

# SOL SYSTEM



FACTIONS AND SECRETS FROM THE **EXPANSE**  
HUMANITY'S HOMEWORLDS FOR





# THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

The Sol System—humanity's cradle. The discovery of the protomolecule has changed everything, and tensions between Earth, Mars, and the Belt are white hot. The pressure rises as the exodus through the Ring gate escalates, and war seems inevitable. Opportunities abound for shrewd crews willing to take risks.

*Sol System* provides information on the governments, corporations, and organizations that vie for power within the star system that birthed humanity. Details on trade between the planets and stations of the solar system and beyond lie within, along with an in-depth overview of the layout, operations, and people of two of the most important locations in the Belt, Tycho and Ceres stations. *Sol System* also offers a comprehensive guide to running planetside stories, either as a prequel or a campaign, as well as rules for creating and running corporations, media outlets, security firms, or religious groups that jockey for money and influence between Earth, Mars and the Belt.

*Sol System* explores bold new ways to tell your stories in *The Expanse Roleplaying Game*. Welcome home.



**GREEN RONIN PUBLISHING**

3815 S. Othello St.  
Suite 100, #311  
Seattle, WA 98118

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## FACTIONS AND SECRETS FROM HUMANITY'S HOMEWORLDS FOR **THE EXPANSE**

*The Expanse* Created by James S.A. Corey

**Writing and Design:** Kate Baker, Christine Beard, Jim Cornwell, Crystal Frasier, Steve Kenson, Ian Lemke, Jason Mical, James Semple, and Pete Woodworth

**Development:** Ian Lemke **Editing:** Skylar Mannen

**Art Direction and Graphic Design:** Hal Mangold **Cover Art:** Conceptopolis **Cartography:** Christopher West

**Interior Art:** Wilmar Ballespí, Marijn van Bekkum, Bryant Grizzle, Jack Hoyle, Victor Leza Moreno, Mirko Scattolin, Andrey Vasilchenko, and Ben Zweifel.

*The Expanse Roleplaying Game* designed by Steve Kenson *Adventure Game Engine (AGE)* Created by Chris Pramas

**Publisher:** Chris Pramas

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**Team Ronin:** Kara Hamilton, Troy Hewitt, Steve Kenson, Ian Lemke, Steve Jones, Nicole Lindroos, Hal Mangold, Chris Pramas, Evan Sass, Malcolm Sheppard, Dylan Templar, and Alexander Thomas

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3815 S. Othello St.  
Suite 100 #311  
Seattle, WA 98118

**Email:** [custserv@greenronin.com](mailto:custserv@greenronin.com)

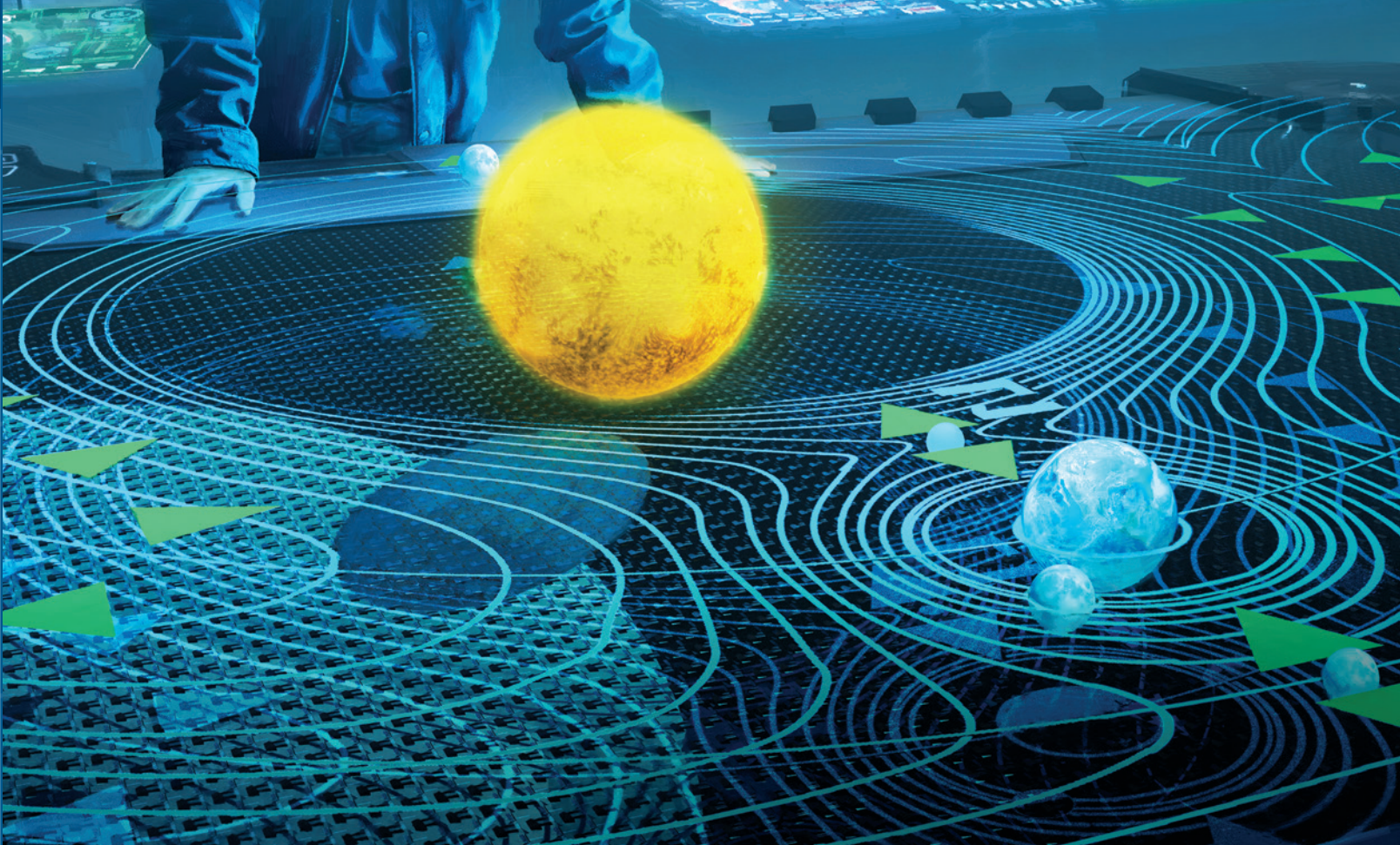
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# INTRODUCTION

**S***ol System* offers an in-depth look at the home system of humanity, the Sol system—Earth, Mars, the Belt, and the Outer Planets. This book takes the information provided in *The Expanse* RPG core rulebook and expands it even further, providing players with new stations to explore and organizations to interact with. You'll also find a wealth of new rules for players, including new equipment and technologies, augmentations, expanded rules for character origins, and creating and running your own organization in *The Expanse*. The timeframe for this book is suitable for any era, although most of the material presented here is based on the period from *Leviathan Wakes* to *Babylon's Ashes*. While not moving the setting era forward, Sol System provides a wealth of information to greatly expand your new or existing *Expanse* campaign.

The law of the solar system is unequivocal. In an environment as hostile to life as space, the aid and goodwill of your fellow humans wasn't optional.

—*Leviathan Wakes*

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is designed with both players and GMs in mind. The first two chapters expand the existing *Expanse* universe with new organizations and stations that include story hooks to aid GMs in creating a rich and vibrant universe. New locations and adversaries can be especially handy if your players have memorized the novels, as much of the information here is completely original. The new rules for players can have quite an impact on gameplay, so always remember that they are intended to give you more choices, not to hem you in. Both the GM and the players should consider everything in this book to be optional. Work together to decide what you want to use, and don't worry about the rest.

## WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK

*Sol System* is divided into five chapters. The first sections greatly expand the established canon of the Sol system and offers GMs and players more places and organizations to explore. The other sections presents a wealth of new rules that expand character creation and offers new ways to play the *Expanse* RPG, including details on trade, piracy, and smuggling as well as creating and operating organizations.



Time had not been kind to the city. Its coastline was a ruin of drowned buildings kept from salvage by a complexity of rights, jurisdictions, regulations, and apathy until the rising sea level has all but reclaimed them for its own.

—*The Churn*

## 1: MOVERS AND SHAKERS

**Chapter 1: Movers and Shakers** details over 30 organizations, both from the novels and new. You'll find more information on the governments of Earth, Mars and the Belts, uncover secrets of corporations both small and large, and delve into the secret lives of religions and cults from around the system. Each has its own story hook for inspiration on how to use them in your own stories.

## 2: STATIONS

**Chapter 2: Stations** covers the larger stations such as Tycho and Ceres, covering the details of their day-to-day operation and the types of people, goods, services, and entertainment available on each. You'll also find information on many of the Lagrange stations as well as corporate, government, and independently operated stations throughout the system, each of which comes with story hooks.

## 3: TRADE

**Chapter 3: Trade** offers a deep dive into how commerce and trade operate in the Sol system. There's also a ship-full of information on piracy and smuggling. You'll find methods of enforcement and punishment for those who are caught. And legitimate traders will find expanded rules for trade that include key imports and exports from different stations and planetary locations throughout the system. You'll also discover exciting story hooks pirates, smugglers, and traders of all sorts.

## 4: PLANETSIDES SERIES

**Chapter 4: Planetside Series** provides a solid foundation for telling *Expanse* stories that are set mostly planet or station-side, including story planning, starting points, and using planetside stories as a prequel. There are series frameworks and story hooks for series set on Earth, Mars, and stations such as Medina or Tycho. The series frameworks explore campaign ideas such as military academy stories for either Earth or Mars (especially as a prequel or prelude), espionage, media, and even disaster series such as after rockfall on Earth.

## 5: ORGANIZATIONS OF THE EXPANSE

**Chapter 5: Organizations of the Expanse** gives players and GMs a complete set of rules for creating and operating their own organization, such as a corporation, security firm, media outlet, or religious group. GMs can use these rules to track important organizations in a campaign, or players can design and build their own organization. Players choose the objectives of the organization, and GMs can use these rules to determine success or failure. There are even new stunts for the organization's growth and organization as well as plot actions. Finally, there are sample organizations and threats for GMs to pull from when they want a quick organization template or a threat to the player's organization.







# 1. MOVERS AND SHAKERS

**W**ithin the Sol system, there are thousands of different organizations. Governments, terrorist cells, corporations, religious sects, and crime syndicates are all in a constant state of ebb and flow. Their connections are labyrinthine—ever-changing and shifting, one day competing while cooperating the next. This chapter explores a few of these organizations and the impact they have on daily life. Most provide story hooks; suggestions on how you can use these organizations in your own campaigns or stories.

## POLITICS OF THE INNERS

The discovery of the protomolecule marked the beginning of a new age in humanity's understanding of the cosmos. Unfortunately, human nature all too often seeks to seize every advantage it can get its hands on. This discovery put the long-standing Earth-Mars Coalition into dissolution rather than a new golden age, giving way to a cold war constantly simmering on the brink of conflict and mutual annihilation. UNN forces destroyed the Martian moon Deimos as a preemptive strike; Mars then vaporized the moon Phoebe in a retaliatory blow to keep the protomolecule out of either government's hands. This culminated in what appeared to be open fighting between MCRN and UNN forces above Ganymede, resulting in the loss of thousands of lives and over five billion MCR\$ of infrastructure damage. Still, desperate to maintain peace and avoid a war that could threaten the very species, the two superpowers began talks to determine culpability and reparations.

This is a time of extreme distrust. Earthers and Martians warily watch one another, waiting, and in some cases, hoping for the justification to commit extreme violence. The Belt is largely ignored, as it has always has been, pushed to the side while the Inners vie for a dominant position. Both sides are eager to get their hands on this amazing new technology while also terrified of their opposition gaining it and weaponizing it instead. A new era dawns, and whoever gets the upper hand here will likely be able to dictate the course of human history.

"There are people I love. There are people who have loved me. I fought for what I believed, protected those I could, and stood my ground against the encroaching darkness. Good enough,"

—*Tiamat's Wrath*



## AFTERMATH OF THE GATE

A little after one year since Eros crashed into the surface of Venus, it departed again. Something that resembled a monstrous mechanical jellyfish pulled itself from the thick atmosphere and launched itself across the solar system to take up new residence just past the orbit of Uranus. This construct, likened by many watching it to some sort of eldritch horror, then began reshaping itself into a gargantuan ring. It sat, inert, until daredevil Manéo Jung-Espinoza flew through the center in a slingshot racing vessel; in full view of both MCRN and UNN ships, the gate activated and was revealed to be a portal, a stable wormhole that, through the 'Slow Zone', leads to thousands of systems. Suddenly, the resources and land of the entire universe were ripe for the picking. Overnight, Medina Station became the single most important point in the entirety of the Sol system... and Belters control it.

## EARTH

Change is rarely welcomed with open arms when you are prospering from the previous arrangement. Earth has been the Sol system's dominant power since day one, thanks in large part to its population and control of resources. Even as the population exploded and the quality of life for the majority deteriorated, the Earther dream of a society where your every need is met—a civilization where there is no sickness and resources are abundant—lives on. In fact, however, life on Earth is a bit less idyllic.

Roughly 27 billion people live on Earth. Scientists have made great strides in resource production and efficiency and combating the effects of increased pollution on the environment. Even so, it's an unsustainable population. The UN heavily taxes each birth in an effort to combat its overpopulation; this tax far exceeds the means of anyone on Basic. Everyone is entitled to a home, though the qualities of such vary dramatically between the squalid, tiny, prefabricated hostels for those on Basic and even the lowest income apartments. On paper, everyone with a registered birth on Earth is a citizen and has the same rights. The harsh reality, though, shows a massive class divide and a growing bottom class. Resentment festers in the Basic Assistance slums, which goes hand in hand with the oppressive sense of hopelessness and despair.

