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Halfway Station presents...

The Dark Nebula Campaign



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For GURPS Traveller
September 2001 revision

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Overview

The Aslan Hierate (imagine Klingons in lion suits) and the Solomani Confederation (Stalinist Nazi humans) are two interstellar empires glaring at each other across a buffer zone of independent planets. Each wants to expand into the other's territory, but neither has a decisive advantage, so they wage a cold war in deep space and dark alleys.

Player characters are based in the Solomani Quadrant, a pocket empire which is being absorbed by the Confederation to act as a jumping-off point for their eventual invasion of the Hierate. Key figures in the Quadrant live in fear of Solomani Security (the Gestapo) who monitor them constantly to ensure their commitment to the Manifest Destiny of the Solomani Race ("Same thing we do every night - try to take over the world").

Between the two empires lie the Dark Nebula (half Bermuda Triangle, half North West Passage); the Union of Fastnesses, a group of mixed human/Aslan planets trying to stay neutral; and various petty planetary states (those places that only appear in one episode of *Star Trek* - made of orange polystyrene and inhabited by humanoids with weird noses and funny hats).

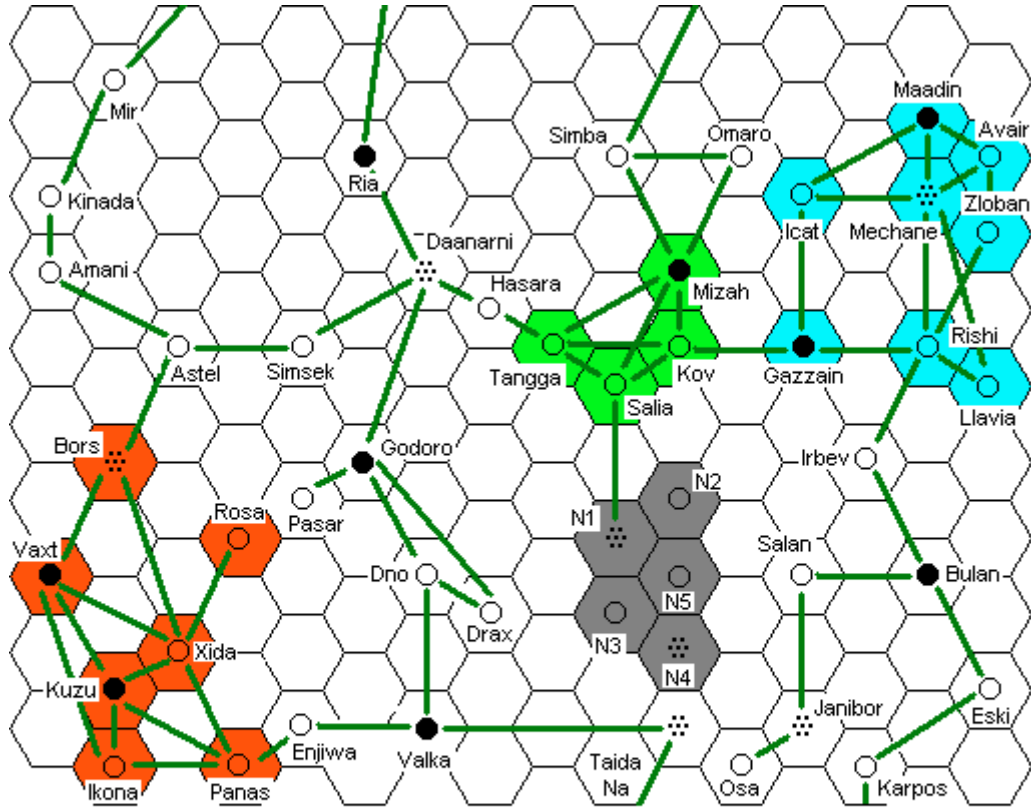
Local technology is like *Star Wars* without the blasters and lightsabres. Personal weapons are conventional guns, although 'conventional' now means 'packed with electronics and firing caseless shaped charge rounds off a floating breech'.

