of the ruling permitting Komarrans to enter the military, and swiftly rose to the rank of Captain.

When the Ser Galen (p. 00) crisis blew up, Galeni refused to cooperate with his father's plans. After doing a stint in counterintelligence on Komarr, Galeni requested (and got) assignment to Barrayar, and was shortly promoted to Head of Komarran Affairs. He is currently engaged to Delia Koudelka.

@PULLQUOTE: "But he's a very closed man, for a lot of good reasons. I think it's been hard for him to try to get close to Laisa. Not because of what she is, but because of how he is, or how he's made himself. Slow, and deliberate, and careful."

@PULLQUOTE: Miles Vorkosigan, *Memory*

Galeni has seen war and its results, and has seen that people are just as dead whether they are killed for conquest or for idealism -- and he doesn't want any more wars. He honestly wants the best for Komarr --and for Barrayar -- and will work through the system to achieve it. While he sees Miles Vorkosigan as a friend, he is somewhat shy of any help from Miles. He tolerates Mark, though warily. Galeni is deeply in love with Delia Koudelka, and can count on support from her and her family under any circumstances.



Duv Galeni is normally a cool, assessing personality, and is developing a façade of serenity as Head of Komarran Affairs. When under extreme tension, his accent reverts to street-Komarran, and he can go berserk in fights. (Such moments of stress are few and far between, and require highly unusual circumstances.) He has a keen sense of the difference between eyewitness testimony, hearsay, and speculation -- vital in his job.

## Kareen Koudelka

Kareen is an attractive blonde, of medium height (the shortest of her sisters) and with blue eyes. When on Barrayar she wears typical Barrayaran women's clothing, but on Beta Colony she dresses in a more cosmopolitan manner, possibly even donning a topless Betan sarong.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 11 [10].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:**

Empathy [15]; Ally Group (Sisters) [10]; Patron (Vorkosigans) [15]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Social Stigma (woman, valuable property) [-10]; Honesty [-10]; Pacifism (Self-defense only) [-15]; Truthfulness [-5]; Sense of Duty (Mark Vorkosigan) [-5]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Dancing-14 [8]; Stunner-12 [2]; Judo-12 [8]; First Aid/TL9-13 [1]; Survival-12 (Mountains) [1]; Computer Operation/TL9-15 [4]; Psychology-15 [8]; Fast-Talk-13 [2]; Savoir-Faire-15 (Barrayaran) [4]; Detect Lies-14 [6]; Driving/TL9-13 (Groundcar) [4]; Piloting/TL9-13 (Lightflyer) [4]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Wears Betan earrings denoting her relationship with Mark Vorkosigan [-1]

Kareen Koudelka is a woman of strong insight and observation, to the extent that Mark Vorkosigan's Betan therapist would like her to train as a therapist on Beta Colony, and has offered to help her find scholarships. She has to balance the constraints and duties which she grew up with on Barrayar against the freedoms and personal liberties which she has grown to live with on Beta Colony. More urgently, she has to balance her relationship with Mark Vorkosigan against the views of her parents and family. However, she has managed so far, with some help from Lady Cordelia Vorkosigan.

Kareen Koudelka was born by uterine replicator, and has absolutely no problems with the use of galactic technology. She grew up in an atmosphere which was incredibly liberated for Barrayar, with a mother who had fought as a soldier, mother-daughter sessions in self-defence and stunner techniques, and frequent input from Countess Vorkosigan. While attending the Winterfair Ball at the Imperial Residence with her sisters, she met Mark Vorkosigan, and the two of them became interested in each other.

Kareen did well at Vorbarr Sultana University, and managed to win a scholarship from Countess Vorkosigan to spend a year studying on Beta Colony. While there, she was able to spend time with Mark, who was also on Beta Colony, taking financial courses and getting psychiatric therapy. She gained a good insight into his problems, and fell in love with him. However, when she returned to Barrayar at the end of the year, she found it hard to reconcile her Barrayaran upbringing with her feelings for Mark. Despite their moderately liberal leanings, her parents were astonished and very displeased to find out about the relationship -- and that it had been physically consummated. Fortunately, diplomatic counseling from Countess Vorkosigan persuaded the Koudelkas to allow the relationship, and with the income from the recent butter bug project (p. 00) Kareen is scheduled to return to Beta Colony for another year's study.

@PULLQUOTE:"I don't understand how it can feel so right there and so wrong here," Kareen said. "It should be not wrong here. Or not right there. Or something."

@PULLQUOTE:-- *A Civil Campaign*

Kareen is an intelligent young woman: she is also compulsively honest, and very conscientious about obligations. While she has taken several courses in psychology on Beta Colony, she's not sure whether it's psychology in general that interests her, or just Mark Vorkosigan's psychology. What she wants at the moment is time, to decide whether she wants to follow Barrayaran or Betan customs -- or to make her own -- and to explore her relationship with Mark. While her sisters and parents do not all necessarily approve of Mark, they will back her to the hilt against outsiders. While on Beta Colony, Kareen would make an excellent contact for any Barrayaran in trouble -- particularly if they come recommended by a Vorkosigan.

## Admiral Elli Quinn

Elli Quinn is an astonishingly beautiful woman, with short dark curls, liquid brown eyes, pale skin, and a tall, lean, well-muscled body. She habitually wears the gray Dendarii Mercenary uniform.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 13 [30]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 13 [30].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Alertness +2 [10]; Charisma +2 [10]; Danger Sense [15]; Intuition [15]; Military Rank (Admiral) [40]; Very Beautiful [25]; Patron (Miles Vorkosigan) [15]; Patron (Barrayaran ImpSec) [30]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:**  
Vorkosigan) [15]; Dislike (Barrayar) [-1]; Dislike (Mark Vorkosigan) [-1]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Free Fall/TL9-13 [4]; Battlesuit/TL9-14 [4]; Beam Weapon-15 (Stunner) [8]; Beam Weapon-14 (Plasma Arc) [4]; Judo-14 [16]; Karate-14 [16]; First Aid/TL9-14 [1]; Computer Operation-15 [2]; Astrogation-15 [4]; Administration-15 [4]; Diplomacy-14 [4]; Leadership-15 [4]; Detect Lies-13 [2]; Stealth-14 [8]; Piloting/TL9-14 (Lightflyer) [8]; Driving/TL9-13 (Groundcar) [4]; Strategy-15 [6]; Tactics-15 [6]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Bites nails when nervous [1]; Looks down on planet-dwellers ("dirtsuckers") [1]; Doesn't use euphemisms about killing [1]

Elli Quinn is the Admiral of the Dendarii Free Mercenary Fleet, and the ex-lover of Miles Vorkosigan. Her beautiful face is the result of plastic surgery after plasma burns in combat which nearly killed her. She respects Miles, learned from him, and loves him, but she couldn't bring herself to be the Lady Vorkosigan whom he wanted.

Elli Quinn was born in space, grew up on Kline Station (p. 00), and spent most of her adult life on board ships. She signed on with the Oseran Mercenaries, and stayed with them when they became the Dendarii Mercenaries. Elli was badly injured during the fighting around Tau Verde IV, with plasma-arc fire reducing her face to an unrecognizable blob. Miles Vorkosigan paid for plastic surgery for her on Beta Colony, and bought her the most beautiful face he could afford. Unfortunately, when Elli returned to the Dendarii Mercenaries, she found this a handicap: soldiers only paid attention to her face, rather than to her rank, and she found herself being propositioned rather than obeyed. She was forced to develop a new

set of techniques for command and administration. This resulted in her becoming one of the most wily manipulators and spies in the mercenary fleet.

@PULLQUOTE:"For the first six months, I was delighted. But the second time a soldier made a pass at me instead of following an order, I knew I definitely had a problem. I had to discover and teach myself all kinds of tricks, to get people to respond to the inside of me, and not the outside."

@PULLQUOTE: Commander Elli Quinn, *Brothers in Arms*

When Miles Vorkosigan (or rather, Simon Illyan) wanted the mysterious Terrence Cee and his rumored powers investigated, Elli was chosen for the job. Her later performance in helping supervise the Dagoola IV evacuation (p. 00) and handling the Dendarii side of the Ser Galen affair (p. 00) saw her becoming Admiral Naismith's second-in-command. She also became his lover, despite their earlier intentions not to fraternize between ranks. Elli was partly attracted to him because she admired and respected him, but mainly because she knew it wasn't just her face which he cared about.

Elli was blindsided by Mark masquerading as Admiral Naismith, and she has never forgiven him for Miles' death. After Miles' revival, she was furious when she found out that he had kept his seizures secret, knowing how irresponsible it was.

Lord Auditor Miles Vorkosigan (in his new position) could offer Elli the position of Lady Vorkosigan, but couldn't be Admiral Naismith for her any more. She didn't want to be trapped on a single planet for the rest of her life -- particularly not Barrayar -- and didn't want to sacrifice her career and life for him, however much she loved him. Miles understood this (indeed, he forced the choice on her) and accepted it. She became Admiral of the Dendarii Free Mercenary Fleet, and currently works with General Allegre of ImpSec just as Miles once worked with Illyan.

Admiral Quinn is an energetic, vital woman who knows her own capacities and is justly proud of them. Her face was the only gift that she was given; the rest she earned through talent and dedication. She is responsible to the Dendarii, and leads them well. In personal terms, she has always disliked being on the defensive, and is something of a thrill-seeker, though this tendency is suppressed now that she has other people depending on her. She is extremely stubborn. Currently, Admiral Quinn is likely to be looking for new prospective subordinates among the Dendarii Mercenaries, given the recent shift in the command tree caused by her promotion and by the Bothari-Jeseks leaving.