Getting off of Basic is a herculean endeavor requiring applicants to submit extremely competitive applications to a university that already shows work experience, drive, and commitment. Even among those that put together an attractive resume, with over 16 billion people on Basic Assistance, the waiting list can last years or even decades.

On the other side of the coin, those with jobs (and therefore incomes), have access to nearly anything they can imagine. Earth industry sprawls across the entire planet—from the central commercial districts of downtown to sprawling automatic factories, each acres across. Agriculture has been dealt with the same way: immense fields and barns the size of towns, all overseen by drones and automated machinery. Each block of factories has its own science lab working tirelessly to further improve yield, increase efficiency, and reduce harmful emissions. They don't do it in pursuit of a shared dream, however; corporate competition has ensured lucrative bounties for any developments that might increase profits.

## THE UNITED NATIONS NAVY

The UN-MCR war, specifically the Io Campaign, revealed a schism in the UNN that hasn't healed by the time of the Ring Gate; while it is believed that those specifically on the payroll of Mao-Kwikowski Mercantile have been rooted out,





it remains a fact that there are admirals both for and against the utilization of protomolecule technology. Unfortunately for them, this is no longer the philosophical debate it used to be: extrasolar technology exists and has already been weaponized for use against UN interests.

Prior to the Ring Gate, the UNN and the UNMC were arguably the most powerful combined military in the system despite Mars' technological edges. The added pressure of now needing to defend against potential unknown aggressors has admirals and captains on edge. Fresh from campaigns and battles with the MCRN, UNN ships now share a picket line with their former enemies. They stare in fear and wonder into the unknown and whatever may come through the Ring Gate. Though the Earth-Mars Coalition Navy was disbanded during the UN-MCR war, the rumor mill suggests talks are already underway discussing its reestablishment.

This is an uncertain time for the UNN. Now more than ever, everything looks like a threat. Worse, everything looks like a threat pretending to be a friend. If not OPA terrorists or Martian recon, Admiral Nguyen's betrayal during the Io Campaign is still fresh in the UNN leadership's mind.

### EARTH AND THE BELT

When the ring gate opened and the Slow Zone was stabilized, Earth was the first to send an officially chartered vessel through a gate at the other end of the Slow Zone, having identified Bering Survey Four as potentially both habitable and profitable. The planet was designated New Terra, and Royal Charter Energy was given exclusive rights to set up a colony and begin returning resources to the homeworld. A Belter frigate snuck through before the RCE ship arrived and established a colony of their own, claiming ownership by virtue of being first to set foot on the new planet.

The resulting legal conflict did not fare well for Earth. The Belter name Illus stuck out over New Terra, and the illegal Belter occupation became the recognized settlers. Though the Belt may have claimed the first planet, there are infinitely more available that might send wealth back to Earth...and provide a better life for citizens who'd been subsiding on Basic. Regardless of how it happens, Earth *must* establish a presence beyond the gate if it has any hope of maintaining social and political dominance.

### MARS

Martians have always worked together towards a common dream: terraforming their planet so that nobody is ever again forced to live in subterranean tunnels or enclosed under domes. This dream led to impressive advancements in their society, technology, and economy that far outpaced the people of Earth or the Belt. There was one shared dream across three billion or so people, and every single one of them worked as hard as they could towards that goal.

The Earther dream is a life of luxury, where you don't have to lift a finger if you don't want to. On Mars, this is ridiculed. Both planets agree on the need to 'work hard,' but Mars takes a multi-generational stance: Everything you do should improve the planet, and in doing so, improving society for your children's children. The arrival of the Ring gate drove a wedge into this facet of Martian society—why live a life of back-breaking labor 25-hours, day in and day out, working on an unnecessary terraforming project? Why do this when thousands of systems are already ripe for settling just a quick trip away? Countless habitable planets, rich in natural resources and already breathable air, wait for industrious Martian settlers who are already experienced in terraforming to come and claim them—not just so that their great-grandchildren might enjoy walking with a breeze on their faces, but so that the settlers themselves can have the kind of life they never even believed possible.

The loss of the Martian shared dream to the irrelevance of the terraforming project was crippling not just to the economy but also to the morale of a people: Was it worth it? Did we just waste generations of life and labor on something that was never going to matter?

Mars' second-biggest industry, the navy, is in similar disarray. The end of the UN-MCRN war was followed with a predictable stand-down period, where excess production is halted, and suddenly superfluous ships are stripped down to their essential parts to reclaim the resources. Overnight, Mars lost their two biggest projects, and unemployment skyrocketed. With that came social dissatisfaction and crime.

The Ring was never going to lead to good things for Mars; it has already brought about secular stagnation in the economy and the death of the Martian dream. Some media outlets immediately began speculating as to if Mars will even continue to be a settled planet, or if its citizens will abandon it entirely and turn into a new class of quasi-belter: a group of would







unable to prove one way or the other if these missing goods were decommissioned and the crews of those warships retired, if they were lost in action with UNN forces, or if they simply vanished into thin air. Lest word of this perceived failure in accounting get out and cause people to think Mars weak, the MCRN denied all claims of misappropriated battle-ships despite growing concern.

be colonists better suited to gravity, who have terraforming experience and the industrious drive to make a real go of it. The actual Belters, of course, are not thrilled about the idea of renewed competition by Dusters now that the possibility of getting out from the Inners' thumb and having resources all of their own has presented itself.

## MARTIAN CONGRESSIONAL REPUBLIC NAVY

The MCRN has always prided itself on its prowess. While the UNN outnumbered them, the MCRN boasts more technologically advanced ships, better-trained soldiers, and the singular efficiency that comes from training towards a single objective every single day: Mars is ready for war on Earth.

The end of the UN-MCRN War dealt a big blow to that mindset. First Ganymede, and then Io, proved conclusively that there were threats beyond the wildest imagination. This forced the two superpowers to put aside their differences and look towards the future and prepare for whatever other surprises the universe may throw at them. The Martian populace, however, did not agree or share the same forethought. The public pressure that followed the announcement of peace forced the military to curtail their spending and decommission some of its suddenly extra ships. Mass exodus from both the armed services and the terraforming project made it suddenly very difficult to keep records straight—a situation that may have been helped from the inside by individuals looking to profit. Though it isn't public knowledge, under Commander Duarte's direction, Captain Sauveterre was able to ensure all manner of MCRN gear, equipment, weapons, and even entire warships went missing. The MCRN was

## ROCKFALL

The Free Navy began their life as little more than pirates, preying on Martian and Earthier trade lanes. Each attack built their resources and emboldened them—they obtained cutting-edge Martian warships, stealth technology, and, more importantly, support in the Belt, as supplies were redistributed from the wealthy Inners to those actually in need. This build up culminated with Marcos Inaros' ultimatum: Earth and Mars may continue as independent bodies, but they must recognize the Free Navy as the ultimate authority in the system. Of course, neither planet does so.

The subsequent apocalypse resulted in a permanent change to the way of life for nearly everyone. While Mars and even Inner-sympathetic Belters, like Tycho Station, didn't escape Inaros' wrath, Earth took the brunt of it. Three massive asteroids impacted the Earth over the course of several hours, killing billions in the initial strikes and the aftermath of tsunamis and earthquakes. The dust plumes from each crater reached high into the upper atmosphere, instantly dropping the temperature worldwide. While the final toll will likely never be calculated, it is estimated that fifteen billion people were killed or injured as a result of the attacks.

Whatever reservations Mars and Earth had about trusting one another and working together vanished in an instant: an attack like this on humanity's birthplace was unforgivable, a crime against the very species. The Earth-Mars Coalition was reformed; the MCRN and UNN were combined into the Earth-Mars Coalition Navy (EMC). Countless aid groups sprang up. Those who were on the fence about Marcos Inaros and the Free Navy were radicalized one way or the other.

The damage to Earth was not just to its people but to its infrastructure as well. With the loss of the planet's ability to trade and supply the solar system, humanity's very ability to survive was at risk. There was no question now—the future of the human race lay beyond the gate.



## MARS AND THE BELT

The relationship between Mars and the Belt is a complicated one. More than Earth, Mars is reliant on the minerals mined from the asteroid belt and the foodstuffs manufactured on Europa (and formerly Ganymede). Belters and Martians share a unique appreciation for fresh air and clean water, also sharing a dislike of Earth's resource monopolies. Martians do not, however, generally view Belters as equals. Though Martian sailors are still happy to frequent Belter establishments, the Belt itself is still a resource to be used and potentially consumed in pursuit of terraforming Mars. Belters may have similarities, but they are just a means to an end and not true allies.

## THE OUTER PLANETS ALLIANCE

The Human tendency to stereotype others still holds true, even when those others live millions of kilometers from Earth. Perhaps especially then. To the extent that they think of them at all, which isn't terribly often, Inners tend to think of Belters as the descendants of the malcontents, screw-ups, and dead-eyed rig jockeys who couldn't hack it closer to the Sun, ingrates who are forever protesting despite the generosity of the corporations and governments that made their lives possible. That this perception is due in no small part to the fact that the Belt only tends to make the news when something bad happens out there—riot, strike, environmental disaster,

OPA piracy, etc.—is largely lost on the Inners. Even those who believe they are sympathetic to Belter issues frequently come from a place of benign condescension, seeing themselves as enlightened saviors of the poor, ignorant, downtrodden Belt.

When it comes to the OPA, all the negative perceptions of Belters are amplified to an extreme. Although Belters recognize several major OPA factions and dozens of minor ones, the Inners rarely make such distinctions, preferring to lump them together and hold all responsible for the atrocities of the most extreme members.

For their part, when it comes to personalities, Belters are as varied as human beings are anywhere, with their usual mixture of sinners and saints, extraordinary heroes, and ordinary villains. However, as a general trend, a few traits have become universal over generations of life so far from the Sun, a combination of how human psychology reacts to the unique pressures of their living conditions and the simple mathematics of survival. For example, any tendency toward carelessness or sloppiness was weeded out early on—those who couldn't be bothered to run two or three safety checks on their vacuum suits didn't survive to pass on their laissez-faire attitude. Even if such individuals physically survived somehow, they were typically shunned by their peers and used as cautionary examples, leading others to avoid similar behavior for fear of suffering ostracism as well.

One of the most pronounced traits of Belter psychology is the idea of self-reliance as a community benefit. Though this seems paradoxical to outsiders, it makes perfect sense to Belters: you have to take care of your own kit before you can be useful to anyone else. Conversely, if your lack of preparation causes a problem, it rarely stops at just you. So Belters pride themselves on taking care of their own needs as much as possible while also checking to make sure the community as a whole has what it requires to survive. They're just as capable of greed and selfishness as anyone else, but even the worst individuals with those traits still think of the common good more than their Inner counterparts; after all, money doesn't matter if hoarding it means the air recyclers break down and the whole station suffocates.

This fuels another part of Belter mentality: egalitarianism. When everyone lives in the same thin metal box full of air, light, and heat, and is equally at risk of being dumped into the cold, dark, suffocating void at any given moment, it tends to act as a great social leveler. It also means that you give serious respect to the people who do the dirty jobs the Inners tend to look down on, such as maintenance engineers and janitorial staff, because without them, everyone is quickly up to their eyeballs in waste or gasping from a bad atmosphere mix. Belters respect ability and authority derived from merit, and listening to crew chiefs in their area of expertise goes bone-deep, especially in times of crisis. Outside of those specific circumstances, though, Belters disdain many status distinctions so common to Inners. Add generations of being stepped on by governments and big corporations onto all that, and Belters have a strong distrust of anything they consider to be an unearned authority.

Another significant facet of Belter psychology, and one that's immediately obvious to Inners who encounter them, is emotional transparency. Keeping emotions bottled up is extremely harmful and often outright dangerous in confined spaces, so Belters tend to speak up and wear their hearts on their sleeves. Being heard is important to them, which is a major reason why Inners not taking Belters seriously is so frustrating. Their sexual and romantic lifestyles further reflect this emotional trait, resulting in fluid and complex presentation and relationship ideas. So long as everyone involved is an informed, consenting adult, Belters really don't care who someone is interested in or how many people they are involved with, which of course,





their critics call out as signs of hedonism and degenerate morality. Tracking these complex webs of personal relationships across various social circles and determining how they impact business and politics is intuitive to most natives of the Belt but can seem daunting and impenetrable to outsiders.

Perhaps the ultimate defining trait of Belters, and one that impacts their daily lives in countless ways, is the idea that all should share both scarcity and plenty. When a resource is running short, everyone shares the hardship equally; when one person is flush, they share their excess with others. This is a literal truth in some of the poorest, hardest sections of the Belt, where every breath of air and drop of water is precious, but even in more well-developed areas, the core philosophy still runs deep. This doesn't mean that everyone ends up equal, but it does mean that those who become known for shirking hardship and hoarding abundance quickly watch their social stock plummet.

## TIPPING POINTS

So, with all that in mind, what drives someone to join the OPA? There are as many potential reasons as members of the OPA, but a few trends emerge if members start sharing stories. Contrary to what the Inners believe, most OPA are not militaristic or even violent by nature and aren't driven by grand designs of bloody-minded revenge and anarchy. The most common reason for joining is not a single inciting incident, exactly, but a moment where a lifetime's worth of injustice adds up and the Belter has simply *had enough*—enough of the low wages and poor living conditions, enough of bowing and scraping to corporate security to avoid catching a beating, enough of too much work and not enough medicine, enough of the world the Inners built to serve their needs. They break from the life they were leading and walk into the ranks of the OPA.