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Campaign Map



KEY

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| ● Water present | ■ Aslan Hierate |
| ○ No water present | ■ Dark Nebula |
| ⋯ Asteroids | ■ Solomani Quadrant |
| — Jump route | ■ Union of Fastnesses |

Dark Nebula Sector Kilrai and Vecinos Subsectors

Hyperspace jumps are only possible along marked routes. The map is a two-dimensional representation of three-dimensional space, so systems next to each other may be too far apart vertically for a jump to be possible. For a quick and dirty view of worlds, assume each has:

- A *GURPS Traveller* starport class equal to the number of jump routes leading there (e.g., Mechane has a Class V starport).
- An Earthlike mainworld with Population 9 if water is present, a Marslike mainworld with Population 6 if no water is present, Population 3 if an asteroid belt – but Class IV or V starports always have at least Population 6.
- A feudal government.
- Control Rating 3 (moderate - weapons licenced).
- Tech Level 10 (interstellar society).

World Descriptions

Worlds are detailed using *GURPS Space* terms, which are summarised below.

World Type

Desert

A small world with a thin atmosphere and little or no water, e.g. Mars. An Earthlike Desert is midway between this and Earthlike, and resembles the Mars of Ray Bradbury or Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Earthlike

Much like our own Earth, surprisingly.

Gas Giant

A huge world with a thick atmosphere of hydrogen and helium, e.g. Jupiter.

Greenhouse

A world with a thick, dense atmosphere and high temperatures, e.g. Venus. An Earthlike Greenhouse is midway between this and Earthlike, and resembles the Venus of Ray Bradbury or Robert A Heinlein.

Hostile

A terrestrial planet with an atmosphere poisonous to humans, e.g. Titan. Often very cold, with oceans of liquid ammonia or methane.

Iceball

A world consisting entirely of frozen gasses and liquids.

Rockball

A small world, totally made of rock, with little or no air or water, e.g. Mercury. Icy Rockballs are covered in a layer of frozen gasses, e.g. Pluto.

Control Rating (CR)

0. Anarchy – no laws or taxes.
1. Very Free. Non-military weapons unrestricted. Taxes light.
2. Free. Some laws, favouring the individual; hunting weapons legal; light taxes.
3. Moderate. Many laws, favouring the individual; hunting weapons licensed; taxes light and fair.
4. Controlled. Many laws, favouring the state; light weapons and communicators licensed; taxes heavy.
5. Repressive. Many laws, strictly enforced; weapons and communicators strictly regulated; taxes heavy and unfair.
6. Total Control. Numerous, complex laws; weapons and communicators prohibited; taxes crushing.

The Solomani Quadrant

Population

Roughly two billion sophonts, almost all on Gazzain and Maadin; 35% Solomani, 10% Vilani, 15% mixed human minor races, 35% Eidex, and 5% Aslan.

Government

Federation. Planetary governments are ostensibly feudal, with Solomani noble Houses claiming descent from the military aristocracy of the Rule of Man, but since the Eidex Landgrab some 200 years ago, real power in the Quadrant has been shifting to its Vilani-dominated merchant cartels. Over the last couple of generations, the Solomani Confederation has been slowly absorbing the Quadrant, leading to a three-way power struggle. The Quadrant was created in 119, during the latter stages of the Aslan Border Wars, as a loose alliance against the real threat of Aslan invasion; it adopted its current name c. 200.

By tradition, the rule of the Quadrant takes the title Duke of Vecinos, because the Rule of Man's last governor for this region claimed the entire Vecinos Subsector as his fief (in the face of determined opposition by the Aslan and Eidex). He administers the laws, controls foreign relations, and acts as the supreme commander of the Quadrant military. The Duke governs with the advice and consent of the Quadrant Council, and while his actions do not require the Council's prior approval, it may call him to justify them afterwards. The title - and rulership - are vested in a noble House rather than an individual, originally to ensure a clear line of succession in wartime. The ruling House is chosen by a state-wide election, in which only Solomani born in the Quadrant may vote. Likewise, only Solomani Houses are eligible for election.

