

TEENS IN SPACE

FREE CONTENT FRIDAY

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THE TIES THAT BIND

Doug & Jon's Note: This was a section of *Teens in Space* that we had planned and mostly finished, but we didn't have time to playtest sufficiently before we had to go to print. A core part of most great space operas is a character with mystical powers, and now, you can include them in your game!

And close readers may notice that a few of the species in the core book reference The Bind. We'd discussed this aspect of the *Teens in Space* universe with the writers before deciding to cut it, but we told them they could still reference it in there. Now, you've got the full rules for using The Bind in your game!

One of the options you have to improve your character is to spend IP to gain access to the Bind, the mystical force that ties the universe together. It is within all things in the universe, both living and nonliving, and this connection can be manipulated to do the impossible, what many religions would call miracles. Though both good and evil powers in the universe claim the Bind is ultimately on their side, it is not sentient and thus is without intention. It does, however, make those who use it for good more good and those who use it for evil more evil.

CREATING A CHARACTER WITH ACCESS TO THE BIND

Choosing to have a character who can manipulate the Bind requires, first, purchasing one of the three Bind Accessor Tropes for 3 IP. Though this does not confer any powers itself, it gives that character a sensitivity to the workings of the Bind. With further training, characters with this Improvement can learn additional skills or augment the ones they already have.

When choosing the "Access to the Bind" Improvement, characters must choose from one of the following "Accessor Groups" representing the three broad groups who access the Bind. However, because Hellbound characters are evil, focused on causing destruction and suffering, they must be non-playable characters controlled by the GM. We include the rules for creating them here mainly so that the GM can create a suitable foil should a player choose an Oathbound character.

THE OATHBOUND

These warriors and sages represent morally righteous (and occasionally self-righteous) Accessors of the Bind. They have a strong moral code, their Oath, which comprises numerous restrictions on their behavior (including one restriction that is unique to each Oathbound Accessor). In addition, the Oathbound will only use their powers for good. Though they are almost always powerful warriors, they will not strike first unless combat is inevitable. They believe quite dogmatically in the inherent goodness of the Bind and thus in all

living things. Consequently, they will only fight even the most vicious enemy if there is truly no other option. (Note: Oathbound must also spend 1 IP to become Skilled with a Laserblade, the Oathbound's weapon of choice.)

When becoming Oathbound, answer all of the following questions:

- What restriction on your behavior is unique to you? (The GM must agree that this is sufficiently restrictive, and other players must agree that this restriction will not make the game less fun for them. Possible examples being must maintain a vegetarian diet, must never lie, must actively seek young Accessors to convert to Oathbound.)
- What have you given up as part of your Oath that you miss deeply?
- What color is your Laserblade, and how does that reflect your personality?
- Who was your mentor, and why are you no longer with them?

Roleplaying Notes

- Oathbound will never knowingly travel with, work with, or otherwise help a known Hellbound. Rather, when encountering a known Hellbound, you will feel a compulsion to convert them to the Oathbound or destroy them and should, within reason, pursue either of those ends.
- The Oathbound will only travel with a known Boundless for short periods of time, during which you must gently attempt to convert them to an Oathbound.
- The Oathbound will never insist on others abiding by their Oath, but you will be happy to gently encourage others through example and by showing the power of the Oathbound. Any creature who wishes to convert will find a ready mentor in your character, and your character may be actively seeking new converts.
- That said, you must attempt to prevent any creature from committing truly evil actions (Violating Actions other than your specific one), using words and influence first and brute force only if necessary.

For example, Gretxan chooses to be an Oathbound Accessor, spending 4 IP to take the Trope and the Laserblade Skill. When she was a small child, she was orphaned when her parents' starship was raided by Proeleans. They died trying to protect her, and in the moments before the Proelean raiders could slaughter her, too, she was saved by Raitha, an Oathbound Accessor who then took her under her (literal) wing. From Raitha, Gretxan learned

about the mysteries of the Bind, and she adopted all of her mentor's beliefs and restrictions. She swore to never lie and to never seek romantic love. (Gretxan is okay with being celibate, but she does miss lying. What teen wouldn't?) Gretxan eventually learned how to use her access to the Bind to fly (helpful for keeping up with her winged mentor) and to teleport short distances (something that surprised even Raitha). Her Laserblade is grey, reflecting her muted personality, and Gretxan is incredibly hesitant to use it. A few weeks ago, Raitha told Gretxan that her training was done and that she'd need to find her own way in the universe. When Gretxan protested, Raitha seemed to relent, only to jettison her mentee from the ship in an escape pod that night while she slept. Now, Gretxan is seeking a noble cause to put her considerable skills behind...

THE BOUNDLESS

Claiming to be the only ones who truly understand the Bind, Boundless Accessors are committed to neither good nor evil but to the pursuit of knowledge. Each Boundless Accessor seeks one specific kind of wisdom in the universe, endeavoring to understand a specific complexity of the universe. To better pursue this narrow kind of wisdom, they attempt to remain above the rabble of the tangible world. As such, though they have acquaintances and will help them, they avoid joining broader causes or taking sides in intergalactic disputes. They are aloof wanderers; staying in one place or with one group for too long can lead to attachments but, more than that, there isn't new knowledge in a place they've been for too long. As such, they wander the universe, seeking the kind of wisdom they pursue, driven on by Knowledge Visions (brief glimpses of a location where they'll experience their next epiphany).