It should be noted that exactly what that decision means also varies by location. Although some Belters have the freedom to seek out an OPA group that agrees with their personal preferences, most find themselves falling in with whomever is at hand; after all, if you're living on a small station and don't have access to a ride any time soon, the mindset of your local OPA is likely to shape yours simply because they're all who's around. Of course, sometimes a strong, charismatic leader can change the nature of their local cell, but more often than not, a new recruit either falls into the mold of those around them or finds these beliefs so antithetical to their ideas that they're forced to seek out others... if their cell doesn't dispose of them first.

## OPA FACTIONS

These are some of the best known and most influential OPA factions out there. Note that this does not include actual criminal syndicates that have affiliated themselves with the OPA (or simply been lumped in with them), such as Golden Bough or Loca Griega. While many of these groups do commit criminal acts, at least by the laws of the Inners, they are not dedicated to criminal activity for its own sake. It's a fine distinction, to be sure, and sometimes an almost invisible one, but it matters all the more for it.

### TYCHO OPA

"Tycho OPA" has become accepted shorthand for Fred Johnson's personal faction, as well as a sort of umbrella term for smaller OPA groups that hold similar beliefs or have directly allied with him, whether or not they are based out of Tycho. Tycho OPA characterize themselves as political realists, staunchly dedicated to a free and independent Belt while avoiding the revenge fantasies and dreams of Belter dominance over the Inners that are common to more hardline factions. Johnson takes an integrationist stance, seeing the OPA's legitimization as a stepping stone to get the Belt political autonomy and diplomatic recognition in pursuit of equal footing with Earth and Mars. With that in mind, Tycho OPA prefer to use the language of conventional politics to express their points, feeling that approaching the Inners in ways they understand is more productive than trying to knock over the entire system and start something totally new.

Tycho OPA's main strengths and problems both stem from its leader. While Fred Johnson is a capable and dedicated leader, many Belters simply cannot find it in themselves to trust the Butcher of Anderson Station, much less follow him; as a result, they reject his faction as well. Even many moderate OPA walk sideways to avoid aligning too closely with the Tycho faction, keeping alliances minimal and downplaying them whenever possible. At the same time, for every person who sees him as more reasonable than some Belter extremists, quite a few people back on Earth regard Johnson as a traitor and a deserter, traits that also do not much endear him to the disciplined and militaristic mindset of the Martian Republic. Johnson himself is well aware of all these perceptions and the problems they cause and often wonders if he's doing his cause more harm than good by retaining his leadership role, but he ultimately feels too strongly about the movement to step down, especially considering all it has cost to get to this point.

### LEADERS

Fred Johnson is the recognized leader of the Tycho OPA. His leadership style is characterized by patience and deliberation, which is sometimes mistaken for or characterized as cowardice and indecision by his enemies (though those that try to move against him on those assumptions soon learn their error at a steep cost). He is not the most charismatic figure, as he's quick to admit, but his talent for strategy, logistics, and delegation means that his supporters know any move he makes will be well-planned and well-supported. By the time his plans are in motion, the opposition has already been outfought—they just don't know it yet.

### RIVALS

Anderson Dawes and the Ceres OPA aligned with him are the Tycho OPA's biggest rivals for the mantle of the OPA's overall leadership, and everyone in the Belt knows it. Both men also realize that outright conflict over this point would only weaken them both at a time they can ill afford it, so they maintain a respectful public relationship while carefully maneuvering for advantage behind the scenes. At the moment, Johnson has a definite upper hand, but he's experienced enough to not take it for granted, reviewing even Dawes's friendlier moves carefully.

### POLITICAL CONNECTIONS

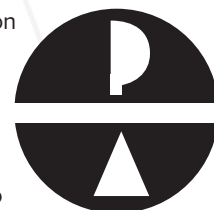
Tycho OPA has diplomatic channels with the United Nations and the Martian Congressional Republic; while "official" recognition remains elusive, these governments have conceded that it is necessary to take Fred Johnson and his faction seriously, so they treat him as a head of state in all but name. They may not like it, but compared to ruthless opportunists like Dawes or violent lunatics like Rosenfeld Guoliang, he's the best option available... for now, anyway.



### CERES OPA

If Tycho OPA is code for Fred Johnson and his followers, then Ceres OPA is basically the same for Anderson Dawes and his loyalists. Although they have a history of cooperating in the interest of the Belt, especially when a united front serves to deter military aggression from Earth forces or the MCRN, Dawes and Johnson differ sharply on key issues facing the OPA and how to approach solving them, making their respective factions wary allies at best. Dawes is a separatist at heart, who wants the Belt to sever all but the most basic ties with the Inners and achieve political autonomy and economic self-reliance. In order to kick off this massive shift, Dawes has argued in favor of commandeering all property of governments and corporations he sees as profiting from the blood and sweat of Belters. Talking is all well and good, he reasons, but nobody will listen unless you speak from a position of strength, and that means taking power first and worrying about the ethics later.

Contrary to popular belief in the Belt, Dawes actually respects Fred Johnson, not just because he's clearly a dangerous man to have as an adversary, but because he has proven he genuinely believes in the cause of the OPA. It's easy to forget that Dawes was instrumental in helping Johnson not only survive in the Belt but get a platform early on, believing that he could serve as an OPA representative the Inners could more readily accept. However, Dawes also feels that Johnson simply can't let go of some of the attitudes of his Inner upbringing, not deep down, and also finds him a bit of a hypocrite when it comes to his supposed "moral OPA" stance; for example, in the past, Johnson scolded Dawes about encouraging piracy but didn't blink about stealing the *Nauvoo* when it suited him. Johnson talks about using politics and avoiding violence, but he has armed crews standing by to do stealth raids and back his decisions with military force. Fortunately, this also allows Dawes to position himself in counterpoint to Johnson and his OPA, giving them faint praise for what they've accomplished while not so subtly signaling that a Belter should lead the OPA, conveniently placing Dawes as exactly the man for the job.





Dawes understands the economy of unrest and is a master of knowing when to cool things down and when to let the fires flare up (and choosing what to burn). As it's based out of the heart of the Belt, Ceres OPA is well-positioned to take action almost anywhere and doesn't lack for transportation and plausible cover stories to go with it—an advantage on which Dawes enjoys capitalizing. Some may not agree with the Ceres OPA, but it's hard to get anywhere in the Belt without them, or at least they work hard to make it seem that way.

## LEADERS

Anderson Dawes holds sway over the Ceres OPA, and his leadership features many things Fred Johnson lacks—he's witty, charismatic, and has built a reputation as a straight talker and plain dealer (deserved or not). He doesn't advocate mass murder or outright anarchy as a means to achieving his goals, but he's not above winking at them either, and he's certainly not shy about calling for strikes, sabotage, and riots when he feels OPA concerns aren't being taken seriously. Dawes is also not above giving the nod to pirates and syndicates to get things done, and he has no qualms about making deals with criminal OPA factions like Golden Bough and Black Sky if it advances his interests. When criticized about such actions, he essentially shrugs it off by saying that with him, even if you don't like his methods, you always know exactly what you're getting—can you say the same about any other OPA leader?

## RIVALS

Aside from struggling with Fred Johnson for the mantle of overall OPA leadership, the Ceres OPA has an internal command problem—simply put, Dawes is at the head of a coalition as opposed to the more monolithic Tycho OPA that Johnson has consolidated around himself. That means Dawes must constantly maneuver to fend off cell and faction heads who disagree with his choices or feel qualified to take his position.

## POLITICAL CONNECTIONS

If the Tycho OPA enjoys the most legitimacy of the factions, then Ceres OPA has ties in the other direction, with political connections to pirates, unlicensed mercenary companies, and criminal syndicates. That these relationships are almost entirely transactional doesn't bother Dawes; financial self-interest may not be a noble motive, but it's often a much sturdier foundation than ideology.

## VOLTAIRE COLLECTIVE

When the Inners talk about the OPA as a collection of bloodthirsty anarchists and monstrous terrorists, odds are fairly good that they're thinking of actions undertaken by the Voltaire Collective. (And if the group didn't stage it themselves, they certainly cheered on the results; the messier the better.) A grouping of high-minded philosophers and bloody-handed militants, the Collective attracts some of the most fanatical zealots in the OPA, including quite a few members who were kicked out of other factions for extreme violence and brutality. They are infamous for all manner of terrorist acts, from kidnappings to spree killings to sabotaging air recyclers on ships crewed by Inners, though they're perhaps best known for their love of bombings as the means to spread their message. It's a simple one: free the Belt now, or bleed.



For their part, the Voltaire Collective see themselves as more than simple killers—members genuinely enjoy debating politics and philosophy and often spin out elaborate, incredibly detailed visions of what sort of society should replace the current one in place once the Inners are finally driven from the Belt. Other OPA sometimes joke, without much humor, that the only thing keeping the Collective from being a bigger threat is that members spend so much time arguing with each other that they take far less action than they would if they could just agree on a single plan for what comes after.

Not surprisingly, members are recruited based on an estimation of their intellectual capability as well as their lack of what is conventionally known as a moral compass. Contrary to popular opinion, most members of the Collective are not mentally ill, at least in the sense that's commonly implied, they're just ruthless in the extreme; those who show squeamishness or hesitation soon suffer "accidents" or are involuntarily martyred for the cause. No one is allowed to leave the Voltaire Collective, especially once they've been blooded, but if anyone has pulled it off, they're laying so low no one knows about it.

## LEADERS

Rosenfeld Guoliang is the Voltaire Collective's accepted face, a position he holds with surprising firmness considering the group's chaotic nature. An unattractive and rather unassuming man at first glance, he lights up when given a platform and possesses

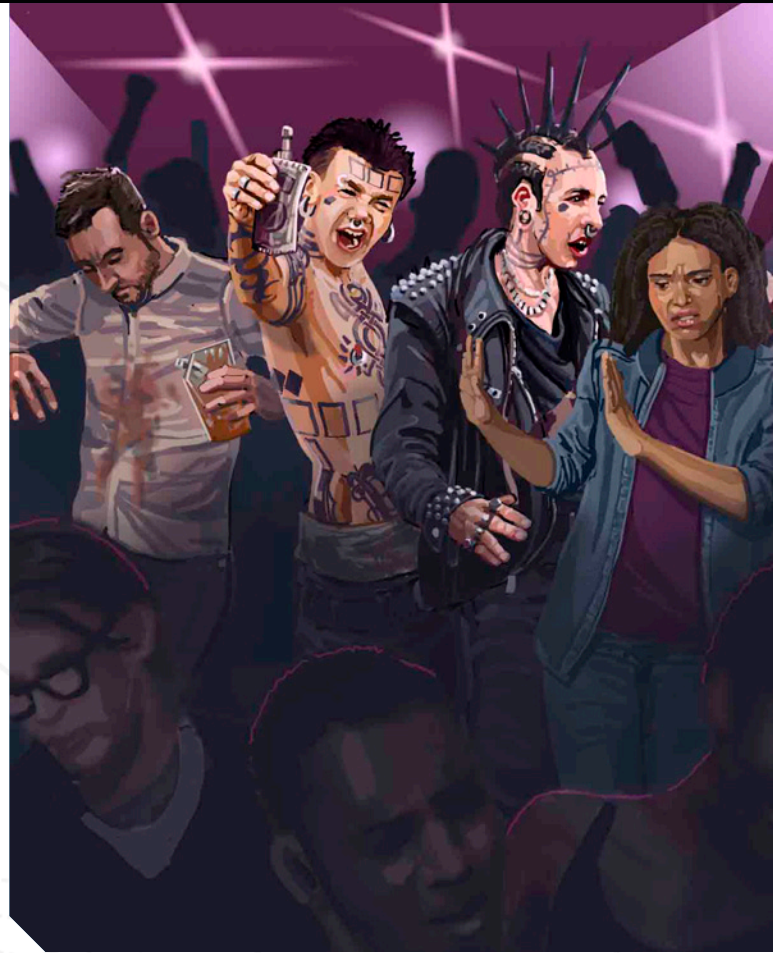
an almost hypnotic zeal when addressing his fellow Collective members. A skilled orator, he can switch without blinking from debating esoteric political theory and philosophical nihilism to calling for the murder of corporate executives with a mass bombing campaign. Like the group he represents, Guoliang is a highly polarizing figure—people either tend to fall under his spell quickly or find his zeal disturbing and highly off-putting.

### RIVALS

A rabid dog is as likely to bite its owner as an intruder, so even those groups that admire the Collective's zeal on behalf of the OPA cause aren't crazy enough to trust them. Their tendency to shrug off the dangers of collateral damage also means there are plenty of OPA members out there who've lost someone due to a Collective action and are just waiting for a chance at payback. The Collective may occasionally have partners on a particular job, but real alliances are nonexistent.

### POLITICAL CONNECTIONS

The Voltaire Collective has strained relations with other OPA groups and can expect to be hunted down with maximum prejudice if their presence becomes known anywhere the Inners can be found and even in the more "civilized" areas of the Belt. Rumor has it that they're courting other, equally fanatical groups for some kind of power play, but who would be insane enough to trust them in an alliance?



### PERSEPHONE'S SCYTHE

An emerging faction, Persephone's Scythe—sometimes also known simply as the Green Sisters—are a loose but growing network of open source biohackers, guerilla farmers, and occasional eco-terrorists who have rallied behind a simple notion: bringing life to the Belt. They are determined to "green" the Belt and make it far more self-sustaining, creating networks of vibrant and nourishing green spaces and farming rigs rather than relying on a few larger production sites to provide the bulk of the sustenance for the population. They undermine corporate farming practices whenever possible, cracking patented formulas and reverse engineering proprietary seed genomes as well as other foodstuffs to make them widely available at no cost. And some of their best minds have begun poring over data on organic material from worlds beyond the Ring to see if it can be incorporated into already modified organisms to offer new and better ways to attain their goals.