The Council has 15 members; four each from Gazzain and Maadin, one from each of the other six worlds, and the current Duke. The merchant cartels and non-Solomani races have no official representation in the Council; current practice is for the delegates from Gazzain to represent non-Solomani interests, and for Mechane and Zloban to represent commercial interests. Since 1106, it has been the custom for one of the delegates from Maadin to be the most senior SolSec official in the Quadrant.

Politics

There are four main political factions within the Quadrant:

- The hard-line Expansionists favour rolling back the current borders of the state into the alleged 'power vacuum' of the Independent Worlds; this policy would inevitably break the treaties signed as part of the Peace of Ftahar and lead to conflict with the Aslan. Their main agenda in 1120 is to increase the Navy budget and build a large battle fleet capable of taking on the Aslan clans. They are natural allies of SolSec and the Confederation. Their most vocal supporter is the SolSec delegate from Maadin, although Icat and Gazzain both see a strong fleet as the best deterrent and privately agree that war with the Hierate is inevitable.
- The soft-line Expansionists are a splinter group which broke away from the main Expansionist party late in 1106. Their agenda differs from the hard-liners by proposing exploration and colonisation of the Dark Nebula as a better option. Technically this would still break the Peace of Ftahar, but since it does not directly threaten clan lands is much less likely to lead to war. As yet none of the Council members are solidly behind this faction, but both Maadin and Icat occasionally vote in support of its policies where it benefits them to do so.

- The Free Trade bloc consists of Zloban and Mechane, supported by the great Vilani cartels. While this faction is a minor one, it can offer delegates great economic incentives for temporary support and gets its own way surprisingly often considering how few votes it can muster. The FT bloc often supports soft-line Expansionist proposals for economic reasons.
- The Quadrant First party are isolationists who argue for sealing the borders, limiting trade outside the Quadrant by protectionist tariffs, and the maintenance of strong planetary defences to deter Aslan invasion. It includes delegates from Gazzain, Maadin, and Rishi - the first two because they do not wish to provoke the Aslan, and the third because large shipbuilding and infrastructure projects divert state funding from pure research.

Militarily, the Solomani Quadrant is dominated by Maadin and Gazzain. The smaller worlds rely on these for protection - indeed, this was the main motivation for the original formation of the Quadrant during the Aslan Border Wars. Each world has its own army; in theory, the Navy, Marines and Scout Service are under central control by the ruling Duke, but in practice this is only true during wartime. The Quadrant has long pursued a policy of having a large standing army to deter Aslan ihatei from trying to grab its land, while maintaining a small navy, to demonstrate that it has no expansionist intentions.

Law

CR 3.

Technology

TL 10. Local technology is limited by the Peace of Ftahalr, signed in 380 at the end of the Aslan Border Wars.

Worlds

Avair

An aging Earthlike Desert world, midway between Earth and Mars in characteristics and with almost no surface water; the diverse ecology which flourished here has all but died out. The few remaining plant forms provide pharmaceutical compounds which cannot be economically synthesised, and together with mining provide the basis of the planet's economy. Colonists make their homes underground to avoid extremes of temperature on the surface.

Gazzain

The Eidex homeworld - an Earthlike Greenhouse covered in swamp, jungle and shallow seas, with scattered air-conditioned arcologies housing the human military governors (about 5% of the population) - House Drake and their allies, originally from Maadin. Life as conquerors amongst occasionally restless natives and other vicious reptilian carnivores have made the human population well-armed and highly disciplined; local weapon control laws are much more relaxed than is normal for the Quadrant, with Solomani and their retainers permitted to carry military-grade weapons. Gazzain starport is notorious for its lack of curiosity about where a ship's cargo - or its laser burns - came from, and its casual acceptance of heavily armed 'merchant ships'. Despite this, it has large, modern and active naval and scout bases, as it is the most likely invasion route into the Quadrant.