When becoming Boundless, you must answer the following questions:

- What kind of specific knowledge do you seek? (The GM must agree that this kind of knowledge is sufficiently esoteric, and other players must agree that this specific pursuit will not make the game less fun for them. Possible examples include information about how the Bind functions and new Bind Powers, the stories of the oldest creatures on a planet, experiencing each culture's unique cuisine.)
- When did you have your first Knowledge Vision, and what did it feel like to complete it?
- What is your current Knowledge Vision, and where is it leading you?

Roleplaying Notes

- The Boundless will travel with an Oathbound or a Hellbound as long as they're going your way, but given the choice, you'll generally prefer

not to. The Oathbound are always only interested in understanding one tiny part of the Bind, and they always try to persuade you to follow their silly, narrow doctrines and join their quixotic causes. The Hellbound are always trying to bend you to their will or fight you, and that gets old really quickly.

- The Boundless will usually only go out of their way to prevent another creature from doing something in two cases - if they are doing something that risks eliminating unique knowledge (especially the kind of knowledge they're pursuing) or if their action will prevent the Boundless from continuing to pursue knowledge.

For example, Naylath chooses to be Boundless, spending 3 IP to take the Trope. They decide that they are pursuing knowledge of languages, which they have been doing since their first Knowledge Vision of speaking a language they had never heard before to a crowd of a species they had never seen. This is, in fact, their first memory, and they were too young to understand it at the time. Some years later, Naylath recognized a member of that species in a bazaar and heard him speaking that language. At that moment, they knew what they must do. They became a deckhand on his ship, a Throggofel merchant ship. Naylath traded lessons in his language for their labor, and within months, they had mastered the language, and the Throggofel merchants were so impressed that they brought Naylath home with them, where they spoke with masters of the Throggofel language. As Naylath was speaking to them in a university lecture hall, they had a deep sense of accomplishment and realized that this was the exact vision they had seen nearly a decade ago. That night, Naylath had a vision of speaking with a small child underwater and leading that child, who spoke haltingly and in a broken version of their language, to her father, who was glad to see her. Now, Naylath is frantically researching underwater species in the hope of fulfilling their current Knowledge Vision...

THE HELLBOUND (GM-CONTROLLED ONLY)

The inversion of the Oathbound, these fighters seek power above all else. Though they may work with a team, they view others, even other Hellbounds, as pawns to further their own ends. Each Hellbound Accessor has one personal goal that is unique to them in addition to the broader goals of power. The more experienced of the Hellbound are universally disfigured from years of violence and from the corruption flowing through them, which causes them to scar more and age prematurely. They often strike before their opponent even knows they're adversaries. Though some apologists have claimed they're simply misunderstood, The Hellbound are understood quite well: they're evil. (Note: Hellbound must also spend 1 IP to become Skilled with a Laserblade, the Hellbound's weapon of choice.)

When creating a Hellbound character, answer the following questions:

- What goal does this character have above and beyond mere power? (Be sure to make this sufficiently difficult. Possible examples include to rule a planet, to destroy other creatures' will to live, to make families turn against each other.)
- Who does this character seek revenge against for a past wrong?
- Who was their mentor, and why are they no longer with them?

Roleplaying Notes

- The Hellbound will never knowingly travel with, work with, or otherwise help a known Oathbound or Boundless. Rather, when encountering a known Oathbound or Boundless, you will immediately seek to manipulate them into advancing your selfish ends or destroy them through direct physical combat (unless doing so is obviously impossible).
- The Hellbound will never abide others who do not recognize your power and absolute authority (unless you must do so for very specific, short-term goals or unless they are a much more powerful Hellbound and thus a mentor to you). In the long run, regardless of any other creature's power, you will seek to dominate or destroy them.

For example, the GM creates Hemblaze, a Hellbound Accessor as a foil for Gretxan, the Oathbound Accessor described earlier. When Raitha stopped the Proeleon raiders from killing Gretxan, she didn't notice a small, scared Proeleon boy hiding on the raider's ship and left with Gretxan. Adrift in space with his dead family's corpses for days, the boy's rage grew, eventually attracting the attention of Drex Altha, a powerful Hellbound Accessor traveling nearby. Drex Altha took the boy in, giving him the name Hemblaze. Over the next decade, Drex Altha brutally trained him, adding fuel to the little boy's rage and twisting him into a tortured man. Hemblaze bears the scars of this training, including the time that Drex Altha severed his right leg for daring to question his methods. Hemblaze always knew he wanted to seek his revenge against Raitha, which he decided to do by slaughtering all of the members of her species, the Reptilnae, that he could. A few weeks ago, in a fit of rage at being told not to pursue his goal, Hemblaze lashed out at his master with a furor that surprised both, literally tearing Drex Altha apart limb from limb and casting him into the void of space, where he perished. Now, Hemblaze is headed for Raitha's home planet...