Indeed, the discovery of the Ring and the worlds it represents was a motivating factor for spurring the nascent group into action, as the leadership of the group quickly realized that these worlds could represent a death sentence for the Belt as they knew it. After all, with more than a thousand new systems' worth of materials to exploit, why would the Inners care about keeping the Belt alive? And what good are new planets to people who cannot survive in gravity without expensive treatments few can afford? No, the Scythe recognizes that this is the very last moment the Belt may claim the tools for survival, spurring them to far more direct action than in the past.

Rapid change has not been without cost, of course. The Sisters began as a collective primarily composed of researchers, scientists, and engineers. While quite a few of them are comfortably capable of kicking ass when called for, the fact remains that these early recruits did not sign on to a group to conduct guerilla attacks and active sabotage raids. This doesn't sit well with some of the newer, more militant members, who eschew their peers' slower, more indirect methods. So far, the leadership has kept the cracks from growing too deep, but tensions are certainly rising within the group.



### LEADERS

Dr. Kore Anin founded Persephone's Scythe and still leads the group. A former child prodigy and talented polymath, they have overseen the growth of the faction from a few dissatisfied intellectuals griping in a Tycho dive bar to functioning cells



of saboteurs and hackers undermining agribusiness across the Belt all the way to its current form as a cross between an aid group and guerilla militia. The doctor is an idealist at heart, but the requirements of ramping up the movement and the fallout from inevitable clashes with everyone from corporate security forces to rival Belter groups have slowly but steadily hardened them. They are brilliant, dedicated, extremely skilled at blending in across the Belt, and highly persuasive.

## RIVALS

The Scythe is on the watchlists of any number of entities throughout the Belt, but corporate security agents from the various agribusiness concerns they've sabotaged, undermined, and otherwise outmaneuvered are their most dogged opponents. The group's efforts have cost some very powerful companies billions and threatened valuable monopolies through the Sol system, and while corporations cannot muster the raw military might of governmental bodies, they can certainly afford top-of-the-line hunters to track those who have stung them so badly. In particular, two large companies, XenoCulture Agricultural and Epoch Colony Services, have recently pooled their resources to hire a large group of mercenaries and investigators to track down the Scythe.

## POLITICAL CONNECTIONS

Although the group has no official political connections as such, in addition to running operations for the group, Kore still mixes in some rarified circles, even spending a fair amount of time acting as a high-end escort at resorts from Luna to Titan, using that cover to seduce and befriend executives of useful industries in order to obtain information and leverage to pass on to the group. Some of these individuals have even been turned to act as double agents, providing a steady source of intelligence for the faction. On the whole, most outposts in the Belt will tentatively welcome the Scythe, as they often arrive with free supplies, but their recent shift to more violent action has somewhat cooled relations.

## UNION

One of the oldest factions, with a decent claim to pre-dating the idea of the "OPA" as an organization, the Union is really just that—a worker's rights organization devoted to helping Belters. Considering that they have struggled to achieve their goals in some of the most inhospitable conditions imaginable and against some of the most powerful corporations in human history, the Union is justifiably proud of the victories they've won along the way—and holds serious grudges for every battle lost. While some ignorant critics look around at the terrible working conditions that persist throughout much of the Belt and deride the Union as ineffective, those who know their history recognize that as bad as things may be now, they used to be even worse. "Regulations are written in blood," or so the old saying goes, and the Union knows that better than anyone.



The Union is too canny to think that labor activism is in any way apolitical, but they are also keen to avoid being lumped in with the most militant hardliners of the OPA; corporations have a harder time getting public support to suppress a strike with a clear message than they do to combat unpredictable terrorists. Union members are no strangers to violence, however, having faced down strike breakers and corporate security goon squads, but they prefer any violence to have a concrete goal in mind and be as narrow in scope as possible. A single event that gets out of hand can erase years or even decades of gains, and they are in it for the long haul. Better to take a few punches waiting for a better opportunity than swing wildly and hit the wrong target.

## LEADERS

Each Union shop elects its own stewards from among the local membership, typically for a set term agreed upon by the shop as a whole. In areas where the Union is illegal, the position is kept a closely guarded secret and/or rotated often as a security measure. When the Union does try to speak with one voice, it typically does so after contacting as many stewards as possible to get a consensus, then a volunteer from the group delivers the message. It's not the most efficient way to get things done, but it also avoids the Union becoming an individual's personal fiefdom.

## RIVALS

As an old, established faction, the Union has little trouble with other OPA groups—some extremists complain about their perceived complacency, but everyone else sees the value of the work they've done and generally leaves them alone. Their biggest threats are, unsurprisingly, corporate security forces and the local governments that are often in the pockets of those same corporations. Scabs who cross picket lines when the Union is conducting a job action are a sensitive subject among the

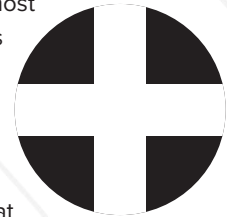
membership—some want to reach out and convince them of the error of their ways, maybe even bring them into the Union, while others see them as traitors and cowards and prefer to do any reaching out with box knives and brass knuckles.

### POLITICAL CONNECTIONS

The Union is a unique case among the OPA in that it is legally recognized in some areas but not in others, and they've enjoyed that status for decades. As might be imagined, the Union has enjoyed the most success gaining official recognition against smaller corporations or in specialized niche industries and environments where finding replacement workers is simply not cost-effective.

### MARUTTUVA KULU

Maruttuva Kulu is nearly as controversial within the OPA as the Voltaire Collective, ironically for almost the exact opposite reasons. An avowed pacifist group, they began as a loose organization of doctors and field medics, tending to those injured in early clashes as the OPA struggled for recognition. Even back then, they earned the scorn of some of their comrades not just for refusing to take up arms, but for doggedly treating anyone who was injured, even corporate security agents or government troops other Belters viewed as oppressors. Rather than draw back from such criticism, however, the group that would become Maruttuva Kulu wore it as a badge of honor and took a stand on the principle that mercy, not ruthlessness, would ultimately deliver the Belt and its people.



The group remains primarily a medical organization but has steadily expanded beyond front line medicine and triage stations to setting up free clinics, distributing aid supplies to those in need, even offering to serve as go-betweens for those who wish to take complaints to authorities but are afraid of reprisal. Like Fred Johnson, they are committed to the dignity of Belters as a people and the integration of the Belt as a full partner in human society, but they pursue this goal through cultural connection and small interactions between individuals rather than large scale political maneuvering and military posturing.

Although their critics sometimes characterize them as a quasi-religious cult, faith is not a requirement for membership, nor are members expected to hold any particular beliefs aside from practicing non-violence, treating anyone in need of medical help, and generally promoting harmony and understanding whenever possible. Maruttuva Kulu members are not naïve, just pacifistic, and do not blindly offer assistance—they may patch up a bleeding Star Helix officer who just moments ago was bludgeoning OPA demonstrators, but while they do so, they will also disarm and possibly even sedate their patient to keep them from re-joining the fray.

### LEADERS

While the faction has no official leader, Dr. Priya Ngyuen has emerged as the current face of Maruttuva Kulu. Daughter of aid workers who operated a seed distribution program on Ganymede, Dr. Ngyuen joined the Maruttuva Kulu shortly after obtaining her doctorate, now running a free clinic on Ceres. She reached a cordial arrangement with Anderson Dawes, agreeing to treat his people with no questions asked in return for his protection from Voltaire Collective and other aggressive factions. Being on Ceres gives her a substantial platform, which she uses to spread the Maruttuva Kulu message every chance she gets, whether it's regular weekly meetings to discuss philosophy and teach basic medical techniques or to gently discuss a change of lifestyle to a wounded Loca Griega she's patching up.

### RIVALS

Although many OPA groups scorn the Maruttuva Kulu, the Voltaire Collective has made a particular point of antagonizing the pacifists, delighting in bullying them into situations where they are forced to either break their ideals or suffer terribly. It's a win-win for the Collective, either the pacifists are driven to violence or they're weeded out of the movement. For their part, Maruttuva Kulu takes the high road as much as possible in such situations.

### POLITICAL CONNECTIONS

Maruttuva Kulu don't have much in the way of political sway, but they do enjoy positive relations with a variety of medical groups and public aid charities across the Belt, even some backed by Inners. Such groups know they can trust that the Maruttuva Kulu will not walk off with their equipment or quit when things get tough. They also enjoy quiet goodwill from those they help, which may not make corporate boards or politicians take much notice but which can result in assistance from surprising corners as former patients pay back old debts.





## MEGACORPORATIONS

“Empire. Every empire grows until its reach exceeds its grasp.”

—Avasarala, *Caliban’s War*

Megacorporations are a driving factor for life in the Sol system. Everyone’s life is touched by them in some capacity. They manufacture and produce the food people eat, the materials that make their homes, the tools they use, the ships they fly in, and even the water they drink. The expansion to Luna, Mars, the Belt, and beyond required big money to happen, and while some of that came from governments, much came from large corporations expecting to see a big return on their investments. Megacorporations continue to control many aspects of people’s lives; even those who manage to avoid directly working for such corporations can’t avoid their influence. People in the Belt and Outer Planets, in particular, are inherently dependent on megacorporations for day-to-day survival.

## POPE ENTERPRISES



Sebastian Pope is the unfathomably wealthy owner of Pope Enterprises, an Earth-based megacorporation. The enormous corporation buys and sells other companies as easily as the average person buys groceries for the week. Accordingly, Pope Enterprises touches almost every industry, from transportation to water to security to technology. Sebastian Pope, the corporation’s namesake, is wealthy enough to be fairly hands-off in the actual operation of his business empire, though he makes direct acquisitions personally, and he keeps a hand directly in the running of some of his experimental science and R&D facilities, especially those involved in deep space exploration.

It should be noted that Sebastian Pope is the shadowy villain in *To Sleep, Perchance to Dream* although he is never directly encountered. If you have run *Abzu’s Bounty*, his current status may be greatly changed, although the company may still exist, perhaps run by family members or shareholders.

### SUBSIDIARIES

Pope Enterprise acts as an umbrella corporation, owning many smaller companies, including Pope-Sanchez Shipping, Krystal Kleer (a competitor of Pu'N'Kleen), and Vector Security. Pope Enterprises also has numerous secret research stations working on pet projects for Sebastian Pope that he doesn't want to disclose publicly. Further, Pope invests in small companies that interest him, and while they aren't official subsidiaries, these companies are happy to offer favorable deals to Pope in gratitude. The Bouilly Network (a new social media platform) is one such company.

### STORY HOOK: THE HITCHHIKER

A desperate person on Earth, likely connected to one of the PCs, begs for a favor. This person has stolen data about a secret science station owned by Pope Enterprises researching mind-control technology. They want to get this information to the OPA, but they can't get a ride from just anyone.

## PUR'N'KLEEN WATER COMPANY

Based on Saturn Station with supplemental offices on Ceres, Pur'N'Kleen is in the water business. The tens of millions of people in the Outer Belt need water, and Pur'N'Kleen is happy to provide it—for a price. The company maintains a fleet of dozens of ice haulers to pick up ice from Saturn's rings and deliver it to the thirsty residents of the Belt.



### RIVALRIES

Pur'N'Kleen is the biggest player in the water industry, but they have competitors, such as Krystal Kleer. Additionally, Tycho Manufacturing and Engineering Concern cuts out Pur'N'Kleen altogether by providing their own water.

### STORY HOOK: FROZEN FACES

Pur'N'Kleen often hires freelance haulers to take extra loads of ice to smaller stations in the Outer Belt, and if the PCs have a spaceship, it's an easy way to make extra money. However, the job turns out to be more than they'd bargained for when one load of ice has over a dozen dead bodies frozen just under the surface. Whoever killed those people is after the PCs, desperate to cover their tracks. The PCs are in serious trouble, unless they can solve the mystery first and bring the killer(s) to justice.

## STAR HELIX SECURITY

Star Helix Security is based on Earth with its corporate headquarters in Baltimore, but the company takes on security contracts all over the Sol system. In fact, its largest operation was on Ceres Station, where it acted as the local police force. With Jules-Pierre Mao as a partial owner, Star Helix has the resources to land big contracts. After all, Star Helix does not merely provide security guards—it's a complete private security solution. Star Helix Security often operates in lieu of an official UN police presence, serving as law enforcement or the military, as required. The city of Baltimore once contracted Star Helix to suppress crime, particularly targeting the Loca Greiga, though the results were somewhat mixed.



### COMPETITORS

Star Helix Security faces substantial competition in the private security field, such as Pinkwater Security and Vector Security. They also face a more existential threat to their business as citizens refuse to respect private security as law enforcement, demanding that police duties be carried out by organizations with local accountability, not giant corporations. When the UN backed out of Ceres, the Star Helix contract went with it as the OPA took over governance.

### STORY HOOK: THE WITNESS

A resident in an area under Star Helix authority, perhaps connected to one of the PCs, reaches out for help. This person saw a Star Helix officer commit murder and get away with it. They want to spread the word about the murder but don't want Star Helix to catch on. So they ask the PCs to help them make sure the Star Helix officer faces justice.





## ROYAL CHARTER ENERGY

Royal Charter Energy holds major contracts from the UN to explore and do scientific research on newly discovered planets through the gates. The organization has several offices throughout the Sol system, on Earth and Ganymede, where scientists work painstakingly on samples sent back from strange new planets and to develop technology to let humanity flourish across the stars.

### COMPETITORS

Royal Charter Energy is constantly at odds with other organizations over rights on new planets, and many of the legal battles play out on Earth. RCE has to fight for the rights to complete scientific research before other corporations and entities start colonizing or mining. Even on the scientific side of things, Dhanbad Nova (a respected Martian research facility), along with its powerful investors, and Tycho Manufacturing and Engineering Concern often compete with RCE in the research and development arena, both eager for contracts to study alien planets.