## Elena Bothari-Jesek

Elena is 6 feet tall, in her early thirties; an aquiline beauty with short-cropped ebony hair and pale ivory skin. She wears dresses when necessary to move in polite society on Barrayar, but prefers uniform or plain fatigues.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 12 [20]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 13 [30].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Beautiful Appearance [15]; Charisma +2 [10]; Strong Will +2 [8]; Unusual Background (Vorkosigan protege) [10]; Patron (Vorkosigans) [15]; Ally (Baz Jesek) [15]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Social Stigma (woman, on Barrayar) [-5]; Intolerance (Rapists) [-3]; Sense of Duty (Barrayar) [-10]; Secret (Sergeant Bothari's history) [-5]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Dancing-14 [8]; Free Fall/TL9-13 [4]; Battlesuit/TL9-14 [4]; Beam Weapon-15 (Stunner) [8]; Beam Weapon-14 (Plasma Arc) [4]; Judo-14 [16]; Karate-13 [8]; First

Aid/TL9-15 [4]; Survival-13 (Mountains) [2]; Accounting-14 [6]; Computer Operation-15 [4]; Astrogation-15 [6]; 5-Space Math-13 [8]; Administration-16 [8]; Diplomacy-13 [4]; Leadership-14 [4]; Merchant-15 [6]; Savoir-Faire-15 (Barrayar) [4]; Strategy-13 [4]; Tactics-14 [6]; Detect Lies-13 [4]; Stealth-13 [4]; Piloting/TL9-14 (Lightflyer) [8]; Driving/TL9-13 (Groundcar) [4]

@TEXT-CSTATS:*Quirks*: Avoids Barrayar [-1]; Touchy about crimes of sexual assault [-1]

Elena Bothari-Jesek is currently a shipmaster operating out of Escobar. She spent ten years in the Dendarii Mercenaries, sucked in when Miles Vorkosigan created it. Through her career as a soldier, she proved herself in her own eyes, and justified herself by Barrayaran standards. More recently, she has realized that merely judging herself by Barrayaran standards is self-limiting, and that the people she cares about (the Vorkosigans, her husband) won't think less of her for choosing to be other than a soldier.

@PULLQUOTE:". . . all my childhood, all my youth, Barrayar pounded into me that being a soldier was the only job that counted. The most important thing there was, or ever could be. And that I could never be important, because I could never be a soldier. Well, I've proved Barrayar wrong. I've been a soldier, and a damned good one."

@PULLQUOTE: -- Elena Bothari-Jesek, *Memory*

Elena was the bastard child of Sergeant Bothari and Elena Visconti (p. 00). After the Barrayaran retreat, Elena Visconti was returned to the Escobarans; her fetus was sent to Barrayar in a uterine replicator. Bothari provided Elena with every luxury that he could as she grew up. He told his daughter that her mother was dead -- although he accidentally gave more than one story about how she had died -- and did his best to raise little Elena as a properly brought up young woman. Elena grew into a competent and curious young woman, even if Barrayar (and her father) refused her the chance of ever being a soldier.

When Miles had to invent the Dendarii Mercenaries, Elena played along, and was surprised and delighted to find that she could do the things he asked her to -- lead troops, supervise martial arts sessions, act like a commander. She began to believe that she could achieve anything she wanted. Her mother's appearance -- and Visconti's murder of her father -- shattered her world. She was forced to confront her father's history, and rejected by her mother. She chose to remain with the Dendarii, as an apprentice to Commander Ky Tung, and married the engineer Baz Jesek (a Barrayaran deserter, with whom she had fallen in love). Later, when Admiral Oser took over the fleet, she and Baz supported Miles during the Hegel Hub battle (p. 00).

When Miles was killed, Elena returned to Barrayar to escort Mark and bring the news. Elena spent a long time with Countess Vorkosigan, and reconsidered certain aspects of her life. She realized how much the Countess had accomplished, and began to think she herself might be able to accomplish things other than being a soldier. When Mark took her oath as armswoman, it served as closure: she had finally achieved everything that a Barrayaran man could have done -- everything that her father had done.

Two years ago, Elena and Baz left the Dendarii Mercenaries to find jobs off Escobar: he as an engineer in an orbital shipyard, she as a commercial shipmaster, but both primarily to start a family. Elena is particularly suited to understand the situation of young Barrayaran women visiting other planets for the first time, and would sympathize with women looking for more scope than their planet traditionally gives them. She is *definitely* still in contact with Barrayaran ImpSec, and would pass along any clearly important information.

**Simon Illyan**

Captain Illyan (he retains the title, despite his retirement) is an average-looking man of medium height, with thinning brown hair and a bland face. His civilian clothing is always neat and respectable, if unremarkable, and in good taste.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 12 [20]; DX 13 [30]; IQ 15 [60]; HT 12 [20].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Reputation (+4, ex-head of ImpSec) [10]; Status +4 [20]; Alertness +2 [10]; Common Sense [10]; Language Talent +5 [10]; Patron (Vorkosigans) [15]; Strong Will +3 [12]; Longevity [5]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Age (in 60s); Reputation (-4 to enemies of the Imperium, dreaded ex-head of ImpSec) [-10]; Absent-Mindedness (Poor Memory) [-15]; Fanaticism (Barrayar) [-15]; Sense of Duty (Vorkosigans) [-10]; Duty (Barrayar) [-15]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Dancing-13 [2]; Beam Weapon-15 (Stunner) [4]; Beam Weapon-14 (Plasma Arc) [2]; Judo-14 [8]; Karate-15 [16]; First Aid/TL9-15 [1]; Accounting-16 [6]; Computer Operation/TL9-16 [2]; Law-14 [2]; Astrogation/TL9-15 [4]; 5-Space Math-15 [4]; Administration-17 [6]; Diplomacy-14 [2]; Fast-Talk-16 [4]; Leadership-15 [2]; Savoir-Faire-16 (Barrayaran) [2]; Strategy-14 [2]; Detect Lies-17 [8]; Intelligence Analysis-17 [8]; Interrogation-16 [4]; Stealth-14 [4]; Driving/TL9-14 (Groundcar) [4]; Piloting/TL9-14 (Lightflyer) [4]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Languages:** French-15 [1]; Russian-15 [1]; Greek-15 [1]; Cetagandan-14 [2]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Never uses euphemisms [-1]; Suppressed panic makes him sarcastic [-1]; Looks abstracted when accessing his chip, or when his memory fails him [-1]; Claims memory lapses in order to avoid discussing subjects [-1]; Carries personal recording device [-1]

(These statistics reflect Simon Illyan's abilities after the loss of his memory chip in *Memory*. With the chip, he had Eidetic Memory [60] instead of Absent-Mindedness.)

Simon Illyan is one of the most feared men on Barrayar, despite his recent retirement and bland manner. As the head of ImpSec, he was one of Gregor's most powerful servants, responsible for keeping the Emperor well-informed, and protecting the Emperor and the Imperium. Illyan's tasks ranged from data analysis to ordering assassinations. He was efficient, cold-blooded, and utterly dedicated to his job and to Barrayar. An implanted memory chip gave him perfect recall, which was a great asset to him; the recent loss of the chip, in an act of deliberate sabotage by a subordinate, caused his retirement. He lives in Vorbarr Sultana, on a retired vice-admiral's half-pay, and maintains a quiet liaison with Countess Alys Vorpatril.

Simon Illyan started officer's training at 18, planning out his life: service, promotion, eventual retirement. His future changed permanently when he volunteered to take part in an experiment of Emperor Ezar's. He, and other young officers, had a memory-chip from Illyrica implanted in his brain, granting eidetic memory. While this memory-chip caused schizophrenia in 90% of cases, Illyan was a fortunate exception: he became a useful tool to the Emperor. Transferred to ImpSec, Illyan now reported directly to Captain Negri, the head of ImpSec.

During the Barrayaran invasion of Escobar, the Emperor placed Illyan at Aral Vorkosigan's side to report on the Admiral's actions. Illyan rapidly found himself becoming Aral's ally, as well. He ended up helping to conceal Cordelia Naismith and Sergeant Bothari after Vorrutyer's murder. After Aral Vorkosigan was named as Regent, Illyan became the ImpSec liaison to the Regent's household.

@PULLQUOTE: "Anyway, people may have seen Simon as sinister, but never as corrupt. He wouldn't have been half as scary if he hadn't been able to convincingly project that implacable indifference to, well, any human appetite."

@PULLQUOTE: -- Miles Vorkosigan, *A Civil Campaign*

After the Vordarian Rebellion and Captain Negr's death, Illyan was promoted to Captain -- and head of ImpSec. He served with distinction for 30 years, but his career was shattered when General Haroche of Internal Affairs grew tired of waiting for promotion. Haroche knew that an airborne virus had been developed by a Jacksonian House for Ser Galen (p. 00) and his Komarran revolutionaries, specifically intended to destroy Illyan's memory chip -- and that the confiscated samples were in ImpSec's Evidence Rooms. Haroche stole, and used, two capsules. Illyan's memory chip began to deteriorate, causing constant memory flashbacks. He was relieved of duty, and the chip was surgically removed. While Haroche first attempted to frame Miles Vorkosigan, and then Captain Duv Galeni, Miles (now an Auditor) was able to discover Haroche's guilt. Illyan, largely recovered, settled into a dignified retirement and a quiet relationship with Lady Alys Vorpatril.

As the Head of ImpSec, Illyan was an object of terror to all Barrayar save the Emperor -- and the Vorkosigan family. Despite his retirement, the fear still remains, and he will trade on it if necessary. He carries a small audio-recorder and computer-map, as his memory is now unreliable -- not only has he lost perfect recall, he now has gaps in both long- and short-term memory. (This is only known to certain members of ImpSec and the Council of Counts.) Simon tends to avoid ImpSec business, not wanting to cramp his successor's style. However, he still takes an interest in Imperium (and Vorkosigan) business, and should be considered an *extremely* servant, he was also loyal to Aral Vorkosigan: while the first has technically come to an end, the second continues.