Icat

A Desert world ruled by a fundamentalist religious dictatorship, fully committed to Solomani ideals of human supremacy, expansionism and conquest. They are natural allies of SolSec and the Solomani Confederation, but suspicious of science and consequently lag behind the rest of the Quadrant in technology. Naturally, such a government breeds opponents inclined to direct

action. The most famous of these is the Icat Liberation Front, a terrorist group dedicated to overthrowing the government of Icat, despite the fact that most of her citizens are quite happy with it.

The ILF originated from a doctrinal dispute amongst the clergy of the Church of Icat about whether or not bishops must be descendants of earlier bishops; the faction believing that they need not be tried to massacre the faction believing that they must be, and those who escaped went underground, eventually coalescing into the ILF. The organisation has several starships, acquired by piracy. Icat has a small naval base, set amongst extensive abandoned fortifications from 200 years ago, when it was part of the Quadrant's first line of defence.

Llavia

A Hostile Terrestrial world whose cold and barren landscape is home to several small human mining colonies and numbers of ferocious predator species, which are trapped for their fur. There is no real central government; family ties and friendship decide most issues. Local clans are suspicious of offworlders and well-armed, as they are regularly raided by pirates and surrounded by fierce carnivores. Llavian fur is popular on Maadin, and Llavian animals are highly prized by Ria's genetic engineers, who frequently send representatives to negotiate with the natives. Llavia's position at the edge of the Quadrant, a backwater system but one poorly defended and easily accessible from two systems with multiple escape routes, makes it vulnerable to pirates seeking furs and slaves.

Maadin

The current capital of the Quadrant, an Earthlike world ruled by House Karpov. Bombardment during the Aslan Border Wars severely damaged its environment; the ecology is now completely managed, and what seems natural only continues to exist due to constant high-technology assistance. House Karpov's members are occupied with the affairs of the Quadrant at large and their hectic social lives, so Maadin is governed by bureaucrats in their name. The Quadrant's most prestigious university is on an island close to Maadin starport. Life here is affluent and stable, although some feel that SolSec and the Confederation have too much influence. For the past decade, garments made from Llavian fur have become essential fashion items, and there is a steady trade in the pelts; while it is nominally illegal, officials both on Maadin and throughout the Quadrant normally ignore it.

Mechane

Mechane's population live in orbital habitats, and support themselves by building starships and providing services to their passengers and crews. Its strategic location and laissez-faire government have made this the most cosmopolitan starport in the Quadrant. Pride of place in the Travellers' Aid Society hostel is given to a sculpture alleged to be the original version of Nogura's "Never Again", depicting an insectoid alien pouncing on a human woman shielding a terrified child with her body. Reproductions of this work were once found on every world of the Rule of Man, and some scholars believe that the savage wars following humanity's first contacts with this species were the driving force behind its lust for conquest. Nogura himself fought in one of these conflicts, and claimed to have sculpted it from memory.

Rishi

A Desert world devoted to scientific research, unfettered by normal considerations of ethics and pragmatism. It produces the most advanced electronics, robots and prosthetics in the Quadrant, and is the only place where having a cybernetic implant is socially acceptable. A citizen's status is measured by his degrees and published papers. The 'mad scientist from Rishi' is a stock character in Quadrant fiction, especially on Icat. Rishi was formerly one of the Quadrant's first lines of defence against Aslan invasion, and had a large naval base, now

largely abandoned. However, its shipyards still build roughly half of the Quadrant's starships, mostly civilian vessels.

Zloban

A mining colony on a Hostile Terrestrial world, which has been politically unstable since the collapse of the Rule of Man, when the Chartered Zloban Corporation - which owns and operates the world - was freed from any remaining legal constraints. The Corporation's strict policies have spawned several revolutionary groups intent on seizing power; however, these fight each other as much as the CZC. Ria's laboratories import significant amounts of plant specimens from Zloban as genetic rootstocks. Zlobani society is notable for the huge gulf between the proles labouring in the mines and factories, and the creature comforts of the senior management. In theory this is an open society, where anyone can rise on his own merits; in practice, proles cannot afford the necessary education and are doomed to life on the lower rungs of the corporate ladder.