### STORY HOOK: THE MISSING SPORES

RCE hires the PCs to look for a stolen sample of mold spores from a planet beyond the Ring gate. They'd prefer to keep the situation quiet to avoid panic—the spores are highly toxic to humans. It's unclear how fast the spores would be able to replicate, but if the culprit is planning to wreak havoc, many lives would be at stake.



## TYCHO MANUFACTURING AND ENGINEERING CONCERN

Tycho Manufacturing Engineering and Concern is headquartered on Tycho Station, which houses 15,000 people and is the largest mobile construction site in the Sol system. In an impressive feat of engineering, Tycho captured a small comet and navigated it into orbit near the station, allowing the station to access water from the comet's ice. Bredon Tycho, the grandson of founder and engineering genius Malthus Tycho, currently runs the company.

### TECHNOLOGY

The technology developed by Tycho has shaped the way in which humanity colonized the outer reaches of the Sol system. The ingenious reactor drive to spin asteroids to achieve habitable gravity enabled the colonization of Ceres and Eros. Tycho Station is the site of construction for enormous state-of-the-art spaceships. They had plans to construct a set of floating "cloud cities" in Venus's upper atmosphere, but the project was halted due to legal disputes. The repercussions of that plan may be why talks to develop space elevators for Earth and Mars have so far remained exploratory.

### POLITICS

Tycho Station is the OPA headquarters' secret site, led by Fred Johnson, though it does not officially endorse much of the OPA's politics. Tycho also donates to political parties and leaders on both Earth and Mars, ensuring that every major political force has a strong disincentive to oppose Tycho. The Golden Bough Society is a criminal faction of the OPA, which Tycho employees sometimes go to for help when more straightforward methods fail.

### COMPETITORS

Bush Orbital Shipyards and the twin shipyards of Callisto are Tycho's primary competition in shipbuilding, with Bush building the majority of the UN Navy's ships and the Callisto shipyards building most of the Martian warships.

### STORY HOOK: PREVENTING DISASTER

A Tycho employee working late decided to bring his work home with him. Unfortunately, as he returned back in the morning, he lost the prototype he was working on: a new kind of pistol capable of operating in a vacuum. Terrified of admitting the loss to Tycho or the OPA finding out about it, the employee asks the PCs for help.

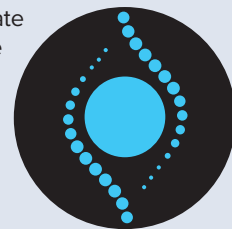
### PROTOGEN

“First. Furthest. Fastest.” Protogen was once one of the most influential companies on Earth, primarily known for private security—they held the law enforcement contract on Eros Station among other locales, but they also had a large research component to their business, and the company worked with Mars to establish an astronomical research station on Phoebe. The company was known for paying its employees very well. Despite operating in the Belt, most of the officers were from the inner planets, often causing tensions with the civilians.

When Protogen left Eros Station, CPM Security Corporation took over their contract, but in reality, CPM was owned by Protogen. Protogen hired members of criminal organizations from Ceres, like the Golden Bough Society, Loca Greiga, and Sohiro’s Crew, for CPM, training them to be a security force.

Protogen’s real interest was furthering their experimentation with the strange bacterial lifeform their scientists found on Phoebe and named for the company itself: the protomolecule. The CPM ruse was to enable Protogen’s infection of Eros Station with the protomolecule. CPM were patsies to be sacrificed to the great experiment, along with the million and a half other people on Eros. Protogen scientists watched the videos and data readouts from Eros carefully, looking to see what the protomolecule would do with enough radiation and access to biomass.

The company’s secret scientific stronghold on Thoth Station was raided by the OPA, with assistance from Captain James Holden and the crew of the *Rocinante*. Anthony Dresden, executive VP of bio research and head of the Eros project, died in the raid, and the eventual reveal of Protogen’s actions led to the dissolution of the company.



### MAO-KWIKOWSKI MERCANTILE

Mao-Kwikowski Mercantile, also known as Mao-Kwik, began as a legal firm involved in the decades-spanning lawsuits surrounding Venusian cloud cities. The small fortune in legal fees supported the organization’s expansion into other sectors. Based on the Moon, the company is now known primarily for shipping, with an enormous fleet of spaceships taking goods and merchandise from the inner planets to the outer planets and back again.

After the Eros incident, Mao-Kwikowski Mercantile was disbanded and nationalized when it was discovered that one of its owners, Jules-Pierre Mao, was heavily involved with Protogen and its conspiracy with the UN to create human-protomolecule super soldiers.



#### SUBSIDIARIES

Mao-Kwik owns many smaller companies, including Dhanbad Nova and, of course, the infamous Protogen. Some of those acquisitions are public, while others (like Protogen) are kept secret. After the nationalization of the corporation, The Kwikowski Mutual Interest Group, one of the companies that merged to initially form Mao-Kwik, was permitted to maintain its own portfolio.

#### STORY HOOK: TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE

Mao-Kwik hires a few dozen freelance ships for an assignment, including the PCs. They pay double the going rate for a trip of this length. All they need to do is provide an escort for a large freighter that’s been attacked by pirates on its last few trips to the Belt from Luna. Sure enough, the ship gets attacked, but it’s not pirates. It’s the OPA, and they’re after the freighter’s cargo: a cargo hold full of nuclear torpedoes.

### MASSTECH

Masstech is a powerful conglomerate with a long history of high-tech development. Solomon Epstein, creator of the Epstein Drive that allowed humans to travel the Sol system in a reasonable amount of time, worked as an engineer for Masstech. The company continues to fund breakthrough research, principally through the Dhanbad Nova laboratory.



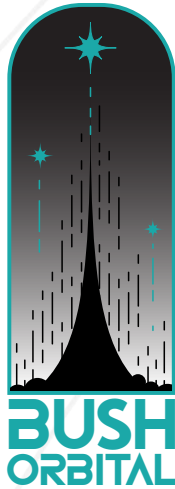
#### TECHNOLOGY

Masstech’s key to success continues to be the Epstein Drive, which their engineers are constantly working to improve, thus enticing both militaries and private companies to upgrade the drives for their fleets.



## STORY HOOK: FULL THROTTLE

Masstech has a brand new model of the Epstein Drive about to go on the market, promising the smoothest ride and most robust performance yet seen. They plan to show it off to some of their biggest customers and build interest in the product, but serious problems have plagued every demonstration. Investigations proved the problems to be the result of sabotage. Masstech reaches out to the PCs with an offer: Masstech will install the newest model Epstein Drive on their spaceship, and the PCs will demonstrate it for some of Masstech's customers. Unfortunately, the saboteur finds out about the arrangement and comes after the PC's ship. The culprit is Annaleigh Harding, whose company, Harding Aerospace, was muscled out of the industry by Masstech, who then bought Harding for a small fraction of its worth.



## BUSH ORBITAL SHIPYARDS

This aging shipyard orbits Luna and was the original jumping-off point for the colonization of Mars. The UN runs the shipyard but it is now geared toward servicing civilian ships. The station even features a small bar and hole rentals and there is a small USMC presence to keep the peace. Many civilian Earth companies preferentially use Bush for their fleets.

## COMPETITORS

While Bush and Tycho produce different classes of spaceships, the two are in constant competition for market share. The Bush Shipyards primarily build and service smaller ships and drives, focusing on passenger shuttles, yachts, and long-haul passenger ships. Because Tycho gets the lion's share of larger construction and repair projects, Bush is constantly trying to woo contracts for larger ships, but as of yet, they've had little success.

## STORY HOOK: WORKPLACE "ACCIDENTS"

The PCs have a temporary job offer from Bush Orbital Shipyards to finish a spaceship intended for the UN. They soon learn that the need for temporary workers is because a large number of employees have gotten ill or had accidents. It's too many to be coincidental, so who, or what, is causing the problems? A rival manufacturer intent on bring the company down or another military looking to undermine the UN?

## SMALLER CORPORATIONS

The mega-corporations might be the household names, but thousands upon thousands of smaller companies exist in the solar system that take care of everyday needs. Many of these smaller companies are subsidiaries of mega-corps, but many still cling to their independence.

## ASHBURY AQUAPONICS

Ashbury Aquaponics is a fish-farming company on Mars specializing in raising bluefin tuna, though they also sell smaller fish and shellfish, which take much less time to reach maturity. The fish trade has slim margins, so owner Haskel Pereira makes ends meet by offering body disposal services to organized crime and wealthy customers, further reinforcing the phrase "sleeping with the fishes."

## MARIUS SPACESHIPS

The Jovian moon Callisto boasts side-by-side shipyards. The Martian Navy owns one, and the site exclusively makes warships for the MCRN. The other is owned by Marius Spaceships, an Earth company, and works exclusively in

the commercial space. The two shipyards don't directly compete with each other for market share, instead poaching employees from each other, borrowing and leasing equipment, and even occasionally subcontracting specialized work. Their close relationship also allows them to combine orders and shipments from offworld, saving them both an immense amount of money on shipping.

## HATA-FARINHA MEDICAL

Hata-Farinha Medical is located on Luna but also has facilities all over Earth and Mars. The company began in pharmaceuticals but quickly acquired other corporations in the medical technology field, including biological and robotic implants. While such augmentations are extremely pricy, the company's employees have access to these technolo-

gies at a steep discount. It's rumored that they sometimes unload implants that don't get official approval to be sold as medical devices to Corentin Francisco, a noted dealer in illicit tech.

### PINKWATER SECURITY

Pinkwater Security is a Martian-owned company but has a presence in many locations throughout the Sol system, including Earth, Ganymede, and Callisto. Most notably, they have the contract to provide law enforcement services on Ganymede. The employees are highly trained, but Ganymede is a long way from Mars, and with the lack of easy supervision by their corporate higher-ups, officers often give in to bribery and corruption, particularly over small issues.

### VECTOR SECURITY

Vector Security is a subsidiary of Pope Enterprises. The company doesn't hold the contracts to provide law enforcement anywhere, but company owner Sebastian Pope is less concerned about Vector Security being profitable and more concerned with having access to his own private team of highly trained mercenaries available whenever and wherever he needs them.

### DHANBAD NOVA

Dhanbad Nova is an enormous research facility on Mars with a sprawling campus that features state-of-the-art laboratory space and residential quarters for the lab's many visitors, both of the scholarly and the financial persuasions. Many critical technologies for the colonization of the Sol System and beyond were developed in this lab. These include anti-cancer regimens that are used on every Martian ship, the most prevalent water reclamation techniques currently in use, and the early work on the Epstein Drive. Both Masstech and the Kwikowski Mutual Interest Group are significant investors in Dhanbad Nova.

### KRYSTAL KLEER

Krystal Kleer, a competitor to Pur'N'Kleen, transports ice from Saturn's rings to the Outer Planets. The company is part of Pope Enterprises, and it's rumored that the ice haulers sometimes get used for Pope's pet projects.

### THE BOULLY NETWORK

The Bouilly Network, developed by company founder Caralynne Bouilly, quickly rose in popularity throughout the Sol system. The social media network connects people in the same location (station or city), allowing them to make business connections, talk about shared interests, and even pursue romantic connections. Social media networks come

and go, but the Bouilly Network is trying to make the most of its time as the hot app.

### AL ABBIQ SECURITY

Similar to Pinkwater or Protogen before its dissolution, Al Abbiq is a private security force principally hired by large companies to serve as a mercenary military or heavy-duty security.

### ANNANSEC

AnnanSec is a Mars-based private security company along the lines of Star Helix Security, Al Abbiq, or Pinkwater. AnnanSec holds the contract for law enforcement services on Pallas.

### SNAKTASTIC VENDING SERVICES

Snaktastic Vending Services provides shelf-stable foods for vending machines on Earth, Luna, and Mars. They also stock up vending machines on spaceships before they leave for the Outer Planets, giving passengers and crews on larger vessels options to supplement galley meals. Besides snack foods like chips and candy, they also make more robust meals, such as their famous self-heating pumpkin ramen bowl: the perfect thing when the lab makes you work late.





## POPE-SANCHEZ SHIPPING

Sebastian Pope and Enrique Sanchez merged their smaller shipping companies to form Pope-Sanchez Shipping. Based out of Durham, NC, Pope-Sanchez is known to be the fastest shipping available from the Inner to the Outer Planets. Most shipping companies go “on the float” for a large part of their journey to reduce costs, but many Pope-Sanchez ships maintain a burn the whole trip for fast delivery for a premium fee. They have regular routes but will also perform custom trips for high-end customers for the secure delivery of goods and data.

## CARACARA ELECTRONICS

Based in Lovell City on Luna, Caracara Electronics makes and sells extremely high-end surveillance equipment to both military and civilian customers. The founder, Marjorie Louie, takes a hands-on approach to her company and still works on-site and meets with prospective customers despite being wealthy enough to retire and leave those tasks to others.

## PYRAMID NEWS NETWORK

The Pyramid News Network is known for propagating outlandish stories and conspiracy theories, but they stumble upon a real scoop every once in a while. The company uses as many misdirections as it can to hide its location. Still, truly dedicated viewers might be able to track down their headquarters in Port Hampton on Callisto under the name Ortiz-Kendrick Media.

## ANDERSON-HYOSUNG COOPERATIVE INDUSTRIES GROUP

This organization based on Earth primarily deals with ore refineries. Anderson-Hysoung is desperately attempting to

re-establish its reputation years after the so-called Massacre at Anderson Station. When Belter employees of the Anderson Station refinery went on strike and killed the station master, the UN sent the Marine Corps to control the situation. Fred Johnson became known as the “Butcher of Anderson Station” for his onslaught, killing thousands of civilian workers he believed to be terrorists. While Johnson is working hard to recompense for his actions, Anderson-Hyosung is still trying to clear their own name from the incident. Their success has been mediocre, and the company has been gradually selling off many of its assets, trying to stay solvent.