## Lady Alys Vorpatril

Lady Alys is a Vor matron, dressed in the very best of taste. Her long silver-streaked black hair is worn in an elegantly restrained style, and she moves with the decisiveness of a woman who knows herself to be an arbiter of society.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 10 [0]; DX 11 [10]; IQ 13 [30]; HT 11 [10].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Attractive Appearance [5]; Status +5 [25]; Reputation (+3, Social Arbiter) [7]; Charisma +2 [10]; Common Sense [10]; Voice [10]; Patron (Emperor Gregor) [25]; Ally (Cordelia Vorkosigan) [20]; Longevity [5]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Age (in 60s); Code of Honor (Vor) [-15]; Social Stigma (woman, valuable property) [-10]; Duty (Emperor Gregor) [-5]; Sense of Duty (Vorkosigans) [-10]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Bard-14 [4]; Dancing-14 [16]; First Aid/TL9-13 [1]; Accounting-15 [8]; Computer Operation/TL9-14 [4]; Law-13 [4]; Administration-15 [6]; Diplomacy-15 [8]; Fast-Talk-15 [6]; Savoir-Faire-17 (Barrayaran) [8]; Detect Lies-14 [6]; Driving/TL9-13 (Groundcar) [8]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Languages:** French-13 [1]; Greek-13 [1]; Russian-13 [1]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Wants grandchildren [-1]

Lady Vorpatril is a woman of taste, firmness, and exquisite societal precision. She has acted as the Emperor Gregor's hostess for more than a decade, given his lack of any other female household members, and is likely to continue in that role in some degree, even though he has just married Laisa Toscane. Lady Alys also maintains a quiet liaison with Simon Illyan (who manages to be socially unclassifiable, and is a person whom no Barrayaran in his right mind would want to annoy). She is a close friend of the Vorkosigans, and is always willing to offer social advice or commentary, if she feels that it is required. Ultimately, however, she has her finger on the pulse of polite society, and typifies the high Vor.

Lady Alys Vorpatril became Cordelia Vorkosigan's friend shortly after Cordelia's arrival on Barrayar. Alys and her husband Lord Padma Vorpatril were trapped in Vorbarr Sultana when the fighting broke out, and were eventually discovered by Vordarian's men. Although Cordelia managed to rescue Lady Alys, Padma was killed. Alys went into labor, and gave birth to her son Ivan; she escaped the city with Koudelka's help, and reached safety.

Throughout Ivan's childhood and youth, Alys worked hard to be the perfect Vor mother, supporting and protecting him, and encouraging him to rise in the Service. However, Ivan failed to fulfil her expectations in the most crucial area; he refused to marry a nice young Vor girl and give his mother grandchildren to fuss over. She found this problem repeating itself elsewhere when, as the Emperor's main female relative, she became responsible for arranging his marriage. Gregor's choice of Dr. Laisa Toscane has relieved her greatly.

@PULLQUOTE:"Richars Vorrutyer sat right there," said Miles, pointing to Rene's chair, "and informed me that Lady Alys held no vote in Council. The fact that she has spent more years in the Vorbarr Sultana political scene than all of us here put together seemed to escape him. Too bad."

-- Lord Miles Vorkosigan, *A Civil Campaign*

A lot of people would consider female influence on Barrayaran politics as insignificant or non-existent, given the position which Vor society women are supposed to adopt. However, high Vor women do have opinions, and they network between themselves extremely effectively, exerting influence on their husbands or family. Lady Alys has a firm grasp on this flow of information, and a strong influence on other women in her circle. Where she leads, they will often follow, dragging their menfolk along behind if necessary. Whatever young Vor men may think, the combined pressure of their mothers and aunts is a force that should not be undervalued.

Lady Alys Vorpatril will continue to maintain her grip on society, despite her new tendency to take occasional holidays in Simon Illyan's company. Indeed, the ripples caused by Gregor taking a Komarran bride are likely to keep her busy for decades. While she does not always agree with Cordelia Vorkosigan's point of view, the two of them are good friends, and can rely upon each other in the event of trouble. Lady Alys would be glad to take on protegees, or to help young men and women of good breeding introduce themselves into polite society. She has an office of her own at the Imperial Residence, where she performs the logistical aspects of her role as Gregor's protocol advisor and social coordinator. Should she request a military aide, the usual victim is her son Ivan. Lady Alys also secretly receives reports from certain ImpSec agents (such as Byerly Vorrutyer), and passes them on to the relevant authorities.

## Byerly Vorrutyer

Byerly is a tall man with a slim build, and typical dark Vor hair and eyes. He wears finely cut civilian clothing, and moves with polite elegance.

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Attributes:** ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [20]; IQ 14 [45]; HT 12 [20].

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Advantages:** Reputation (+2 to Vor social circles, town gossip) [3]; Status +2 [10]; Eidetic Memory [30]; Strong Will +2 [8]; Voice [10]; Patron (ImpSec) [15]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Disadvantages:** Code of Honor (Vor) [-15]; Duty (ImpSec) [-15]; Odious Personal Habit (Sarcasm) [-10]; Dislike (Stupid people) [-1]; Secret (ImpSec Employee) [-15]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Skills:** Bard-15 [4]; Dancing-14 [8]; Computer Operation/TL9-15 [4]; Law-14 [4]; Acting-16 [6]; Carousing-14 [8]; Diplomacy-16 [8]; Fast-Talk-16 [6]; Savoir-Faire-16 (Barrayaran) [4]; Detect Lies-14 [6]; Driving/TL9-14 (Groundcar) [8]; Piloting/TL9-14 (Lightflyer) [8]

@TEXT-CSTATS:**Quirks:** Affectation of making small bows [-1]

Byerly (or "By") Vorrutyer is a town clown, an idle Vor, and a fashion-plate with an extremely sarcastic tongue. He is capable of turning up anywhere in Vorbarr Sultana -- even the officers' bars, usually uninteresting for non-Service -- and gossips with both Progressives and Conservatives. Other Vor tolerate him, possibly because he isn't viewed as a threat, or possibly because they dislike being the victims of his biting wit. His insults may not always be in the best of taste, but they are usually polite, and never unintentional. However, By's best kept secret is that he is actually a deep cover informer for ImpSec, and has been for the last 8 years. (Civilian contract employee, counterintelligence, Domestic Affairs, specializing in the high Vor social milieu.) His "drop," the person to whom he passes collected information, may well be Lady Alys Vorpatril.

Byerly's father is the youngest son of his generation, a misanthrope who never comes near the capital if he can help it. By himself is notoriously without visible means of support, but manages upper-class elegance, and is not notably short of money. He's too far from the Vorrutyer title to be likely to become Count. By is distantly related by marriage to Miles Vorkosigan, as one of his aunts -- the sister of Admiral Vorrutyer -- was Aral Vorkosigan's first wife. Byerly shows no great urge to pursue the relationship, except as a source for witticisms.

@PULLQUOTE:Byerly Vorrutyer had never joined the Service; he'd been a town clown for as long as Miles had been acquainted with him. Byerly had impeccable taste in everything but his vices.

@PULLQUOTE:-- *A Civil Campaign*

Byerly makes no secret of despising those of his fellows who "come unarmed to the battle of wits" -- however, this loses him few friends. He is welcome in most quarters, if only because his barbs are so widespread that at least a few are bound to hit someone whom his interlocutors dislike. He can be extremely charming when he wants to be, and is loyal to Barrayar and ImpSec, though the latter is *not* public knowledge. Part of his value to ImpSec is his reputation as an idle clown; this gives him access to a great deal of gossip. He's sharp-witted and generally well informed, and only rarely acts on his own behalf.

Even though he recently suffered a minor demotion from ImpSec, for his private activities in the Dono Vorrutyer case, he will probably regain his old grade soon enough. Byerly isn't a trained combatant --- he doesn't need to be. His job is gathering information and gossip, and the occasional covert op, and he does it extremely well. Very few people have any idea of his allegiance to ImpSec (Ivan Vorpatril and Miles Vorkosigan are recent additions to that list), and it is likely to stay that way. If he does provide any



assistance to acquaintances in trouble, then it will be untraceable and unremarkable, and will not affect his public attitude of polite derision in any way.

*The short man in brown and silver looked at the screen of his computer again. As if he needed to check it, Solone reflected wearily. "So," he stated. "While on a hiking trip outside the Dome, your breathmasks tragically malfunctioned, leading you to seek shelter wherever you could. Purely by accident, you stumbled on the outpost of a Jacksonian smuggling ring . . ." He paused to allow comment.*

*channel, "we wouldn't have gone out if we'd known the breathmasks were defective."*

*easy to identify them."*

*It should have been, Solone reflected, after the trouble he and the other two had taken to leave the stolen transport."*

*"Think nothing of it, Captain Solone," the small man stated firmly. "Our Dendarii friends got everything important out of there before that little accident with the neutron hand grenade. But I fear . . ." He*

*immediately. Given how well you seem to work together, there is a small matter on Beta Colony which I need you to investigate. . ."*

@PULLQUOTE:"Forward momentum."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Miles Vorkosigan, too often to count

The universe doesn't stop moving. It's big, and it's busy, and even if major worlds are currently -- barely -- achieving a temporary peace and stability, you can be sure that someone somewhere is going to produce a new invention, political system, or other disruption. Market forces and scientific insight bring political and economic change, and a planet or group that can't adapt is going to find themselves left behind and desperately trying to catch up. (Of course, those worlds or empires who pride themselves on their tradition and monolithic stability will be quite busy enough trying to maintain their stability against the waves of social pressure and change.) Characters need to react, or better still, act -- the rest of the universe won't slow down for them.

## **Types of Campaign**

The Vorkosigan books have wandered through a wide range of themes and plots. Miles and his family have, from time to time, been involved in events that range from the dangerous to the farcical, from space battles to down-and-dirty assassinations, and from high society intrigues to desperate life-or-death negotiations on battlefields. While a campaign can contain any or all of these elements, sometimes the GM will want to expand on one particular theme or mood, and use it as his central motif. Alternatively, he may want to set his game at some point in the history of the universe other than the present moment -- in the past, or even in the potential future.

### **High Adventure**

The Vorkosigan universe is *made* for high drama, last-minute escapes ("Daring rescues our specialty!"), perilous confrontations, and heroic resistance against the forces of evil. There are plenty of opposing factions out there in the galaxy, who may engage in life-or-death struggles for the most ethical -- or unethical -- reasons. If Cetagandan and Barrayaran secret agents are both trying to get hold of the genomic complex for telepathy, then neither side are necessarily villains -- they can both be acting on orders from their superiors, and for the highest of motives. (Whether or not their ends justify the means they use is a different question.) There are plenty of opponents out there -- possibly including other player characters.

@PULLQUOTE:"Ultimately . . . his career ran aground in disaster. But before it ended, he changed worlds."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Simon Illyan, *A Civil Campaign*

High adventure campaigns should be played straight-faced, and with an understanding by the characters that the universe *is* a dangerous place, and that the threat of death is real. They know that they're risking destruction for planet, power, or personal reasons. This is a setting for stories about heroism and duty, personal or professional, and characters that change the universe around them. Hairbreadth escapes can and will happen, confrontations with the campaign's main villains will occur and should be suitably thrilling, and the characters will get to be heroes. And even if they do die -- heroically, of course -- their names will be remembered.