Public Figures

- Drake, Anthony (deceased). Former Duke of Vecinos. Executed in 1106 for alleged "anti-Solomani activities". He was noted for his liberal views on alien rights. Following his execution, the Duchy of Vecinos was given to House Karpov, and House Drake were exiled to their ancestral fief of Gazzain.
- Drake, Simon; Marquis of Gazzain. Anthony Drake's son; he has vowed to clear the family's name and restore them to power.
- DuPlessis, Amanda; SolSec Coordinator. A ruthless Solomani fanatic, and easily the most powerful individual in the Vecinos Subsector.
- Karpov, Basil; Baron Maadin. Next in line to the Duchy of Vecinos. Spends most of his time carousing and gambling.
- Karpov, Isabella; Duchess of Vecinos. Rumoured to be overfond of certain members of her Marine bodyguard.
- Karpov, Jurgen; Duke of Vecinos. His reign has been marked by legal reform and investment in public works (bankrolled by SolSec).

The Aslan Hierate

Population

Roughly two billion sophonts, mostly on Kuzu and Vaxt; estimated as 95% Aslan, 5% assorted other races, although this is hard to confirm because any sophont adopting Aslan ways is treated as if he were an Aslan.

Government

Alliance. The Hierate is composed of many Aslan clans; it has no central government, although the most powerful clans hold lands on several worlds. It is a feudal structure, with each clan dividing its lands into hereditary fiefs, which it assigns to vassal clans in return for loyalty and military service. The vassals in exchange divide the land amongst their prides, who share it between their component families.

The closest thing to a Hierate government is the Tlaukhu, or Council of 29. This consists of envoys from the 29 most powerful clans in the Hierate, who meet continuously on Kuzu to

negotiate matters of interest. Each envoy speaks only for his own clan, and no-one has authority to speak for the 29 as a whole. To be a member of the 29, a clan must be independent, and have enough wealth and firepower at its disposal to be a credible member. There is constant jockeying for position among the clans; this often leads to war, and sometimes to a change in the 29's composition.

Clans

No-one is sure how many clans there are, although given the extent of the Hierate there may be as many as 4,000. Within the Dark Nebula, there are approximately 300 clans, most of whom hold lands on Kuzu itself.

The clans of most importance to the casual traveller are:

- Ateikhoi: Clan ranked 1,984th most powerful in the Hierate. The Ateikhoi ("Children of the Night") have a long and proud tradition of starflight, and their economic power is based on interstellar trade, especially along the Kuzu-Maadin run. They have landholds on Kuzu, Vaxt and Godoro, and trading factors in many other systems. The Ateikhoi are liberal in their interpretation of Fteir, allowing camouflage and espionage as legitimate ruses of war; they also have cultural Aslan prides, descendants of human slaves captured during the Aslan Border Wars who have since earned their freedom and positions on the clan councils.
- Fteirao: Clan ranked 1,999th in the Hierate. The Fteirao ("Souls of Honour") have a strong military tradition, but little experience of spaceflight; their interpretation of Fteir is strict, and intolerant of non-Aslan, trickery, and other ruses. They have landholds on Kuzu and Godoro, and are currently at war with the Ateikhoi.
- Khaukheairl: Second most powerful Aslan clan; co-discoverers of the Aslan jump drive.
- Yerlyaruwo: The single most powerful Aslan clan; co-discoverers of the Aslan jump drive.

Their chaotic internal politics make it easy for Aslan to grasp the fact that humans (or other races) may represent a variety of different organisations, while humans tend to tar all Aslan with the same brush.

Law

CR 1. Like all things Aslan, their laws are decentralised and based on family ties. Civil and penal codes vary widely from clan to clan, but the following are general guidelines:

The family patriarch resolves matters inside the family; disputes between families are resolved by the pride leader; differences between prides are adjudicated by the head of the clan; differences between clans are handled by negotiations between clan heads or by open warfare.

- Crimes of passion (assault, disorderly behaviour etc) are judged by the head of the family, pride or clan, and punished by formal apologies, fines or a period of indentured labour for the victim.
- Crimes with victims (theft, fraud, piracy etc) are judged by an independent arbitrator; penalties are fines, paid in cash or forced labour for the victim.
- Crimes of honour (treason, failure to obey an arbitrator, dereliction of duty) are judged by the pride or clan head; punishments in theory are death, mutilation or exile, but in

practice these cases rarely come to court, as they are resolved by a duel to the death before things get that far.