## AMALTHEA AMBROSALS

Amalthea Ambrosals is in the luxury imports business. Based on Titan, the company imports luxury food and drink items from Earth and Mars and then distributes them throughout the Belt and Outer Planets. While the cheese, wine, candy, dried fruits, cured meats, and so on are popular with spas, high-end casinos, and the wealthy elite, most Belters would have to spend a month’s paycheck for one of Amalthea’s imported chocolate bars. The company is owned and operated by the Dardanus family.

## DELOS DOME RESORT AND SPA

This is one of the largest resort domes on Titan, where the wealthiest citizens of the Sol system gather to indulge in life’s pleasures, mingle with each other, and watch the breathtaking methane rains. The Delos Dome is known for its grand ballrooms, available for private parties and conventions. A mysterious Board of Directors hosts an elaborate event every three years where only the richest and most powerful attend a Grand Ball with an exclusive auction.

# CRIME SYNDICATES

Every place in the Sol system has crime. It’s impossible to get around. Wherever there is money, wherever there is wealth of any kind, crime is going to come with it. And given enough time to flourish, crime syndicates are sure to follow. Much of their business traces back to when humanity all lived on Earth: drugs, prostitution, protection money. While the mechanics of crime haven’t changed, the expansion of humanity across the Sol system opens up whole new avenues for canny criminals to make their fortunes.

“Say what you will about organized crime, at least it’s organized.”

—*Leviathan Wakes*

## GOLDEN BOUGH SOCIETY

The Golden Bough Society is a major crime presence on Ceres. They primarily run protection rackets, with many members who hit up businesses for protection money. The Golden Bough has a small presence on Earth, predominantly in Baltimore, but they don’t have the same stature as on Ceres.

In addition to lining their own pockets, the Golden Bough Society strongly supports the OPA, where they consider themselves a faction. Many OPA leaders however, disagree. This has led to tremendous tension in the OPA as the Golden Bough Society brings considerable resources but expects to have a say in the organization’s direction, which more legitimate arms of the OPA don’t support.

### RIVALS

The Golden Bough Society is in constant battle with the Hand to see who will rule Ceres' organized crime scene. Currently, the Golden Bough Society is on top. Other rival syndicates on Ceres are Loca Greiga, the Aryan Flyers, and Sohiro's Crew.

### STORY HOOK: THE GOLDEN CHANCE

The leader of a major faction within the OPA is disgusted by a protection ring playing a major role in the OPA and wants them kicked out. Her plan is to set up a fake conspiracy to take out Fred Johnson and lure The Golden Bough Society into participating, then reveal to Johnson that the criminals were conspiring against them.

Depending on the PCs' allegiances, they might work with the OPA leader to entrap the Golden Bough Society, or they might work with the Golden Bough Society investigating the conspiracy.

## LOCA GREIGA

The Loca Greiga is a powerhouse crime organization throughout the Sol system. They have a big presence on Ceres, but they also have a sizable operation on Earth, where they manufacture drugs in Baltimore in the North American Shared Interest Zone. Eduard Hopkins and Jehon Dzurban run the Earth operations. The syndicate then transports drugs to Ceres and the rest of the Belt, giving them a significant advantage over their competitors who have to buy drugs from outside suppliers. The Loca Greiga uses front organizations to cover their drug transportation and launder money, such as TKO Holdings on Ganymede and the Corporação de Gato Preto on Ceres. They also operate brothels, engage in racketeering, and run protection rackets.

### RIVALS

The Golden Bough Society is the biggest player on Ceres, but the Loca Greiga is coming for them. The Hand, the Aryan Flyers, and Sohiro's Crew are additional syndicates on Ceres. On Earth, the Loca Greiga competes with Organizace Bayyo, Tamara Sluydan, and Baasen Tagniczen, among others. The Baltimore contingent is notoriously vindictive, and Star Helix's attempts to crack down on the organization were met with fierce violence and explosives.

### STORY HOOK: HICKORY

A new kind of drug is taking off in Baltimore, sweeping through the city's underbelly like wildfire. Known as Hickory, the drug is particularly popular with teenagers in the underground dance scene. It's manufactured by the Golden Bough Society, enraging the Loca Greiga, who fear losing the upper hand to the Golden Bough Society on Earth as well as on Ceres. They hire the PCs, or perhaps use leverage to compel the PCs, to find out the secret of how Hickory is made.

## ARYAN FLYERS

The Aryan Flyers, a white supremacist crime syndicate, operates on Ceres. They largely lost their protection racket territory to the Loca Greiga. They continue to operate at a smaller scale, primarily through drug manufacturing and sales, as well as thefts. They often vandalize shops from their former territory. They have particularly stoked hatred against people from the Inner Planets, having been key instigators in the most violent riots that have happened on Ceres.

### RIVALS

The Aryan Flyers compete with the Golden Bough Society, the Hand, and Sohiro's Crew. However, their most hated rivals are the Loca Greiga, who stole their territory.

### STORY HOOK: THE MISSING STASH

An OPA ship in port in Ceres went missing, along with some weapons and other tactical gear stored in a secret smuggler's compartment. While the OPA doesn't want to go to Star Helix Security for official assistance, they do need help finding the ship before the weapons are discovered, and so they quietly post a bounty. The PCs can follow rumors to reach the thieves: the Aryan Flyers, who are trying to put together a small fleet of ships to commit shakedowns in space.



## THE HAND

The Hand has been present on Ceres for a long time. They took over as the premier crime syndicate on Ceres some years ago, displacing Chucky Snails's protection racket. While the Hand has faltered in prominence since the Golden Bough Society took over most of their protection racket territory, the gang is still hanging on, ready to claim its former glory. The Hand primarily operates brothels and gambling in addition to protection money schemes.

### RIVALS

The Hand's primary rival is the Golden Bough Society. They also compete with Sohiro's Crew, the Aryan Flyers, and Loca Greiga.

### STORY HOOK: THE CHEDDAR HEIST

News has quickly swept Ceres: an entire shipment of cheese was taken at gunpoint from a freighter bringing in trade goods from Earth, and *everyone* is upset. The Hand is behind the theft: the freight company hadn't been paying their protection money. The Hand is carefully meting out their precious treasure, but some of the members are bragging about their personal source for cheese. The PCs can try to pull off a heist to get the cheese away from the Hand, either back to its rightful owners or for their own bellies.

## SOHIRO'S CREW

Sohiro's Crew is another crime syndicate on Ceres. They lost a large part of their membership when they were recruited to work for the CPM Security Corporation on Eros. The remaining members on Ceres are continuing to keep up their protection rackets, but without enough bodies for enforcement, they are in real danger of losing much of their territory.

### RIVALS

On Ceres, Sohiro's Crew competes with the Golden Bough Society, the Hand, the Aryan Flyers, and the Loca Greiga.

### STORY HOOK: A SHAKY ALLIANCE

Sohiro's Crew has been feeling out a possible alliance with another gang, considering the option of voluntarily joining with a bigger organization rather than being destroyed by one. They have a meeting scheduled to negotiate an alliance with the Hand. The Golden Bough Society (GBS) has gotten word and wants to stop the alliance from happening, as the two groups working together would pose a much bigger threat to their own position on top. Since the Golden Bough Society members are well known to the members of both Sohiro's Crew and the Hand, the GBS hires the PCs to disrupt the meeting and stop the alliance.

## TAMARA SLUYDAN

Tamara Sluydan is a crime boss in Baltimore, controlling a territory north of the city's arcology, which were were a failed attempt on Earth at building self-sustaining skyscrapers capable of providing for a large population. The empty, non-functional arcology serves as a convenient and easily defensible border for Sluydan's turf, and many of her lower-level members squat inside the building when in trouble with the city or a rival gang.

Unlike many crime bosses, Tamara cultivates loyalty among her members and among the residents of her territory. The protection she offers is not merely a euphemism for a bribe, but she genuinely works to keep the people in her turf safe from her rivals. However, she can sometimes take things a step too far, particularly in the vicious defense of her status and territory. When Baltimore hired Star Helix to crack down on the city's crime, Tamara organized her syndicate to take to the streets, rioting for two full days. Eighteen businesses ended up with windows smashed, goods stolen, and even storefronts set on fire, in addition to half of Sluydan's people out of commission to arrest, injury, and even a few deaths. It took substantial effort to win back goodwill from the civilians of the area.

### RIVALS

Tamara Sluydan's gang competes with the Golden Bough Society, the Loca Greiga, Organizace Bayyo, and Baasen Tagniczen.

### STORY HOOK: RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARCOLOGY

The PCs are in Baltimore and have been hired by the police or a rival gang to pick up a member of Tamara Sluydan's gang. It's easy to know where the mission's target has gone to hide out, somewhere north of the city's abandoned arcology, but actually finding him is a different matter. The PCs must carefully search abandoned tenements to find their mark, avoiding hazards, traps, and other members of Sluydan's gang who know the terrain all too well.

## ORN AQUILLO

Orn Aquillo is a crime boss in Ganymede. A large man even among Belters, he earned his current status by working his way up through the criminal underworld as low-level muscle, then becoming a lieutenant. While his size and strength helped him get to where he is, his cunning has helped him maintain control over his very own syndicate. Aquillo has a reputation for being able to get things that no one else can, though he charges dearly for his services.

### STORY HOOK: THE SPA RAID

A hospital in the most rundown part of Ganymede is has been completely overrun with illnesses, injuries, and poor Belters from elsewhere who must come to Ganymede to give birth when they can't afford it anywhere else. Their needed supplies keep getting waylaid or stolen, and they have finally turned to Orn Aquillo to get them what they need. While the hospital clearly doesn't want to see other medical facilities raided for supplies, leaving other sick patients in the lurch, Ganymede's high-end spas have many of the supplies they need since they can afford the security to make sure their supplies arrive better than the hospitals can. As most of his operatives are known there, Aquillo hires the PCs to raid these spas, who can either sneak in after hours to rob the place or can pose as wealthy spa-goers to gain access.

## HUTCH

Hutch is a drug dealer in Londres Nova on Mars, mostly operating out of the Martineztown neighborhood and taking advantage of the students at Salton to sell to and make his product for him. Hutch's MO is to lure people into racking up debts, then forcing them to work for him as dealers, drug cooks, or prostitutes. His drug empire continues to grow, as does his influence over Londres Nova.





**STORY HOOK: NO ONE LIKES COMPETITION**

A student at Salton, not understanding the territory, began cooking up stimulants for other students. Hutch, furious at the competition, started making threats. Now in way over their head, the student asks the PCs for help dealing with the Hutch situation.

## THE NIGHTINGALE SOCIETY

The Nightingale Society controls substantial territory on Luna, makes their base of operations in Lovell City, and maintains several front organizations for the purposes of money laundering and enacting their plentiful financial scams. Ainsley Tiwari is the head of the Nightingale Society and a financial genius. While many crime syndicates use muscle to keep their leverage over others, the Nightingale Society uses finances. Tiwari acquires debts, buys out companies, and places large orders with competitors—whatever it takes to secure leverage over her enemies. The people who oppose her don't wake up with their legs broken, instead finding themselves completely financially in her debt.

**STORY HOOK: THE NIGHTINGALE'S SONG**

The PCs, perhaps unwittingly, annoy Ainsley Tiwari. This could be by getting in a fight with a member of the Nightingales or by interfering in her business. Tiwari immediately responds by pressuring everyone in Lovell City to stop hiring the PCs. As their business dries up, she makes an offer. She'll take them off the blacklist if they perform a dangerous mission: stealing data that she wants from the UN.

## THE VERMILLION CROSS

The Vermillion Cross has a large network of gambling rings on Mars, Earth, and Luna. From animal races to robot fights to poker games to betting on sports, the Vermillion Cross finds many ways to separate the people of the Inner Planets from their money. Some of these endeavors are technically legal, but many are underground. They have a substantial influence on the Martian football league, and every year or two, a player on one of the teams in the Mariner Valley blows a big game and then, a few months later, buys a very nice yacht. They are also rumored to have influenced some of the past pinnacle races. The underground robot fighting is also of questionable integrity, as past champions suddenly show up with robots that go down after one hit from a newcomer.

**POLITICS**

The Vermillion Cross has many clients with substantial wealth, many of whom are in politics. More than a few political favors have been used as payment after said clients ended up owing the Vermillion Cross due to accrued debts.

**STORY HOOK: JUNKYARD BRAWL**

The PCs come across a junked fighting robot in an alley. Any of them with a background in electronics recognize that the robot is a pretty good one if they fix it up. If the PCs do so and start entering it in robot fights, it does well and earns them some money. Unfortunately, it also gets the Vermillion Cross on their backs. The robot's previous owner was beaten up and the robot trashed when the Vermillion Cross caught him cheating, and now they think the PCs might be part of the same group.

## THE SILVER HOOK

One doesn't always think of the "organized" part of organized crime when it comes to pirates, but a single pirate ship can't take care of itself forever, and the Silver Hook is there to help. The Silver Hook operates discreet establishments throughout the Belt and Outer Planets where pirates can dock, buy and sell goods, and usually indulge in a few vices. There's a strict code inside Silver Hook establishments that no matter what grudge two pirates have with each other, no one starts fights there. Station security has no such compunctions, and the Silver Hook spends a small fortune on bribes in order to keep operating. The establishments often need to stay mobile, however, when security decides the presence of pirates isn't worth the bribes as ships keep getting attacked. In the meantime, the Silver Hook makes money hand over fist as one of the few groups that will buy from pirates. They then typically ship the ill-gotten goods to the Inner Planets to fence.

### STORY HOOK: THE PIRATED PAINTING

The PCs get hired to retrieve a valuable art object recently stolen from the spaceship transporting it from Luna to Ganymede and everything else on the ship. It hasn't shown up in any art auctions yet, legal or otherwise, and the owner thinks that the pirates may not have unloaded it yet. The PCs must go to the Silver Hook establishment on Ganymede to try to find the art and negotiate to buy it back for the owner.