## ImpSec and Auditorial Investigations

@PULLQUOTE:"We have advanced to new and surprising levels of bafflement."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Lord Auditor Miles Vorkosigan, *Komarr*

This setting offers interesting scope to characters who want to investigate crimes, corruption, and intrigues. They may be an ImpSec team, a loose group of experts requisitioned by ImpSec, an Auditor's assembled staff, Auditors themselves, or merely a hired set of investigators on retainer for ImpSec -- in which case they may not even know who their employers truly are! They might even be an investigative group working for another government, such as Beta Colony, the Cetagandan Empire, Escobar, or Jackson's Whole. GMs may find this a useful model to work with, as it gives convenient reasons for the characters to be working together, and the possibility of multiple layers of plot and investigation.

However, matters shouldn't be made too easy for the investigators. Fast-pentaing everyone in sight should be discouraged: either by widespread cases of allergy, or by official orders from above to refrain (maybe some suspects can't be allowed to babble freely, or are too politically important), or by simple restraint on the part of the characters, respecting the dignity and privacy of the suspects. (Admittedly, the last is unlikely.) Characters may be placed somewhere unusual -- imagine trying to conduct an investigation on Beta Colony? -- or forced to operate under the scrutiny of *another* ImpSec team. Ultimately, even if they discover the truth, there may be reasons for keeping it secret, or for blaming the incident on someone else

...

## Political Intrigue

Where there are important people, there will be political intrigues, and this is certainly true in the Vorkosigan universe. The characters may have the political power to be intriguers themselves, or they may be the trusted agents of Counts and Emperors -- or dupes to be used, framed, and discarded. Admittedly, in this sort of campaign, it's more fun if the heroes do have some power to influence the

course of events. Younger sons and rising officers may have connections to a Minister or Count, and may be sent out to make deals for him -- or to perform the odd bit of illegal activity. Female Vor may need to network on the distaff side, and persuade the Countesses to persuade their Counts.

Ultimately it may come down to a question of trust, honor, and duty. What if a character is obliged by political obligations, or by his name's word, to cast a vote in the Council of Counts for something that he violently disagrees with? Why is ImpSec following the characters wherever they go -- could they have stumbled into something bigger than they know about, while negotiating for increased import rates for uterine replicators? What reason could a Count who they'd never met before have for delivering loaded threats to them over coffee in Vorbarr Sultana -- and might it have something to do with a relative's recent rise to the Ministry of Mines? And what do you do when a politically important figure asks *you* to testify on his behalf, in public, to the Council of Counts, on a matter that will change the future of Barrayar? Worse still, what if he wants you to lie?

## Historical Adventures

Many players will wonder what it was like to be a stranded Barrayaran Firster, or a Vor during the Time of Isolation, or one of General Piotr Vorkosigan's guerrillas during the Cetagandan Operation. They may be intrigued by other historical character concepts, too: a pirate during the early days of Jackson's Whole, a Cetagandan haut or ghem during that Empire's frequent conspiracies, or a Betan in the early days when the colony's laws and culture were being established.

This sort of game offers a great deal of potential fun for both GM and players: there's enough evidence in the books to make some reasonable extrapolations about "what it was like back then," and it can allow simpler scenarios, without some of the current galactic complications. If the heroes actually take part in any major, history-affecting events, their names might even go down in the history books. Imagine a researcher in a modern-day Barrayaran campaign being able to look into the records of House Vorrutyer, and finding a reference to the character he ran back in a Time of Isolation game! (Of course, it has been known for history to be imperfectly recorded, as records of Aral Vorkosigan, "the Butcher of Komarr," bear witness. The GM should not be blamed if a Vor with a mild taste for Dendarii maple mead goes down in the books as a confirmed alcoholic . . .)

## Romance

In the books, people fall in love: this provides a lot of the motivation for some plots, and can add a great deal to a campaign. However, it can also be an extremely tricky subject for a GM and players to handle. Players may object if they are informed that their character has fallen in love without their consent: equally, GMs may find that players who declare that their characters are "in love" don't necessarily run them in the way that the GM thinks would be suitably romantic, or which fulfil the GM's concepts for the campaign. It can be awkward, and risks being embarrassing or painful for players as well as for characters.

@PULLQUOTE:"Mother Nature gives a sense of romance to young people, in place of prudence, to advance the species. It's a trick -- that makes us grow."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Countess Cordelia Vorkosigan, *Mirror Dance*

However, romance can also add a great deal to a Vorkosigan campaign. It's a staple of the genre that people fall in love, and that it brings them plenty of additional plot twists, dependents, concerns, problems, and the like. The GM is at liberty to cast romantic bait NPCs in the heroes' way -- especially if some of them are being pressured to marry or reproduce. If players like the idea, and choose to play with

concepts of romance, then they should be allowed to do so: however, it's not something that should be forced on them. (Having a NPC conceive a passionate desire for a PC is a different matter -- that can be quite amusing, as Ivan Vorpatril's varied relationships demonstrate . . .)

## Scenario vs. Campaign

A campaign should have features such as running themes (responsibility, honor, revenge), recurring secondary characters (such as the Dendarii regulars who keep on showing up in the background), and plausible reactions to events which the characters have caused. Each episode of the campaign, or any single scenario, can be self-contained: the characters handle a current problem, resolve an investigation, or take steps to deal with an enemy. It is necessary for there to be some sense of accomplishment in each separate episode, even if they don't reach their ultimate goals: such an achievement is kept till the resolution of the campaign, and should be something to be worked toward.

One of the main requirements in campaign play, as opposed to single-scenario play, is a character with which the player is comfortable, and whose future he will enjoy exploring. While many character types can be amusing for a single scenario -- or even several -- a campaign requires a group of people with plausible but manageable interactions, and with the opportunity for growth. (Of course, individual tastes may differ -- some people may *enjoy* a campaign where they are all Jacksonian Barons, politicking and Dealing for the good of their Houses and the downfall of their enemies.)

## Inter-Character Conflict

While characters don't have to be sworn enemies, both GMs and players can have a lot of fun with inter-character friction. This may come from mutually incompatible goals or priorities, embedded prejudices, historical grievances, or simply obnoxious personal habits such as hyperactive manic enthusiasm. As play progresses, characters may actively work against each other, rather than simply failing to cooperate. This may come from competition for resources, separate loyalties, or many other reasons. It can add a great deal of richness and interest to the game, whether they ultimately manage to work together, or if they find themselves dealing with failure, and its consequences to them. Even Miles didn't always win -- and when he lost, it had permanent consequences. Players can and will generate their own plots involving each other, and should be encouraged to do so.

## Long-Term Goals

A long-term goal will probably take most of a campaign to accomplish, and is likely to figure in the character's personal history as something very important: achieving a lifelong dream, or laying to rest a hideous personal trauma. It might involve a non-Vor achieving high rank in the army, a Jacksonian joining a House (or escaping one for good, or destroying it), a ghem-lord gaining high command or a haut-lady wife, a merchant trader making the profit which will establish him permanently as a major player on the Komarran stock market . . . These are all things that will probably take years to accomplish, and that require a significant amount of effort by the character. Their achievement will be a defining moment for him, when he will be forced to review his life's objectives, and to decide what to do next.

## Short-Term Missions

This is the sort of mission or priority which only takes one or two sessions: rescuing kidnapped nobility, spying on an important meeting, securing a trading conflict, investigating a murder, and so on. This sort of job probably keeps the characters in funds, and composes most of their daily work. Short-term missions may vary wildly, and be as minor as "Introduce young Lord Vorpatril to Lady Vormuir," or as

major as "Hijack Baron Bharaputra's gene shipment and steal the packet with the screaming-bird sigil."  
(Of course, some of them may be more dangerous than others . . .)

## Complications

Problems are what make life interesting. In the Vorkosigan novels, it's the handicaps and problems that the characters have to face which truly make them great. Miles would not be as interesting without his brittle bones, his Vor sense of honor, his duty to the Emperor, and his manic-depressive swings. Character disadvantages and cultural restrictions add a great deal of the fun to role-playing in this universe: the heroes succeed *despite* because they were perfect in the first place.

Certain complications are more common than others, and frequently cause problems for involved characters. They can also be running themes explored in the course of a campaign, and viewed from different perspectives.

## Duty

Duty is distinct from honor: honor requires you to do your duty. Duty is the everyday set of tasks and obligations that most characters will labor under, ranging from the trivial (data input, saluting superior officers) to the extreme and unexpected (apprehending a spy, guarding a wormhole, sacrificing your life for the Emperor). Duty can largely be planned for, and depends on prior commitments: if you don't want the duties of a Service life, don't sign up for a career in the military. Betrayal of one's duty is also likely to bring consequences with it, ranging from the social (ostracism for actions unbecoming a Vor) to civil and military (imprisonment for betrayal of the haut). Duty is what one has signed up to -- either by birth or by conscious assent -- and which one must now fulfil. It is not unknown for duty and honor to pull in different directions, too . . .

## Honor

@PULLQUOTE:"Reputation is what other people know about you. Honor is what you know about yourself."

@PULLQUOTE:-- Count Aral Vorkosigan, *A Civil Campaign*

A character may be able to evade his duty, but he cannot escape his own sense of honor. Honor is an intensely personal thing, even if it is often broadly delineated along cultural lines: many Vor would disagree on questions of personal honor, even if they would agree on the general duties of the Vor caste. Equally, honor may drive a character to disobey his duty. If Miles Vorkosigan is ordered by a superior officer to stay out of the action, but feels an obligation to involve himself and save his clone-brother's life, which will he obey? Duty or honor? If a Cetagandan ghem-lord has his life saved in a spaceport brawl by a Barrayaran, and is later ordered to kill the Barrayaran in order to protect a haut secret, what will he do? When Count Aral Vorkosigan refused to sanction a mission to rescue the baby Miles during the Vordarian Rebellion, he was acting from a personal sense of honor: he could not favor his own son when he would not mount a similar mission for other hostages. If someone betrays his own honor, other people may never know it, but he may have irrevocably wounded himself. It then becomes his choice whether to continue in the same way, with betrayal after betrayal, or whether he can admit his fault and start again

...