PLAYING A CHARACTER WITH ACCESS TO THE BIND

First and foremost, it's important to remember that, as part of the character creation process, you and the other players decided how to mesh your desires as an Accessor character with the interests of the other characters at the table. When roleplaying, remember that you need to walk the line between pursuing your goals and frustrating your team. At the same time, other characters need to remember that, in exchange for having a very powerful member of the group, they agreed to (mostly) let your goals set the tone of the game. It's a delicate balance, likely made impossible if a character is Hellbound. For this reason, again, players should not create a Hellbound character.

If you chose an Accessor character, you will need to abide by the Code of the kind of Accessor you're playing. Failure to do so will result in your being unable to gain new Improvement Points until you take actions to atone for the Violating Action. Narratively, the GM will reveal to you the way that you need to atone, whether that is by presenting you with the chance in the course of the story or by giving you a vision of what you must do to make up for your Violating Action.

Each Accessor Group has Grand Actions, behaviors that grant benefits when completed. Characters who perform these actions will find themselves gaining power in exchange for the sacrifices they've made to pursue that greater end.

OATHBOUND

Violating Actions

- premeditated killing
- killing for personal gain
- refusing to help the meek or downtrodden when you could
- breaking your individual restriction on behavior
- helping a Hellbound (unless that help is intended and expected to convert them)

Grand Actions

- preventing the death of a stranger at great peril to yourself
- non-violently foiling the schemes of a Hellbound
- converting a creature you see as evil to your Code
- sparing the life of a powerful enemy who could later seek revenge

Result of a Grand Action: +1 IP to be spent only on Bind Powers, either upgrading an existing one or gaining a new one.

BOUNDLESS

Violating Actions

- taking sides in a large-scale conflict
- seeking out an adversary, even one who has harmed you, or helping others do the same
- deviating from your pursuit of your specifically desired kind of knowledge (unless there is an immediate necessity to do so)
- doing anything that might damage or impair your memory or ability to acquire new knowledge

Grand Actions

- fulfilling your previous Knowledge Vision

Result of a Grand Action: +1 IP to be spent only on a new Bind Power *and* a brief vision of the next knowledge goal.

HELLBOUND

Violating Actions

- sparing the life of an enemy
- sacrificing power, influence, or any other selfish end for another's benefit
- helping the meek or downtrodden (except to further your own ends)
- helping an Oathbound (except to further your own ends)
- not pursuing your specific goal when you could without significant danger to yourself

Grand Actions

- killing a powerful enemy who thwarted you in the past
- getting an Oathbound Accessor to willingly commit a Violating Action
- killing an enemy after they are no threat to you

- getting any creature to intentionally destroy something they love

Result of a Grand Action: further disfigurement and +2 IP to be spent only on Bind Powers

BIND IMPROVEMENTS

Blockable: An appropriate check of 8 or more prevents it unless the target willingly fails.

Passive: Unlike most Bind powers which must be activated, this Improvement is considered always in use.

BIND IMPROVEMENT	IP COST	DESCRIPTION	UPGRADING
Access to The Bind	3	Allows the Accessor to be Oathbound or Boundless. (NPCs can select Hellbound.)	not applicable
Laserblade Mastery	1	Allows the Accessor to wield and control their laserblade. (Required for all Oathbound and Hellbound Accessors.)	not applicable
Pulling Push	1	Blockable. Allows the Accessor to pull or push an object or creature without damaging it from up to 20 feet away.	Each additional point: Increases range by 10 feet.
Purge Venom	2	Allows the Accessor to purge a poison, foreign pathogen, or other similar ailment from a willing or unconscious target's body.	not applicable

BIND IMPROVEMENT	IP COST	DESCRIPTION	UPGRADING
Remove Sense	1	Blockable. Allows the Accessor to temporarily suppress a single sense in a target. If successfully blocked, the target is aware of the attempt and who attempted it. If unsuccessfully blocked, the target is unaware of who removed their sense.	Each additional point: Allows the Accessor to block an additional sense in the same target or the same sense in an additional target.
Restore Health	2	Allows the Accessor to heal minor injuries in a willing or unconscious target.	not applicable
Savage Kinship	1	Allows the Accessor to communicate with creatures with animal-level intellect.	not applicable
Silent Step	1	Allows the Accessor to move silently across any surface.	not applicable
Swirling Storm	1	Allows the Accessor to levitate small objects and create a swirling radius around them.	Each additional point: Allows for larger area of effect or larger objects.
Thunder Clap	1	Allows the Accessor to create a thundering sound with a clap of their hands.	not applicable

BIND IMPROVEMENT	IP COST	DESCRIPTION	UPGRADING
Tranquil Wave	1	Blockable. Allows the Accessor to calm a target's emotions.	not applicable
Uncanny Visage	3	Allows the Accessor to make themselves different in appearance, though they must still be the same size and shape.	Each additional point: Allows for additional 10% difference in apparent size and shape.
Unsettling Visions	2	Allows the Accessor to get a brief, confusing glimpse of an upcoming negative event that may come true.	not applicable