## CORENTIN FRANCISCO

Corentin Francisco is one of the biggest dealers of illicit technology in the Sol system. While he is wealthy enough to retire and live a luxurious lifestyle, he enjoys the thrill of his work. Though born on Mars, Francisco has no loyalty to any planet or faction. He originally got his start as an arms dealer, and he supplies militaries, revolutionaries, and terrorists alike. As long as his buyers have the money, he has weapons, armor, missiles, and even battle-ready spaceships. He has since expanded to include biological and robotic implants not legally available. He is equally uncaring and ruthless in acquiring his stock, and more than one group has found themselves buying back their own equipment from Francisco. Francisco has a small fleet of heavily armed spaceships that hold his stock, and he travels back and forth from the Inner to the Outer Planets.

### STORY HOOK: THE EMPTY CASE

The PCs get hired to be the proxies to sell a pallet of machine guns to Corentin Francisco. But as they near Francisco's ship to complete the deal, they find that the pallet is empty and their employer has disappeared. Now they have to find the person who double-crossed them before Francisco finds them.

## THE PLUMBERS

The group started out with a more intimidating name, but they eventually gave in to what everyone on Ganymede calls them: the Plumbers. The Plumbers operate in the Belt and the Outer Planets, and as their name suggests, their business is water. They tap into pipes, clean up gray-water to the extent that they can, and sell it to broke Belters who can't afford to buy clean water. Their work is highly illegal, and they constantly have to move their taps and water cleaning equipment since station security takes water theft seriously. They also stay heavily armed in case of trouble, but they tend not to get into fights that they can avoid. Often, they're the ones paying protection money to other criminal organizations. Belters tend to have a positive view of the Plumbers.

### STORY HOOK: POISON IN THE WATER

Several people on Ganymede have gotten dangerously sick after buying black-market water from the Plumbers, so Pinkwater agents are after them. The Plumbers claim that their water is clean, or at least safe, and that someone is framing them. Since they can't let Pinkwater catch them without exposing their whole operation, they hire the PCs to find out who's responsible for the poisoning.

## RELIGIOUS GROUPS

Religion in the 24<sup>th</sup> century is largely unchanged. Traditions dating back thousands of years provide comfort in the face of relentless scientific advancement. The Eros Incident and subsequent footage from the surface of Venus provided incontrovertible proof that there are things beyond human ken; something greater actively shaping evolution and life. Nearly every church reported surges in attendance leading up to the formation of the Ring Gate. Now, more than ever before, mankind is questioning its place in the universe at large and its role in whatever is coming.

Theological anthropology is a lot simpler when humans are the only ones with souls.

—Abaddon's Gate

## THE MORMONS

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is one of the many religious groups based on Earth. They have a strong emphasis on education, community outreach, and both public and personal health—this has made them popular amongst both the affluent and destitute alike. More recently, the Church has expressed displeasure in the direction the UN policies are heading and opted



to fund a colony ship to take the faithful to the stars. At enormous expense, they commissioned the *LDSS Nauvoo* from Tycho Shipyards. Shortly before the ship was completed, it was hijacked by Fred Johnson and the OPA and fired like a missile into space, where it was recovered by Fred Johnson once more and declared “legitimate salvage”. The Church has filed numerous suits with Earth and Belter courts for the colony ship’s return, but the tense political situation has lead the courts to refuse to hear the case.

## POLITICS OF THE MORMON CHURCH

Many Earthers are vocal opponents of the ring gate and allowing access to the great unknown, but few have the connections or resources of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Medina Station, formerly the *Behemoth*, formerly the *LDSS Nauvoo*, was originally a Mormon colony ship. It was constructed at great expense to the church over many years and was intended to take thousands of Mormons to Tau Ceti. OPA terrorists seized this vessel after declaring it was vital to preventing the Venus incident (which they failed to do), then having the gall to not only retain it but to retrofit it as a weapon of war. What was originally intended to be a beacon to the Mormon desire to spread the Word across the stars has instead become a fixed point of oppression against that very ideal.

The Church has attempted to sue the OPA many times over this outright theft but have yet to find a court that will hear their case; Earth fears loss of access to the trade routes through the station, Mars lacks the authority, and the OPA gain immensely from keeping the station under their control. This hasn’t stopped them from filing suit after suit in the pursuit of justice.

Eventually, Mormon patience will wear thin, and they may begin exploring other options to regaining their property and gaining compensation for damages. Though the church has immense resources on Earth, they are not limitless, and the *Nauvoo* was a significant portion of it, representing nearly all of their presence in the outer planets. When this is combined with an already declining membership, it becomes of vital importance to the church to regain control of Medina Station.

### STORY HOOK: MISSION: MISSIONARY

While on Tycho station, the PCs are approached by Elders Thomas and Adam. They were set to depart on the *Nauvoo* but are unfortunately now unable to do so. They still wish to depart on a missionary trip and would like to commission the PCs to take them to Titan. They are paranoid about OPA interception after the theft of the *Nauvoo*, however, and do not wish to fly commercial or unescorted in case the same thing were to happen again. As it turns out, they are right to be paranoid—their mission is a cover story while they deliver documents showing Fred Johnson being complicit in the theft of the *Nauvoo* and alleging outright fraud and theft of the billions of UN\$ he charged the church. The OPA has a strong incentive to make sure those documents never see the light of day.

## MARTIAN ORTHODOX

When Mars was initially settled, the populace primarily identified as Chinese, Indian, and Texan. Each group brought religions of their own, but due to limited space to enact centers of worship, the religious leaders had to adapt and care for all Martians’ spiritual needs. Over generations of commingling and bonding over the shared goal of terraforming Mars, the priesthood gradually began integrating the lessons of Baptism, Hinduism, and Buddhism into a single religion suited to the people who needed it.

Martian Orthodoxy was born of the idea that every person has self agency and is entirely in charge of their own success in the physical and spiritual realms; they are beholden to educate themselves and live healthy lives to shepherd the body they were given. They do this not for personal advancement, but as a means to improve their community, planet, and eventually, the whole solar system. It is expected of practitioners that they live modestly as to not unduly drain the planet’s resources—eschewing meat, a small minimalist apartment, and a career focused around improving Mars are all important steps on the path to spiritual enlightenment.

### STORY HOOK: SHOWDOWN AT THE LONDRES NOVA CORAL

While on Mars, the PCs are visited by a Martian Orthodox Minister. On the surface, the visit is a polite check-up to see how the new arrivals are doing and offer them any needed guidance. In actuality, the minister is trying to determine their motivations and allegiances, as he needs some off-world help: a member of his congregation has admitted in confidence that they have become mixed up in some shady dealings with very bad folks (perhaps laborers at the MCRN shipyards stealing surplus ammunition for Captain Sauveterre) and don’t know how to extricate themselves. Newly arrived off-worlders poking their noses into things is the perfect cover for the minister to help without tipping his hand.

### DEVOTEES OF THE RING

Humanity watched in awe and horror as Eros guided itself into crashing on the surface of Venus. Every news story for nearly a year devoted air time to the story. When the organism took off and left to become the Ring just beyond Uranus, humanity once again watched and held its collective breath, cognizant of this monumental moment in history. For some, just watching wasn't enough. This was a sign—indisputable proof of a greater power, something monumental, ancient, and unknowable, enacting its will.

This belief started as a joke among nihilistic Belters on the float, a synonym for the ubiquitous technical gremlins every rock hopper houses. As the joke spread, it took hold in more and more minds, and people began to wonder anew how everything has changed—and how nothing anyone thought mattered actually did. The only thing that matters now, the only higher power that's actually proven to exist... is whatever force was behind the Ring.

Now, decentralized groups have taken to worshiping this force. Their faith is made stronger with each ship reportedly vanishing during a ring transition and by every claim of weird dreams by those on Medina Station. They believe that only by sussing out this force's true intentions, and helping carry them out, will this great power be appeased.

### ALLIANCES AND OFFSHOOTS

The Devotees of the Ring are as splintered a group as the OPA, with sub-factions and differing tenets in every port, as it hasn't been around long enough to establish and codify itself. The main shared belief is in the superiority of the Ring architects; every branch interprets their motives and desires differently, and even within each branch there are divides over how best to proceed. The Architects are, after all, an ancient, unknowable entity with powers beyond current human understanding.

Ring Devotees are also generally wary of announcing their beliefs to outsiders due to the media's labeling them as a "cult" following one member's attempts to charge exorbitant fees in exchange for "the truth." In practice, this makes it difficult to tell who is actually a member of the organization. Following conviction after the Io Campaign, a few former Mao-Kwikowski Mercantile members were found to have affiliated with the Devotees of the Ring in prison, which furthered the bad press.

#### STORY HOOK: A WHISPER IN THE DARKNESS

A small freighter has just returned from beyond the Ring, having made the long journey to deliver soil and farming substrates to the Auberon colony at a substantial markup. The ship then passed through Medina Station customs to return to Sol, but it vanished for months, only appearing when the PCs come across it adrift in deep space with a weakly broadcasting distress beacon. Inside, the captain's log has been purged, the crew has all been killed horrifically, and there's a macabre message written in blood warning against intersystem travel. Despite the gruesome scene, cursory examination suggests everything was self-inflicted!

The ship was recently discovered by a Belter mining consortium. They want to claim the freighter as legitimate salvage, but the nature of their discoveries has the crews freaked out and seeking a professional opinion.

Investigation reveals medical logs suggesting that some crew members began experiencing auditory and visual hallucinations after returning from the Ring. As the investigation continues, two concurrent threads begin to unravel. One suggests that the freighter came afoul of the unknowable presence the Devotees speak of, and that this knowledge drove the crew mad. The second thread shows more mundane causes: a dip in oxygen pressure leading to hypoxia, faulty wiring in the ship's internal speaker system, and the airlock showing evidence it was accessed from the outside! It's up to the crew to determine if this ship ran afoul of gremlins or something less natural.





## HUMANITARIAN AID

One of the key components of establishing a society is the pooling of resources to take care of its constituent members. Now, humanity has more resources than they have ever had before, the highest average standard of living, and the highest population by far. Statistically, this means the bottom percentage, the groups needing the most help, are also, unfortunately, the largest in history. Numerous groups have evolved to tend to these people, be they living on Basic Assistance in the slums of New Detroit or Belter rockhoppers who can't afford the refueling bill.

"And the moral high ground is a lovely place," Marwick said, as if he were agreeing. "It won't stop a missile, though."

—*Cibola Burn*

## CHURCH OF HUMANITY ASCENDANT

Like many religions, the Church of Humanity Ascendant asks its members to be the best they can possibly be. They also believe this applies physically. They encourage members to improve themselves spiritually through extensive charity work and activism and physically through gene therapy and biomechanical implants and prostheses. They eschew supernaturalism very loudly and often, instead insisting that mankind should focus on individual efforts at self-improvement rather than a higher power. Their theology, in essence, is: "Humans can be better than they are, so let's do that."

Missionaries and monks of the Church of Humanity Ascendant can be seen all over the Sol system in their distinctive loose orange robes from Earth to Ganymede, even establishing delegates aboard Medina Station after arriving from aboard the *UNN Thomas Prince*.

### STORY HOOK: BLOCKADE BUSTERS

The PCs are contracted for a smuggling job. Relief supplies—medicine, food, quick shelters—are desperately needed at the site of a recent disaster. Depending on where your group is in the timeline, this could be Phobos after the Deimos incident, Ganymede, somewhere beyond the ring, or even Boston. Regardless, each location is quickly cordoned off by their respective navies and put in a blockade to control traffic—it's this blockade that the Church representative wants the PCs to slip past to deliver the supplies to an organizer at the site. Once the PCs arrive, they find gang activity has sprung up that would very dearly like to claim the relief cargo for themselves!

## HUMANKIND UNITED

Though headquartered in Buenos Aires, Earth, Humankind United views itself as an intrasystem organization that doesn't recognize the distinctions between Earthers, Martians, or Belters. In theory, the organization is available to provide aid to anyone struggling from an Earther on basic to the furthest rockhopper. In practice, the organization struggles to find volunteers to the more distant ports, and the PR isn't as great so close to home, so they operate primarily out of Ganymede and Ceres with the occasional-but-notable trip to pre-incident Eros.

The group's primary focus is to raise the standard of living across the system. They do this by donating and distributing medical supplies, food, hydroponics equipment, prefabricated shelters, and small scale fabricators.

### SIMILAR ORGANIZATIONS

Outside of Humankind United, there are many other relief groups operating in the Sol system. There are government-sponsored projects like United Nations Relief, anti-hunger organizations like Terraform Your Home!, and medical outreach groups like the BBB—Birthing Better Belters—whose doctors try and combat the negative effects of zero-g pregnancy and its deleterious effects during infancy.

### STORY HOOK: HOSTILE EXTRACTION

A doctor and her staff have been running a clinic in the slums of Baltimore for the inhabitants on Basic for several months. Recently, she's stopped checking in with her Humankind United liaison, and they have grown worried that a local gang might have taken over the clinic for their own nefarious purposes. Humankind United needs someone to infiltrate the slums, determine the status of the doctor, and extract her back to Luna, if necessary.

## POLITICAL ACTIVISTS

There are only so many seats in a world's parliament or senate, with many more people wishing to influence the decisions these governments make. There are countless lobbyists vying for leverage and favor. Their methods range from mundane fundraising to outright bribery and even espionage. There are multiple of such groups working on the UN, the Martian Parliament, and within the OPA— wherever you find a congregation of influential people, you'll find someone trying to influence their decisions.