## Family

Family mingles questions of affection, duty, and honor, bringing trouble for the characters from all three sides. What is a young Vor woman to do if she finds that her parents are arranging a marriage for her with a "nice young man" who she's never heard of before, and who turns out to be exactly the sort of old-fashioned man she'd never consider marrying in her worst nightmares? How is a rising non-Vor officer in the Barrayaran Service supposed to cope when he finds out that his family, back home in a remote District, has joined some sort of *democratic* clone-family behind -- or will he go back to bring them out as well? Families provide some of the most solid, reliable ally groups that any character could hope for, but they also bring inherent, ongoing problems. Just because a Barrayaran has managed to overcome a long-held distrust for Cetagandans in order to befriend a ghem-lady doesn't mean that his father is going to be as understanding about matters. So what will the character do about it?

## Scenario Seeds

Several scenario or campaign options follow, intended to give an idea of how various themes from the books can be used or expanded.

### Untold Dendarii Stories

One option here is for the story to be set before Admiral Naismith's retirement, while he's still personally directing the Dendarii under ImpSec's orders. Alternatively, it may be after Naismith's retirement, with Admiral Elli Quinn in command. The characters may be high-ranking officers, captains of ships, leaders of commando teams, reporting directly to Miles (or, as far as they will know, to Admiral Naismith) or Quinn. For a different approach, they may be a low-level team, who seldom achieve the rarified heights of the Admiral's presence, but who are constantly busy in "down and dirty" missions. If they are particularly skilled or talented, they could be a detached team on a mission, as Commander Quinn was in *Ethan of Athos*. They will be expected to operate together under conditions of extreme danger and secrecy, possibly never fully understanding their mission, but bound to carry out their employer's wishes. It's a tough life -- but they're the Dendarii Mercenaries, the best of the best, and if anyone can do it, they can.

There will doubtless be plenty of missions besides those ordered and paid for by ImpSec. The Dendarii undertake plenty of rescues, assaults, spying, and sabotage: mercenaries earn their money, and characters can make friends and enemies independently of any involvement with Barrayar. For an interesting campaign twist, they might discover Admiral Naismith's *real* identity, and the fact that Barrayar and ImpSec are behind half their missions. What will they do with such information, if they have it? Will they sell it, or keep it secret, or attempt to blackmail someone? Do any of them have a grudge against Barrayar, or against the Butcher of Komarr and his son? And what would the Cetagandans or Jacksonians pay, for proof of this . . .

### Auditor Vorkosigan

Congratulations: the characters are experts in their fields, or well known for their loyalty, and are engaged to assist Auditor Miles Vorkosigan. While undertaking an investigation, he'll need scientists to analyze the data, guards to keep him safe from the assassination attempts that will doubtless take place, guides for unknown geography, local cultural experts to explain the situation, investigators to go undercover and fetch him the information that he needs . . . This can be an excellent way to bring together a group of

characters who have little in common. Being on ImpSec's files is enough to bring them to Miles' notice, if he's looking for some experts on the matter in hand. And what will they do if the Auditor is incapacitated, or goes missing? They may need to resolve the investigation themselves . . .

## **Imperial Security**

ImpSec needs agents all across the wormhole nexus, to protect Barrayaran interests; the characters may well be ideal for the role, whether or not they realize the identity of their employer. They may be separate agents, who are united into a team at the request of their mysterious patron, or an already-existing team of operatives who are assigned to a particular mission. This may involve sabotage, kidnapping, spying, pursuing an enemy agent, or any number of illegal activities. ImpSec might even want some criminal evidence against the characters, to make it easier to blackmail them into cooperation. If characters have a dark secret or criminal record, they will doubtless be extremely unhappy to find out that ImpSec knows about it . . .

## **Merchant Campaign**

Trade fleets? Private merchant traders? Wormhole wildcatters? Pirates? Dirty deeds done dirt cheap behind sordid spaceport bars, goods being smuggled through customs, illegal cargoes that will fetch a nice little packet of money, and that might pay off a debt to a Jacksonian crime lord? High-level economics and stocks and shares, discussed in Komarran domes, negotiated with Vor lords and Cetagandan ghem-clans, financed by Jacksonian banks . . . A career as a trader, whether upper-class or lower-grade, offers all sorts of opportunity to an acquisitive character with quick reflexes and an intelligent mind. Anybody can drift into a trading career, from any sort of background: of course, if a group is *too* widely assorted, certain cultural clashes are likely, but hopefully they can put their prejudices aside in pursuit of the greater profit. Life as a trader can be dangerous, but can offer huge profits -- how much might it be worth to negotiate a deal between the Cetagandan Empire and certain Barrayaran trading houses? It's up to the characters how much they care to risk, and how much they hope to achieve.

## **Jacksonian Renegades**

There are all sorts of reasons for all sorts of people to be on the run from Jackson's Whole. They might have personally offended one of the Barons, or reneged on a Deal -- or just made a Deal with the wrong person at the wrong time. Maybe they're a group of privately designed slaves, on the run together, hoping to escape a fate of servitude, experimentation, or worse. Perhaps they're members of the underclass, with no hope of ever attracting the attention of a House Minor, let alone a House Major, and they've gone on the run with a stolen spaceship and false IDs. Or perhaps one of them is actually the heir to a House, accompanied by loyal servants or guards, and just needs to get away long enough to accumulate money and power, before making a triumphal comeback. Jacksonian agents can reach almost anywhere in the galaxy -- characters shouldn't feel secure just because they've left the planet behind . . .

## **Historical Seeds**

There are too many historical possibilities to mention, but each of the planetary cultures has high spots which players might like to explore. They could even alter the course of history! From the arrival of the Firsters, to high Vor martial adventure during the Time of Isolation, to Emperor Dorca's suppression of the Counts, with the rediscovery of Barrayar and the first ships to land and make contact, to the Cetagandan Invasion and Mad Yuri's War, and up to the present day with the Escobaran War and the Vordarian Pretendership, Barrayaran history is nothing if not full of excitement. ("Meet Pierre Le Sanguinaire -- and hope to survive!") Jacksonian history could also be interesting -- the evolution of the planet from pirate base to the current organization of Houses Major and Minor must offer countless



opportunities for intrigue and foul play. In the Cetagandan Empire, the separate evolution of haut and ghem must date back to some early decision by the founders of the Star Creche -- what happened then, and did some of the early Cetagandans try to stop it? Even on Beta Colony, there have been recidivists, criminals, and scientists who were less than sane: their histories would doubtless make interesting reading, and interesting play. Are the facts about the invention of the gravity drive, or the uterine replicator, or the creation of hermaphrodites, quite as simple and straightforward as history makes them out to be? Beta Colony might have believed that it was in the best interests of its citizens to conceal the truth . . .

# APPENDIX A: Timeline

The following timeline provides a rundown on history as experienced by most of the galaxy, and as created by the Vorkosigan family. It contains information that may spoil the books for those who have not read them before. Warning is duly given!

## Chronology Received Galactic History Vorkosigan Activities

21st Century Earth founds Alpha and Beta Colony via colony ships. Alpha Colony fails, Beta Colony succeeds.

22nd Century Disasters on Earth temporarily halt space program. Beta Colony cut off for a while.

Wormhole drive discovered

Colonization in all directions.

Wormhole to Barrayar shuts off, Time of Isolation begins. Colony lost.

-200 years Uterine replicator invented

Quaddies and herms created by genetic engineering.

Artificial gravity discovered.

-80 years Komarr-Barrayar wormhole discovered.

Cetagandan invasion and occupation of Barrayar.

-60 years Cetagandans finally retreat from Barrayar.

-3 years Barrayar invades and conquers Komarr. Admiral Vorkosigan organises the invasion, named "Butcher of Komarr."

-1 year Barrayarans claim Sergyar. Aral Vorkosigan meets Cordelia Naismith, and they fall in love.

Barrayar-Escobar war -- Prince Serg of Barrayar killed. Cordelia flees Beta Colony, reaches Barrayar and marries Aral.

0 Death of Emperor Ezar: Aral Vorkosigan appointed Regent of Barrayar. Poison gas attack on Aral affects the unborn Miles.

Vordarian Pretendership: death of Princess Kareen. Baby Miles in uterine replicator taken hostage; Cordelia Vorkosigan organizes rescue, has Sergeant Bothari kill Vordarian.

Miles Vorkosigan born

3 years Komarran Revolt

6 years Ser Galen obtains tissue samples, has the clone Mark Vorkosigan built on Jackson's Whole.

Second Cetagandan War.

17 years Gregor becomes Emperor; Regent Aral Vorkosigan resigns his position, becomes Prime Minister. Miles Vorkosigan fails his Service entry exams.

General Piotr dies

Miles founds Dendarii Mercenaries, and narrowly avoids treason charges -- Gregor has him admitted to the Academy.

20 years Miles has to act as judge in murder case in Vorkosigan District.

Miles' first military assignment on Kyril Island ends in arrest.

Battle between Cetagandans, Barrayarans, Dendarii, Cavilo's Rangers, and Vervani, over Vervain; Cetagandans lose. Miles reunites the Dendarii, and Gregor accepts them as his personal secret force.

22 years Death of Cetagandan Empress; haut Rian becomes new Empress. Miles and Ivan get embroiled in internal Cetagandan politics.

Sole carrier of telepathy gene escapes to Athos, barely avoiding Cetagandan pursuers. Commander Elli Quinn of the Dendarii obtains a sample of the gene.

23 years Miles smuggles a scientist out of Jackson's Whole; gains new recruit Taura, and eternal hatred of Baron Ryoval. Has leg bones replaced by synthetics.

24 years Miles and Dendarii organise mass escape from Cetagandan prison camp on Dagoola IV.

On Earth, Miles meets his clone-twin, Mark Pierre Vorkosigan; Ser Galen sets his plot in motion, and fails.

25 years Miles has arm bones replaced by synthetics; helps Simon Illyan foil plot against his father.

28 years Death of Baron Ryoval of Jackson's Whole; House Fell manages to seize most of Ryoval's assets, grows in power. Durona Group leave and go to Escobar. Mark impersonates Miles to launch a Dendarii strike on Jackson's Whole. Miles is killed, undergoes cryorevival; Mark is accepted by the Count and Countess on Barrayar. Mark rescues Miles and kills Baron Ryoval, but is tortured by Ryoval first, and develops partially split personality

30 years Captain Simon Illyan steps down from position as head of ImpSec; General Allegre takes his place. Miles loses command of Dendarii after falsifying evidence about his seizures. Miles investigates Illyan's memory problems, and identifies General Haroche as the criminal.