Discourtesy and related offences are not illegal, just dangerous, as they normally lead to a duel.

Technology

TL 10. Local technology is limited by the Peace of Ftahalr, signed in 380 at the end of the Aslan Border Wars.

Worlds

Bors

Ikona

Kuzu

An industrialised planet, Earthlike except for being slightly drier and with less pronounced seasons. It is the Aslan homeworld.

Panas

Rosa

Vaxt

Xida

Public Figures

Public figures in the Hierate are mainly clan chiefs. These embody the spirit of their clan, and carry its name; if for any reason it is necessary to differentiate between the clan's views and those of the chief, the suffix *ko* is added to the clan name. For example, the head of the Ateikhoi clan is known as Ateikhoiko, or simply Ateikhoi.

The Union of Fastnesses

Population

Roughly one billion sophonts, almost all on Mizah; 70% human, 30% Aslan.

Government

Empire. The Union is a matriarchy, led by the Countess of Mizah. The Countess is nominated by her predecessor, but the office is not hereditary as she may not marry or have children (for her subjects must be her children). The planetary Marquises are not so constrained, and are a more normal hereditary nobility.

The ruler is sometimes known as the 'Shadow Countess', as in accordance with Vilani tradition she is never seen in public, ruling through public proclamations and only meeting envoys via audio communicator channels.

Law

CR 2.

Technology

TL 9.

Worlds

Kov

A Gas Giant, formerly a Rule of Man gas mining operation. The population lives in numerous cities floating at the 1,000 milliBar level in the gas giant's atmosphere; each city-state is independent of the others and there is no planetary government, although the ruler of Kov City claims the title Marquis of Kov. Travellers need a respirator and arctic-grade clothing to venture beyond the buildings.

Mizah

An Earthlike world with extensive mineral deposits, and the capital city grew up in disused mining galleries drilled into the side of deep canyons near the starport. The galleries are connected by monorail; onplanet travel is by dirigible airship.

Salia

A Desert world, unique amongst the Union worlds in having a male ruler and an all-human population. Salian gentlemen traditionally settle disputes by duelling with swords.

Tangga

A Rockball world, best known for the Tanggan Games, a no-holds-barred martial arts competition held annually. Warriors and would-be warriors come from all over the sector to prove themselves here - human, Aslan and Eidex. There are no rules, and consequently many injuries and fatalities each year. Perhaps as a result of this brutal event, Tangga is home to a number of excellent martial arts schools, many of which have unique styles. There are persistent rumours that various special forces and secret service agencies in the region send teams to the games incognito, to try out their techniques and learn from others.

Public Figures

- Countess Louisa Di Mizah.

The Dark Nebula

The Nebula is largely unexplored. It should contain jump routes, leading not only to the systems within it, but to others (currently unreachable) above the plane of the map; but these have yet to be charted. Those few ships which venture into the Nebula have a very high chance of disappearing without trace; the explanations for this offered in starport bars include lost alien civilisations, pirates, renegade war robots from the Rule of Man era, giant mutant space amoebae, and Elvis sightings.

The Independent Worlds

Bulan

This is thought to be an Earthlike Desert world populated by Droyne. The few traders who have dealt with them and survived report that they are a reclusive, xenophobic TL 13 culture led by a single Droyne calling itself the Leader of Leaders.

Godoro

An Earthlike Desert world. Small and very dry, it hosts a TL 4 minor human race called the Mar Callani, who live in canal cities, and a TL 3 race of degenerate Droyne called called Mar Altani, who terrorise the city-dwellers from their mountain aeries. Godoro was conquered by Aslan clans seeking new lands in 1103.