Miles Vorkosigan appointed Auditor.

Emperor Gregor betrothed to Laisa Toscane of Komarr.

Komarran soletta damaged: officially blamed on accident. Miles investigates soletta damage; discovers

Miles falls in love with Ekaterin.

32 years Count Dono Vorrutyer appointed, despite unusual sexual history. Miles pursues Ekaterin with

Marriage of Emperor Gregor and Laisa Toscane

#### APPENDIX B: Bibliography (1 page)

These books are the history (so far) of the Vorkosigan universe, from over 200 years ago to the recent marriage of the Emperor. The books are listed here in chronological order; however, they can be read in any order, and none of them actually *requires* prior acquaintance with earlier books in the series.

*Falling Free:*

*Shards of Honor:* Aral Vorkosigan and Cordelia Naismith meet and fall in love amid the chaos of the Escobaran War. Treachery and corruption in high places, honor and honesty in low ones.

*Barrayar:* Aral Vorkosigan becomes Regent on Barrayar, and must put down rebellion; Cordelia discovers the pitfalls of Barrayaran society, and gives birth to Miles.

*The Warrior's Apprentice:* Miles founds the Dendarii Mercenaries, and loses Sergeant Bothari. His first war, his first command, and his first major clash with Barrayaran law.

*The Vor Game:* Miles gets transferred sideways to ImpSec, and must take command of the Dendarii in order to deal with a Cetagandan invasion and a beautiful but treacherous mercenary commander.

*Cetaganda:* Miles discovers Cetagandan high political intrigue, and falls in love with a haut-lady; Ivan Vorpatril discovers Cetagandan women, and upholds Barrayaran honor.

*Brothers In Arms:* While on Earth, Miles must juggle his identities, the Dendarii finances, and a Komarran plot. "Admiral Naismith" acquires some new faked history, which unfortunately turns out to be true . . .

*Ethan of Athos:* Commander Quinn of the Dendarii and Doctor Ethan Urquhart of woman-hating Athos are forced to cooperate in a case involving a mysterious group of Cetagandans, a missing consignment of ovaries, and a box of newts.

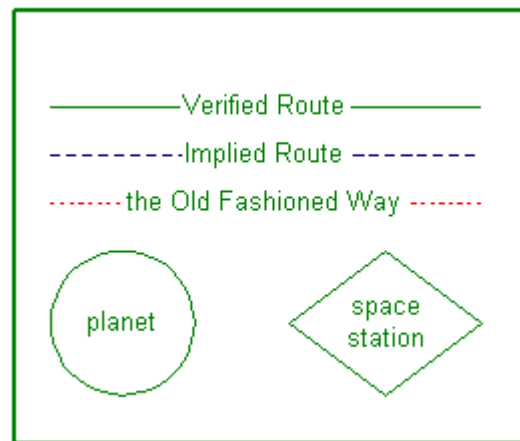
*Borders Of Infinity:* Four short stories, involving Miles' various exploits: one of him as a youth judging a case in the Vorkosigan District, and three involving his work with the Dendarii Mercenaries.

*Mirror Dance:* Mark Pierre Vorkosigan resurfaces, and steals a shipful of Dendarii to raid Jackson's Whole. Miles finds that having a brother doesn't always turn out as one would expect, and Mark discovers what it means to have a family.

*Memory:* Miles finds out the hard way that it's a bad idea to leave things out of his reports. Unfortunately, Captain Illyan forgetting about it is more dangerous than him remembering . . .

*Komarr:* While investigating a potentially criminal catastrophe, Miles uncovers a decidedly political one; in the process, he meets the gardener of his dreams.

## APPENDIX B: The Nexus





# Planets A-E

<a href="#"><u>Antares</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Barrayar</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Bujoldia</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Dalton Station</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Eta Ceta</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>S-Z</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Athos</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Beni Ra</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Cetas</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Earth</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>F-L</u></a>	
<a href="#"><u>Aslund</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Beta Colony</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Dagoola</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>Escobar</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>M-R</u></a>	

## Antares

According to the popular song, *Beyond Antares* world. But don't just pass on by. Stop and enjoy a quiet moment of reflection. Whether viewing the vista of Mt. Naismith in the distance or tramping through some very fine standing stones, Antares has a quaint charm all its own.

## Athos

This pastoral world sits at the end of a two month long Jump Point journey. Athos' most unique aspect is that women are not allowed on the planet. The Athosian Immigration Bureau would like to encourage all men who are interested in "Emancipating themselves from beings not of their own gender" to come and visit their world.

Athos is a beautiful world. Soft blue oceans wash golden sandy beaches. Red and white farms nestle between rolling green hills waiting for the warm yellow sun. In the cities, there is a full range of all male clubs, restaurants, and activities.

Traveling to Athos is not easy even for men. The only public transportation to Athos is the Galactic Census ship which stops on Athos only once a year.

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## Aslund

A small world at the end of a Jump Point cul de sac, Aslund has had some difficulties in the past harnessing aesthetics and industrial growth. However, a lively underground music scene has grown out of rampant and not entirely successful attempts at industrialization.

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## Barrayar

The central world in a three planet empire: Barrayar, [Komarr](#) and [Sergyar](#). Barrayar is at the end of a worm hole cul de sac and can only be visited through Komarr. A fact which has been of some significance over the last 100 years.

Visitors will find that Barrayar has a diverse landscape with many natural wonders and a rich cultural heritage. The imperial capital of Vorbarr Sultana is famed for its bridges, spires, and genuine feudal castles.

Women traveling alone are advised to use caution in rural areas.

For more information about Barrayar, visit [People and Places of Barrayar](#)

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## **Beni Ra**

Beni Ra, a lovely ore rich lump of rock, is ringed with orbital ore processing facilities.

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## **Beta Colony**

Horrible climate, but a great place to visit whether travelers go desert trekking near Quartz or explore the renowned Silica Zoo.

Second settled, first settled successfully, it is amazing that the Betans have done as well as they have. The planet's surface is a fierce desert dotted with saline lakes, so the Betans dug their cities down into the dirt. This practice has prompted more than one native to note that Betans practice interior decorating not architecture.

Always at the cutting edge of technology, Beta Colony has made an industry out of the necessity of dealing with life on a marginal world. Travelers who want the latest technological advances should pay a visit to Beta Colony. Not only will Beta Colony have it first, but it will be as safe as the highly rigorous Betan manufacturing standards can make it.

Whatever your cultural or personal identity, Betans are enormously tolerant of your right to be you. From the Hermaphrodites of Quartz to the Up wing Teks of New Sedona, Betans not only welcome the fringe, they revel in it.

Betans are extremely open to casual sexual relationships, indicated by the wearing of earrings. If you are not interested, just say no. If you are interested, Betan Licensed Sexual Therapists in all three sexes deliver therapy with *craft and style* throughout Beta Colony.

However, just because Betans accept a wide range of behavior does not mean that they will accept a lack of safety consciousness. As inhabitants of a marginal world, Betans practice frequent safety drills and rigorous resource regulation.

Beta Colony does not allow lethal grade weaponry through customs. Only registered stunners are allowed. Don't bother trying to smuggle in anything with more destructive capability. Betan Customs Officers can be quite thorough.

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## **Bujoldia**

This planet was settled entirely by followers of a 20th century Science Fiction author, Lois McMaster Bujold. Inhabitants claim that their ancestors were kidnapped from Twentieth Century Earth and forcibly settled on Bujoldia by a mysterious alien named Yeltar.

There is a splendid statue of a giant book in the center of down town New Minneapolis to commemorate those settlers who died from a lack of fictional books to read. Write Lois Write.

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## Cetas

Our sources have not yet been able to provide this travel guide with information about out three of the interior worlds and six of the satrapies of the Cetagandan empire.

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## Dagoola

This world is a satrapy of the Cetagandan Empire. The Cetagandans do not encourage visitors to Dagoola because they use the world as a prison world/hazardous waste dump.

Determined military historians with money, clout, and an enormous amount of luck through rigorous application might be able to view the hole in the ground where the Marilacian prison camp, (Site of the third largest prison breakout in history) used to be, but it is unlikely.

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## Dalton Station

"The travelers go in, the travelers go out." has long been the motto of this home away from home in space. Dalton spacers take pride in the speed and expeditious manner in which the many ships which reach Dalton station are dealt with by station personnel.

However, don't be fooled. There is more to Dalton Station than meets the eye.

You can find every kind of food known to the Nexus prepared in quaint out of the way cafes which just happen to have porthole views. Local pubs serve good hearty food and a friendly atmosphere. And be sure to take an opportunity to take the inter station ferry on the last Friday of the month. Local R&B musicians gather to put on an eclectic selection of music. It only costs the

So, when you visit Dalton Station, be sure to bring your sax and a willingness to look beneath the surface. You won't be disappointed.

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## Earth

Earth may be off the main wormhole routes, but it is well worth a visit. The birth place of humanity and the center of human culture there are too many important historical sites to try and list them all. However travelers on the run may enjoy scuba diving in Lake Los Angeles or a bicycle trip on the dikes of New York.



## Escobar

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One of the oldest colonized worlds, Escobar is blessed with rich natural resources, a temperate climate, and a number of useful Jump Points.

Due to an uncommon foresight on the part of the original colonists, Escobar has always applied stringent environmental standards to industry. Therefore, Escobar has uncommonly clean air, abundant park systems and excellent public transportation systems.

Escobaran Water Gardens have good reason to be galactically renowned for their beauty. Travelers should make an attempt to visit the Presidential Garden in the capital which combines stunning fountains with quiet grottos and pools.

Military historians will enjoy a visit to the Great War Memorial Park which commemorates the service of Escobarans and Escobaran allies who died in defense of Escobar. The park is located on the first landing site of the Barrayaran invasion troops during the Great War. There is a small science and industry museum on the eastern side of the park geared towards children ages 8 and up. The focal point of the museum is a working Plasma Mirror or Sword Swallower which was actually used during the conflict.