Hasara

A Rockball - a plain ball of rock, originally a Rule of Man penal colony. When that empire collapsed, guards and prisoners were forced to co-operate to survive; as males greatly outnumbered females, the resulting society is polyandrous and matrilineal, although still male-dominated. The government is repressive, and punishes any attempt at dissent by withdrawing life-support. As part of the closed ecology, the dead are recycled in funeral vats and their remains used in agriculture. Travellers are cautioned to avoid words or deeds which could be interpreted as criticising the government or expressing interest in a local woman.

Irbev (D410622-7 Na Ni)

Irbev's government is an electronic democracy with instant voting, so the laws and government are in a state of perpetual flux. Votes do not determine which party gets into power - they all do. Each party gains control of one or more public services based on the number of votes cast for it and the perceived importance of the service. As at 1120, the starport was controlled by the Progressive Marxist Conservative Party, the computer network and libraries were controlled by the Vilani Techpriest Congress, six other parties controlled various government departments, and 217 parties lost their deposits in the last election.

A droyne vessel from Bulan visits the Irbev system on an unknown errand about once per year. Once in a lifetime, one lands; even then, they keep to themselves. Occasionally, travellers pass through Irbev en route to Bulan. Few return, and those who do are changed somehow - "Strange," as the locals put it, "Forgetting their greed and arrogance".

Ria

An Earthlike world, originally a Rule of Man research station. Its high gravity means that the air is uncomfortably dense near sea level, and therefore the colonists have built their cities in the planet's mountain ranges. The extensive oceans make the climate mild and stable, but generate high levels of oxygen, so fire is a constant risk. Ria is ruled by a conservationist oligarchy of genetically-enhanced humans who have the most peaceful and liberal culture in the sector, which over the centuries has attracted numerous non-humans oppressed by the Solomani. Only 'necessary' technology is permitted; the unit of currency is one hour's labour, and everyone's time is considered to be of equal value. The main industry is agriculture. The planet's scientific focus is on biology; it is the only world in the sector which still practices genetic engineering. Numerous flora and fauna from other systems - notably Llavvia and Zloban - are imported as root stock for genetic engineering. Llavvian animals are especially sought after and representatives are regularly sent to that world to negotiate deals for them.

Alien Races

Xenobiologists divide intelligent species into the Major Races (those who have achieved faster-than-light starflight on their own) and the Minor Races (those who acquired stardrive from other races, by theft, by trade, or as a gift). Within the Dark Nebula, the Major Races are the Aslan, the Droyne, and the Solomani and Vilani branches of humanity. Minor Races are generally regarded as second-class citizens.

Aslan

The Aslan are a feline warrior race. They are bigger and stronger than humans, averaging two inches taller and 45 lbs heavier, although less dextrous; they have claws, a strict code of honour, and an obsession with owning land. The males are concerned with owning land, and the political and combat skills needed to get it and keep it; the females do everything else. Aslan have no central interstellar government; the highest social organisation amongst them is the clan.

The Aslan code of honour, Fteir, can be summarised as follows:

- Keep your given word, regardless of the cost.
- Never show fear or pain.
- Never let your friends or relatives down, for any reason.
- Never ignore an insult; fight for your honour if necessary.
- Landholding and fighting are for males; everything else, especially money, is for females.

In *GURPS* terms, being an Aslan is a 2 point advantage. You have +1 ST, -1 DX, one more hit point than your HT would usually give you, claws which add +2 to your "bare hands" damage, -2 on any skill needing a firm grip, Acute Hearing +3, Acute Taste/Smell +3, Night Vision, fur which keeps you warm and has DR 1, and a couple of other things that don't come into play in *GURPS Lite*. You also have the Aslan code of honor (Fteir), an intolerance of anyone else who doesn't, fierce pride, and an obsession with owning land - you must be able to rationalise anything you do as helping you to acquire land, or expand your current holding.

Aslan, Cultural

Members of other species, usually humans, who were conquered or absorbed by Aslan clans long ago and have adopted their lifestyle.

In game terms, being a Cultural Aslan is a -41 point disadvantage; you have the Aslan code of honour (Fteir), intolerance of anyone else who doesn't, fierce pride, and an obsession with owning land - you must be able to rationalise anything you do as somehow helping you to own land, or more land.