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## **Eta Ceta**

The jewel at the center of the Cetagandan Crown, the Cetagandan Emperor directs the eight Cetagandan worlds and eight Cetagandan satrap worlds from his palace on Eta Ceta. Unfortunately, the Imperial Palace, known to Galactics as Xanadu, is completely enclosed in a white force bubble. Barring high government connections, the average traveler will only ever see the outside of the bubble.

However, Eta Ceta is a vast and rich world with plenty of sites to see. The Emperor's palace may be forbidden, but many of the Ghem and lesser Haut exhibitions are open to lesser mortals.

One such location is located conveniently near the Imperial residence. The Moon Garden Hall is host to a wide range of Ghem artistic creations.

Of course, travelers on the run need not seek out Cetagandan art. Every aspect of Ghem and Haut life has been turned into an art form. Every palace and every industrial park on Eta Ceta has been engineered for maximum aesthetic potential. After seeing stunning Haut men, the women travel in colored force bubbles, after beautiful Ghem, it is clear that the Cetagandan aristocracy have engineered themselves for maximum potential as well.

While aristocratic gene banks and genetic art work are not available to the public, Eta Ceta does have an incredible amount of engineered flora and fauna which has trickled down from aristocratic hands to general consumption. Whether you are looking for singing frogs or Vor massage flowers, Eta Ceta shop scan supply it.

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# Planets F-L

<u>Frost</u>	<u>Hespari II</u>	<u>Jacksons Whole</u>	<u>Komarr</u>	<u>Lairouba</u>	<u>M-R</u>
<u>Hegen Hub</u>	<u>Illyrica</u>	<u>Kline Station</u>	<u>Kshatyia</u>	<u>A-E</u>	<u>S-Z</u>

## Frost IV

About thirty years ago, Frost IV suffered a tectonic disaster of immense proportions which destroyed most the buildings and facilities on Frost. Already a marginal arctic world, Frost has had enormous difficulties rebuilding. Travelers going to Frost should expect harsh conditions.

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## Hegen Hub

This area of local space is just a place between the worlds. Each of the neighboring planetary systems maintains a station in the Hub. The Aslund station is a utilitarian military station which is currently undergoing renovation amid yet another round of speculation lawsuits. Jacksons Whole has a series of pleasure and work stations maintained by the various Jacksonian Syndicate Houses. Pol's station focuses on handling trade vessels and their cargoes. Vervain's station is a military station which in the easing of Hubsid tensions has been refitted to focus on accommodating travelers and trading vessels.

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## Hespari II

An agricultural world with a heavy export production of garlic and fennel. Travelers with Jump Pilot potential will enjoy the jump to Hespari which is well known for the startling beauty of its red jump.

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## Illyrica

Every year, thousands of Galactic citizens gather to watch or compete in the *Illyrica Solar Run*. The run is made up of a series of different races for engine powered vessels and solar sail ships between Illyrican local space and its sun. The 1st prize in each race, one million Illyrican pounds, is offered by a consortium of space craft design firms based out of Illyrica. This is just one of many ways Illyrica tries to stay on the cutting edge of space faring technology.

Illyrica has long been famous throughout the Nexus for the sleek lines and high quality of their ships. Space craft of all shapes and sizes may be purchased in Illyrican ship yards. There is also a flourishing trade in antique and used space craft.

The Air and Space Museum in the city of Ariel is well worth a visit. The museum contains extensive displays from the earliest days of flight to the present including a working model of modern Necklin Rods.

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## Jacksons Whole

This sub arctic world was first settled by Admiral Jackson who operated a wholesale retail business selling items his ships had "liberated" from passing transports. After a brief period of turmoil following the unfortunate death of Admiral. Jackson, he fell on his own vibra knife, the planet's

True to its roots, Jacksonian houses pride themselves on providing anything and everything to customers at reasonable market prices. House Fell provides a variety of weaponry for both large and small scale destruction. House Dyne provides no questions asked banking. House Bharaputra specializes in large scale genetic contracts and longevity treatments. Meanwhile, House Ryoval, *Dreams made Flesh*, specializes in unique one of a kind genetic products.

Travelers should be aware that many of the neighboring systems consider some Jacksonian practices illegal. Persons who have made use of House Bharaputran longevity treatments may be detained on first degree murder charges if passing through Beta Colony space. House Ryoval products being transported through Escobaran space may be confiscated on the grounds that they are sentient beings. Pol does not allow importation of House Fell neutron grenades.



## Kline Station

A glittering tube worm of humanity in space, Kline Station is much more than just a way station for travelers.

Travelers come to Kline Station from all directions of the Nexus. Kline Station shops carry a wide range of goods and foods imported from all points on the Jump map as well as local products. You shouldn't try to get away from the station without trying one their native delicacies, the deliciously tender newt. Local chefs have devised a stunning variety of ways to prepare the amphibian ranging

Kline Station has facilities which cater to a variety of needs. There are many excellent null and low g sports facilities at single and group rates. The dining facilities in the Transient Area cater excellent cuisine with stunning views of the outside of the station.

Newcomers may find the station a bit of a labyrinth, so hold onto the map provided to you when you first arrive on the station. Otherwise contact the black uniformed security officers for assistance.

As a space station, Kline Station practices rigorous sanitary screening. Do not under any circumstances attempt to enter the station while infected with a communicable illness. You will be quarantined. This also applies to any animals or cargo you may be transporting. Insects are completely prohibited.

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## **Komarr**

Komarr is a key member of the Barrayaran Empire. At the center of a wormhole rich sector of space, Komarr relies mostly on trade and travelers for income. Travelers will be able to find accommodations and restaurants in a wide range of prices and planetary styles.

The landscape outside the domes can be quite literally breathtaking. Komarr is the middle of an eight hundred year project to terraform the planet into a human habitable world. Until then, Komarrans live in domed cities under the dual light of their sun and a human made solar array. When going outside the domes, always make sure to check your breather gear for oxygen levels or your vacation may be cut drastically short.

Domes are well connected by an economical public transit system. However, the public transit tube systems in several of the major metropolitan complexes are subject to stalls and traffic jams at peak use times. Travelers should try and avoid using tubes from 5-9 in the morning and 4-7 in the evening.

In its long and wealthy history, the Komarrans have built many monuments within their domed cities. One of the more whimsical is a memorial to one of the most successful trade ventures in Komarran history, the Marat Galen. The principal share holders set up a sizable trust fund to maintain Galen Topiary Garden in Solstice. A series of holographic generators causes the image of a golden antique clipper ship to sail across the surface of the park's dome. As a more somber historical reminder, a few miles away a simple black monolith lists the names of those who died at the Solstice Massacre following Barrayar's annexation of Komarr.

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## **Kshatya**

Not everyone's idea of a perfect holiday spot, but a great world for wilderness and company retreats.

Since they live on a marginal world with few resources, the Kshatryrians specialize in exporting trained fighters. Military training begins very early for both genders and general education stresses outdoor activities.

Kshatya has some of the best schools in martial arts training available in the Nexus. Also, the Imperial court operates several survival camps open to Galactics which use modified versions of Kshatryian Imperial training.

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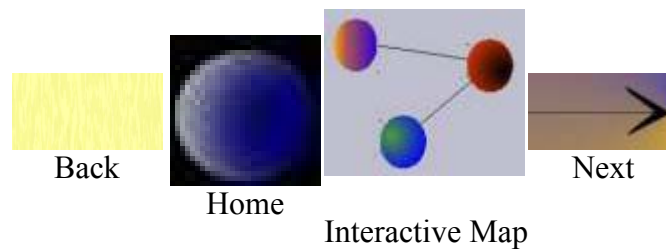
## Lairouba

This harsh desert world has a reputation for hospitality to visitors who take the time to understand Lairouban culture. A few words in Lairouban or Arabic and a positive attitude go a long way.

Travelers are advised that Lairoubans observe strict Islamic clothing and food regulations. Female travelers should be particularly cautious in their attire. Galactic women are certainly not expected to observe Purdah, but they should be careful about going out at night by themselves and save the sarongs for Beta Colony.

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# Planets M-R

<u><a href="#">Mahata Solaris</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Mu Ceta</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Orient</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Rho Ceta</a></u>	<u><a href="#">S-Z</a></u>
<u><a href="#">Marilac</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Nowhere</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Oz</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Rodeo</a></u>	
<u><a href="#">Minos IV</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Nuovo Brazil</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Pol</a></u>	<u><a href="#">A-E</a></u>	
<u><a href="#">Morita Station</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Ola III</a></u>	<u><a href="#">Quaddies Home</a></u>	<u><a href="#">E-L</a></u>	

## [Mahata Solaris](#)

Whether sailing the solar winds or riding the trolleys in Solaris' clean gleaming cities, Mahata Solaris is a truly pleasant and relaxing place to visit.

Don't go there looking for excitement. Mahata Solaris' main claim to fame is its jump points. But as you pass through, stop and take a breath of fresh clean air and relax.

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## [Marilac](#)

A study in contrasts, Marilac is home to a sophisticated galactic culture, and yet is pockmarked with areas of extreme devastation due to decades of civil strife and the incursion of a Cetagandan "expeditionary force" which occupied the planet for several years.

Marilac is currently working to recreate the heritage destroyed or lost during the recent conflicts. Manufactured goods are in short supply and costs are high. Travelers may cut costs by checking with the local tourist bureau for Marilacians who are willing to lodge the budget traveler in a spare room. Home cooked meals are often thrown in with the room and staying with a local family is the best way to get a real feel for Marilacian culture.

Military enthusiasts will enjoy a visit to the fortress at Fallow Core now turned museum and historical park. Visitors can walk on a docent led tour through the fortress and experience recreations of the final days of Fallow Core.

Another part of the museum is dedicated to the prisoner of war breakout from the prison camp on Dagoola IV. This includes a small recreation of the prison camp itself with spoken narratives by actual prisoners.

For a closer look at old Earth halberds and modern maser cannons, explore the display on mercenaries and their evolving role in warfare throughout the ages. This area of the museum is dedicated to the Dendarii Mercenary Fleet for their role in the Dagoola breakout, the third largest prison breakout in history.

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## [Minos IV](#)

Students of Modern Warfare will enjoy a visit to the battle sites of Minos IV, made famous in *The Adumbration of Trigonal Strategy in the Wars of Minos IV*. Of particular interest is the battlefield of the Som. Hills and arroyos made for difficult fighting then and breath taking vistas today. Hover

bikes and picnic lunches are available in the Park station at the base of the battlefield. Hours are 6:00 to 21:00.