Eidex

The Eidex are native to Gazzain in the Vecinos Subsector. Descended from dinosaur-like creatures, they look like huge, bipedal lizards - they are the same height as humans, but on average weigh 30 lbs more. They come in many colours, and their shimmering scales make them beautiful. Their fangs, claws and carnivorous diet make them fearsome. Their favourite pastimes are hunting, fighting, and basking in the sun. The Eidex seem incapable of limiting their numbers voluntarily, and as a result have a constant need for new land to occupy. This has often led them into conflict with humanity, most notably during the Eidex Landgrab of 911-920, when they attempted to seize territory on Omyl and Maadin. At this point, humans decided that enough was enough, and conquered their planet. They have now been a subject race for nearly two centuries, and most of the bitterness of those days has gone, although racial tension occasionally flares up in the Solomani Quadrant army and marines, which value Eidex as shock troops.

Being an Eidex is a 58 point advantage. You have +4 ST, -1 IQ, +2 HT, claws which add +2 to your "bare hands" damage, sharp teeth which do cutting damage as per p. B140 (typically 1d6-1), DR 1 scales, and peripheral vision giving you a 300o field of view. You are intolerant of non-Eidex and uncomfortably shy around strangers; you have a -3 Reputation as land-

grabbing people-eaters, Social Stigma -2, and one level of Primitive. Finally, you may never have Language Aptitude and may not learn alien languages beyond your IQ. Much of Eidex culture in this campaign is taken from *Traveller's* Ithklur; the game statistics are those of *GURPS* Reptile Men.

Humans

Long ago, a race known as the Ancients took human stock from Earth and scattered it across known space. When the Ancients destroyed themselves in a savage civil war, humanity survived on roughly 40 worlds, each of which evolved separate cultures and beliefs. Three of these worlds gave rise to major starfaring races - the Solomani, the Vilani, and the Zhodani - who between them account for over half the humans in known space. The rest is composed of various minor human races, who typically control just one star system and are considered inferior by members of the "Big Three". Within the Dark Nebula sector, approximately 58% of humans are Solomani, 17% are Vilani, and 25% are members of minor races or of mixed descent. Zhodani are almost never encountered.

Solomani

The Solomani are humans from Earth, which they believe makes them superior to all other races and the logical choice to rule the Galaxy. Some feel compelled to remind others of their superiority, and others are just quietly smug. Solomani can be found anywhere humans have settled. Initially, Earth sent out slower-than-light generation ships; later, the Terran Confederation conquered the Vilani Ziru Sirka and planted garrisons throughout its 11,000 systems; in the last century or so, the conquest of Terra by the Third Imperium (merely a temporary setback, you understand) has sent exiles far and wide.

Vilani

The Vilani were the first human race to discover faster-than-light travel, and used it to carve out a merchant empire called the Ziru Sirka. This lasted for thousands of years, but eventually collapsed under its own weight (if you ask the Vilani) or was conquered by morally superior Terrans (if you ask the Solomani). The Ziru Sirka was planting colonies among far-flung stars when the cutting edge of Solomani technology was the copper axe-head, so Vilani can be found anywhere; but most of those in the Dark Nebula are descended from those penal colonists forcibly relocated during the Rule of Man.

Psionics

People with psionic powers are rare, and subject to various degrees of ostracism or criminal charges, depending on the location. The Psionics Suppressions of the 800s created a deep distrust of psionic powers in general, and the Zhodani in particular, which is deeply engrained into Confederation and Imperial citizens. The Confederation has passed on this prejudice to the Quadrant over the last couple of generations with a vigorous propaganda campaign. Aslan consider psionics dishonourable – reading someone's mind implies that you think they are lying to you, which is a deadly insult; so psionics are inherently dishonourable. (The cynical might suppose that this view is partly due to the embarrassing fact that humans are better at it.)

A 20th century parallel would be cannibalism. People know that it happens sometimes, and roughly what it entails; they talk about it occasionally, but always as something that happens to other people, very far away. There are very few who have actually done it, and *they* keep quiet about it.