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## **Morita Station**

Imagine a glass and steel palace from an Old Earth fairy tale and you imagine Morita Station. Aesthetics and engineering necessity combine to create a veritable jewel in space. Excellent long range planning and high engineering standards have made this two hundred year old station the model for deep space transfer station design. And yet, after a hundred copies and replicas there is nothing quite like Morita Station.

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## **Mu Ceta**

This world is one of the four exterior worlds in the web of jump points which connects the Cetagandan empire. Mu Cetans range from the extremely rich Ghem and Haut ruling classes to the extremely poor everyone else. Travelers should use extreme caution when visiting the poorer areas of Mu Ceta. There is a high crime rate and the authorities are not always sympathetic to the unwary.

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## **Nowhere**

According to current Nexus charts, this Jump route dead ends and does not lead to habitable or inhabited systems.

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## **Nuovo Brazil**

Rumors abound about the inhabitants of this tropical world. Aggressive militarists and would be genetic engineers, Nuovo Brazil has often found itself at the center of controversy.

If you think being drafted into a foreign government's military would be a great adventure, then look no further. Otherwise the Galactic Travel Bureau rates travel to Nuovo Brazil as extremely dangerous.

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## **Ola III**

Ola III is a satrapy of the Cetagandan Empire. Rich, varied, historical, with incredible monuments and architectural wonders. Go there and see the beauty that is Ola III.

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## **Orient IV**

Named after the first colony ship to arrive on this world, the Orient Express, Orient IV sits on a number of well traveled jump routes. Cosmopolitan with a long rich history, Orient IV has plenty



to offer travelers.

There is recreation of the first settlement just outside of the capital complete with costumed live actors and a petting zoo for children.

Military Historians will enjoy a visit to Frere Park, the site of the final battle in the Brothers War. Docent led tours explain the fascinating history of this bizarre period in Orient history.

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## **Oz**

The magical land of Oz is fabled to lie over the rainbow, but travelers can go there if they attempt to jump through a wormhole with bent Necklin rods.

## **Pol**

As a member of the Hegen Hub Alliance, Pol welcomes thousands of travelers and cargo ships each year to its many museums and shops.

Best known for its cuisine, Polian food could make a Stoic weep and turn Epicurean.

Of particular historical and architectural interest is the replica of the Alhambra/Taj Mahal which was built on the shores of Lake Ti as a summer home for John Stonguy, an early Polian Industrialist.

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## **Quaddies Home**

Explorers of the unusual need look no further than this string of asteroids riding a weak gravitational well.

Home was settled two hundred years ago by a genetically engineered race. The Quaddies were designed as a free fall race. Quaddies have four arms, no legs and have one of the friendliest and most socialized societies a traveler could wish to encounter.



Quaddies are not on the Galactic exchange, so do not try to give them outside currency. Instead bring barter goods such as story discs, music, and drama vids.

The asteroid belt is littered with Quaddie homes burrowed into the rock and there are even some larger communities which have been outfitted with artificial gravity for the Homo Sapiens in the community.

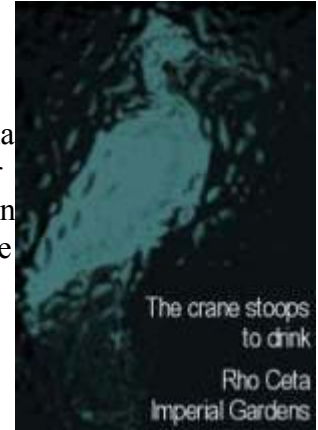
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## **Rho Ceta**

This world is one of the four exterior worlds in the web of jump points which connects the Cetagandan empire.

Rho Ceta has benefited from its proximity to the lush interior worlds of the Cetagandan Empire and the trade routes of nearby Komarr. Even citizens who are not members of the Cetagandan aristocracy enjoy a good standard of living.

There are many landscaped parks and gardens which are open to the public. One of the most breathtaking estates which is open for viewing is Ghem Blenheim House. The house and estate were awarded Ghem Lord Marlborough for a spectacular series of victories in the conquest of Sigma Ceta. The estate, including an ornamental lake, was landscaped to appear artfully natural, but with convenient grottos, overlooks and a faux Minoan ruin. The house was built as perfect replica of the main palace of the Duke of Urbino on old Earth.



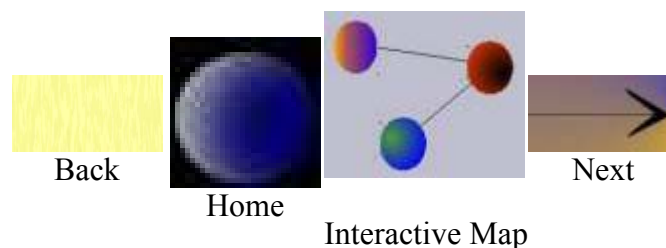

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## Rodeo

This worn out mining world is of principal interest as the birthplace of the Quaddies. There is a small museum funded, though not manned, by the Quaddies chronicling their conception as a species.

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# Planets S-Z

<u>Sergyar</u>	<u>Somewhere</u>	<u>Toranira</u>	<u>Vervain</u>	<u>Ylla</u>	<u>F-L</u>
<u>Shya IV</u>	<u>Tau Ceti</u>	<u>Varousa</u>	<u>Walshea</u>	<u>Zoave Twilight</u>	<u>M-R</u>
<u>Sigma Ceta</u>	<u>Tau Verde</u>	<u>Vega Station</u>	<u>Xi Ceta</u>	<u>A-E</u>	

## Sergyar

Discovered about thirty years ago by the Barrayaran Empire, Sergyaris in the midst of rapid colonization. Now that the local government at Chaos Colony has managed to resolve minor health issues, the Galactic Tourist Bureau recommends that travelers passing through this system pay a visit to this truly lovely planet.

A brilliant blue sky, virgin forests, grassy plains, and abundant native wildlife, Sergyar has a great deal to offer naturalists and would be explorers. Campers are warned however that Sergyar is not a controlled habitat. There are animals which can be a danger to human health if proper precautions are not taken. Contact the Sergyaran Tourist Bureau for further information.

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## Shya IV

Small but cosmopolitan by any Galactic's standards, Shya IV is a little off the main routes, but is well worth a visit. Military Academics will find the Shya IV old wormhole jump station especially interesting. The jump station, now a historic landmark, was made famous by Sr. Simka in his classic book on defensive strategy *Shya IV*.

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## Sigma Ceta

This world is one of the four exterior worlds in the web of jump points which connects the Cetagandan empire. Beautiful, mysterious, Cetagandan.

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## Somewhere

Somewhere - out of Komarr.

Somewhere - out of Jackson's Whole.

Somewhere - out of Kline Station.

No information available at this time.

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## Tau Ceti

This cosmopolitan world is the Hub of the Western Orion Arm. Tau Cetan's take their responsibilities to their smaller Hub neighbors seriously. The Tau Cetan Navy makes frequent

patrols throughout the Hub. Travelers suffering difficulties anywhere in the Western Orion Arm should feel free to call upon Tau Cetan naval ships for assistance.

The Tau Cetan Naval Museum is well worth seeing. One hanger contains portions of the actual flag ship of Admiral. La Varr, who made a brief name for himself by extorting poorly defended planets before being apprehended by the Tau Cetan Navy.

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## **Tau Verde**

Though this world is at the end of jump point bottle, it was once home to cultured cities and lush landscapes. However, generations of fighting have reduced this once fertile world to a boring montage of bland homogeneous buildings built for a durability they rarely get.

Travelers should be advised that fighting between the local nation states could break out at any time, and there have been records of wormhole blockades impeding traffic.

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## **Toranira**

This highly industrialized world has benefited from its on again off again relationship with the Cetagandan Empire. Favorable trade agreements have allowed Toranira to import many sought after commodities from the Cetagandan empire.

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## **Varusa Tertius**

About 90% of this pleasant little world's surface is covered in water. The remaining 10% is made up of a number of charming island chains at the equator and in the southern hemisphere. Life on the surface is relaxed as natives surf the clear blue green water, lounge on white sand beaches, or engage in the social practices which got four separate venereal diseases named after the planet.

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## **Vega Station**

This connection between the worlds is beginning to show its age. Vegais no pleasure station. It is a station where people live their lives. Vegans don't have much margin for extras, but they are proud of their independence from surrounding systems.

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**Vervain** "incursionary force" from the Cetagandan Empire because of that jump point.

A lush world which has both gained economic benefit from Vervain did not suffer any damage to its surface during the straddling one of the Cetagandan empire's trade routes into the Nexus and more recently suffered from an "unwarranted and cultural wonders to offer the galactic traveler.

As a vehement member of the Hegen Hub Alliance, Vervain enjoys thriving trade with its Hub neighbors and no trip to Vervain would be complete without visiting the Hegen Hub Alliance Peace Park. Statuary honoring Hub members is carved in materials native to that planet. Particularly impressive

Barrayar carved from Dendarii Granite. The Emperor holds a

sword. The statue is equipped with a small antigrav device which turns the Emperor on his pedestal. Each morning Emperor Vorbarra turns his sword toward the park's Eastern gate and each sunset Emperor Vorbarra extends the peace treaty towards the Vervain statue. In the summer there are nightly fireworks.



## **Walshea**

This marginal world was made famous in Sr. Simka's elegant discussion of the Nuovo Brazilian offensive strategy on Walshea. There are many interesting battle sites for the hearty backpacker, but the terrain is harsh and should not be attempted by any but the most experienced of travelers.

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## **Xi Ceta**

This world is one of the four exterior worlds in the web of jump points which connects the Cetagandan empire. Go there and be stunned and amazed at all things Cetagandan.

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## **Ylla**

Quaintly industrious.

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## **Zoave Twilight**

A world of eternal twilight. A world of long lakes, grass, tundra and the occasional tornado. Scientists, visitors, and readers, no one knows why. Perhaps it is this world's unusual gravitational alignment which casts half the world into eternal sunlight and the other into eternal darkness. Then again it could be the planet's glacier structure which reflects an eerie glow into the sky, day or night. Perhaps, well in any case as long as the only reason to go there is to pass through Zoave's many jump points, we'll never know.

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