### THE FAR HORIZONS FOUNDATION

The Far Horizons Foundation sprang into existence on the campus of the prestigious Lovell University on Luna. Luna has always been a symbolic union between those who live in Earth's gravity well and those on the float; this micro-culture combined with university students thinking on their own (and perhaps as rebellion against affluent parents) lead to the formation of a Belter equality group. The FH Foundation's goal is to end the marginalization of those working hardest for humanity's survival—those beltters who live lifestyles below even Earth Basic but are essential in harvesting the minerals, farming the food, and manning the factories and shipyard that make interplanetary life possible. Being founded by affluent Inner students, this is officially a fund raising group aimed at providing legal services to those Belters who have been identified as unfairly caught in the churn.

### ALLIANCES AND OFFSHOOTS

Being a student-lead activist group, there is little standardization in how they approach things. As students graduate, or travel for assignments or leisure, they often develop pet projects and petition the board for funding. This has led to all sorts of connections with various groups and many notable names in the Belt such as Fred Johnson and Marcos Inaros.

The FHF isn't a militant organization, instead encouraging its members to spend time in the Belt slumming it to see how the Belters live. This has led to several members wishing to get more involved and potentially radicalizing, but it is not officially the stance of the group as that would jeopardize the financial avenues available from students' parents, likely leading to the university itself cracking down on membership.

#### STORY HOOK: INJUSTICE SERVED

While conducting an interlude, the PCs are witness to a crime: a Belter getting mugged. Star Helix (or Pinkwater) watch and laugh, taking bets. The PCs are later approached by a representative of the Far Horizons Foundation — they want to hire the PCs to dig up dirt on the cops that the foundation can use in a lawsuit... or blackmail.

## ON THE FRINGE

With every society, there are those who don't fit in. On Earth, illegal births known as the unregistered live off the grid and are forced to extreme measures to survive. On Mars, disaffected youth who don't buy into the war machine and are too lazy or unwilling to apply themselves to terraforming are invited to leave the planet to gain perspective on the Belt. Belter society doesn't allow for misfits as the entire crew must rely on one another for survival on the float; it takes an extreme act to excommunicate a Belter, which means a Belter on the fringe of society is likely someone worthy of caution.

### SURVIVALISTS

One of the draws of the Belt for those born in gravity wells is the call of freedom, to truly live under your own rules and make it on humanity's latest frontier. Some, infatuated with this idea, strike out and discover that Ceres and Eros and Ganymede are all miniaturized variants of life on Earth or Mars and aren't as free as they would like. These people take it a step further, truly striking out on their own.

Most of the asteroids in the belt are under a kilometer in diameter. These rocks are too small to sustain a real settlement but are spacious enough for a smaller multi-family commune. Rockhoppers who despise living under anyone else's rule have been known to band together to purchase atmospheric scrubbers and prefab buildings, then using their ships' mining



equipment to carve tunnels into these smaller asteroids to create off-the-book, uncharted homes. While these are rarely self-sufficient, the same drive that leads people to create these bunkers tends to cause them to stock it with plenty of emergency supplies, making them perfect to hunker down in.

These survivalists tend to have very tribal and xenophobic outlooks. This doesn't help the public perception that most of these communes are actually pirate safe houses.

#### STORY HOOK: OBTAINING UNOBTANIUM

Belter miners believe they have found a jackpot: One of their survey vessels found an unclaimed asteroid in the belt with dense rhodium deposits worth an absolute fortune at any shipyard. However, when their team arrived to extract this ore, they discovered squatters had carved an elaborate tunnel system and built-in permanent structures with their own life support systems...and a radio antenna. While the antenna is being jammed now, they can't risk the public outcry of mining the asteroid with the inhabitants still in it, and all the tunnels would make sending in security forces a costly endeavor. The Belter miners are in need of some independent contractors (who can't be traced back to them!) to "negotiate" on their behalf.

## THE MAW

In any frontier or culture, piracy and banditry is an unwelcome but ever-present fact of life. The MCRN and UNN patrol their trade routes with cutting-edge destroyers, and the OPA extract hefty "protection" fees to promise safety. Even so, space is vast, and patrol ships are still limited in their response time to the g forces their crews can endure. Pirates in the age of Epstein drives generally prefer to work as quickly as possible and under the safety net of radio jammers to try and minimize security response times. There's a fine line between operating so far into deep space it's not profitable and too close to a major trade route that you risk naval interception. A small flotilla styling themselves The Maw have figured out this operation almost flawlessly and have worked themselves up from being petty nuisances and insurance justifications to being declared an outright menace.

Earth and Mars both have tried to label The Maw as OPA extremists; however, the major OPA factions vehemently deny this and cite Belter ships being targeted as well. Regardless, all factions can agree the group is bad news and bad for business. They target passenger vessels and cargo ships without distinction to sell what they can and jettison the rest.

#### STORY HOOK: PIRACY PROBLEMS

Medina Station, and the Ring itself, pushed mankind's travel patterns into deeper space than ever before. The Earth-Mars Coalition Navy protects the Ring itself, but there's still a large section of empty space between Saturn and Uranus that has infrequent patrols. A Mankind United mission has been assembled to establish a clinic for would-be colonists passing through Medina Station, but they fear having their medical supplies fall prey to the Free Navy or such on the way. They have chartered the PCs' ship to protect them (or to do the transporting itself) as a safety net for the long journey.

Medical Supplies, and even more the doctors and surgeons that know how to use them, are a prime target for The Maw; the whole expedition would likely fetch a high price for an unscrupulous new colony on the other side of the Ring gate!



## 2. STATIONS

**T**here are perhaps thousands of stations throughout the solar system, ranging in size from small, isolated stations that contain a few people to huge stations like Tycho that are home to thousands of people and thousands more transients. This section details a handful of these stations.

### LAGRANGE STATIONS

A common location for space stations is within a planetary body's Lagrange points, which are areas where the gravitational forces from nearby planetary bodies cancel each other out. These points are important to spacecraft and habitats because in such a place, an object can maintain a fixed position relative to the nearby planetary bodies with little or no need to correct its position or speed.

Each pair of major bodies has five Lagrange points: three along the line that connects the two bodies (called L1, L2, and L3), plus two more (L4 and L5) that lie 60 degrees ahead and behind the path of the orbiting body. The latter two are much more stable—and larger—than the other three, so this is where most of the Lagrange stations are located. It is also notable that their stability causes L4 and L5 to collect asteroids, dust, and other space debris, which can result in navigational hazards—or unusual finds.

While each Lagrange point is indeed literally a point (of infinitesimal size), the effect of gravitational balance extends throughout a larger zone around each point, sort of like an island of gravitational stability. In the case of the Sun-Earth Lagrange points, these zones are about 800,000 kilometers wide. This means that, despite the fact that L4 and L5 each contain numerous satellites and habitats, most of these would be unable to see each other without a telescope.

The stations under discussion here are located specifically in the Earth-Moon system's Lagrange points. These are the ones commonly called “the Lagrange stations,” even though that name could technically apply to stations built in the Lagrange points of the Sun-Earth system, or the Sun-Mars system.

In the case of the Sun-Earth Lagrange system, L1 is between Earth and the sun, about 1.5 million kilometers from Earth, and always in view of the sun. L2 is on the other side of the Earth, at the same distance as L1, always hidden from the sun. L3 is

Bobbie had thought that Mao Station was the most ludicrous display of conspicuous wealth she'd ever seen right up until they boarded the yacht.

—*Persepolis Rising*



on the far side of the sun from the planet, forever invisible from Earth. L4 is “ahead” of the Earth on its orbital path, while L5 is the same distance “behind” Earth’s orbit.

What the numerous Lagrange stations have in common are their stable locations and the fact that most operate under spin gravity. Beyond that, the Lagrange stations can be wildly different from each other, from who owns them (governments, corporations, or even wealthy individuals) to what they’re used for (such as defense, repair facilities, entertainment, military operations, private use, or numerous other purposes).

A sizeable population lives in the Lagrange stations full-time, and an even larger number of people travel there regularly from their homes on Earth or Luna, either to work in the stations or make use of their services. Living on some of these stations is akin to living in the Belt, in that luxury items are often prohibitively expensive, including water and Earth-grown food. In addition, most Lagrange stations were established with a relatively low spin gravity. Neither of these conditions is universal, however, and Lagrange stations exist that feature food, decorations, activities, and even gravitational pull reminiscent of Earth. It’s just that someone has to pay for those privileges, and the people willing to do so tend to live closer to Earth than the Belt.

People who commute to and from the Lagrange stations have a travel time of more than a day (for the more popular L4 and L5 points), so most regular travelers maintain a schedule where they alternate a few days at the station with a few days at home. Stations at L1 and L2 are easier to visit from Earth, being only a few hours away. L3 is the farthest away, being on the far side of the sun, and does not make for a popular destination.

## NOTABLE LAGRANGE STATIONS

This section details just a few of the many stations located at the Sun-Earth Lagrange points.

### ADITYA-L1

One of the few L1 stations in current operation, Aditya-L1 is a small uncrewed solar observatory that has been functional for over 200 years. Aditya’s primary mission is to study the sun’s chromosphere, corona, and photosphere. Recently, observers on Luna who interpret Aditya’s data detected what seems to be unusual movement in the chromosphere, but most specialists believe this is a glitch in the satellite’s ancient observation systems.

### APPLIED BIOGENESIS

The small, obscure research station run by the corporation of the same name is working to produce life by using the building blocks of organic matter. Its director, Dr. Nola Stanisława, says that in the past, their research has been regarded as dangerous, which drove the decision to move their workspace into orbit. The station has had a measure of success recently with a microorganism engineered to scrub radiation from contaminated engine cores, and Stanisława is excited about the potential for the lab’s upcoming line of engineered insects.

### COMM RELAY 12

Provided as a public service by the United Nations, this is one of many small stations that have the important job of relaying tightbeam communications. They work by receiving transmission lasers sent by distant ships, stations, and planetary senders and rebroadcasting them to the intended recipients. Relay stations are normally not staffed, though they feature habitable areas as well as automated PDCs to keep out unauthorized visitors.

### COUNTER-EARTH

This L3 habitat is named for the long-time theoretical idea of a planet orbiting in Earth’s orbit on the exact opposite side of the sun (which is pretty close to where L3 is). What’s going on inside this spherical station is a mystery—it is registered to a new low-profile company named Counter-Earth Incorporated that had the station constructed in almost complete secrecy. Ads have recently begun appearing on entertainment feeds announcing the opening of Counter-Earth, “coming soon!”

### DARKSIDE POINT

One of the few permanent habitats at L2, Darkside Point started out as an observatory and ended up as a popular bar. L2 is the Lagrange point on the other side of the Earth, away from the sun. Most notably, the station is uniquely positioned because it’s mostly shielded from solar radiation, making it well-suited for interstellar observation using infrared means. Less than a year after it was established, the station (which was once known as Observatory Laplace-Epsilon) became known for one of its astronomers’ station-brewed beer, and ships started visiting for this reason. The station still performs astronomical work, but now, two of its former labs have been converted into a large serving area, and the station’s brewmaster, Hector Choi, divides his time between studying the stars and perfecting low-gravity brewing techniques.

### FUTUREVEG HABITAT

One of the largest corporations involved in extraterrestrial food production built this habitat to test out new growing

methods and technologies, all involving varieties of vegetable and fungal life. Recently, one surprising result has been a new strain of fungus that has developed a rudimentary system of locomotion, which seems to become more advanced with each generation. The company sells discounted foodstuffs to nearby habitats, in part to generate goodwill and in part to keep surplus food from going to waste. The new “walking fungus” is not a part of these discount packages as of yet—not intentionally, anyway.

#### MAO STATION

Jules-Pierre Mao, co-owner of Mao-Kwikowski Mercantile, owned this extravagant private habitat at Lagrange point L5. This station served as Mao’s personal interplanetary hangar, where he kept his small fleet of private spacecraft. Mao Station was expensively furnished and ostentatiously decorated, but it also worked as a fully-functional and well-staffed supply and repair facility.

#### LAGRANGE REPAIRS

These two sister stations offer spacecraft repairs, one at L4 and the other at L5. Station management rents out facilities to most major corporations in the business of spaceship parts or repair, and the competition between this variety of providers helps keep costs reasonable. However, at times, the competition becomes especially cutthroat, and it’s not unusual for customers to be caught in the usually-figurative crossfire, as one company tries to sabotage another’s repair components, use non-standard parts that only a particular company sells, or use hired muscle to intimidate customers away from their main competitors.

#### L-5 FEEDS

This small station manages the transmission of several dozen news and entertainment feeds that go out to both the Innies and the Belt. Most of the feeds are produced on Earth, but a few are made right here on the station, with one beamed in by a lone water hauler whose folksy audio musings managed to capture the attention of listeners. The station has feeds dedicated to current events, colony news, sports, celebrity gossip, recipes, AI-generated fiction, technology trends, Belt-oriented soap operas, and more.

#### L-VEGAS

One of the hotspots of L-4, L-Vegas is a massive, multi-level spinning ring filled with facilities for gambling, drinking, dining, shopping, and otherwise enjoying off-planet hedonistic pleasures. Some superstitious high-rollers insist that the dice are more favorable in L-Vegas’s lower gravity than they are back on Earth. Other, less lucky gamblers have difficulty affording the trip back down the gravity well. The management of this station has deep pockets, a fact that shows in the quality of the furnishings, décor, food, and live

## OTHER LAGRANGE STATIONS

Most of what are considered “the Lagrange stations” are in the Lagrange points of the Sun-Earth system. However, other planets have large Lagrange zones as well, and some of them hold satellites and habitats. Here are a few noteworthy ones.

#### JOVIAN DISTRIBUTION (SUN-JUPITER L5)

With the most sizeable Lagrange zones in the system (at 2 billion kilometers each), as well as plenty of usable moons, Jupiter is an inviting space for Lagrange stations. One station already in use is the Jovian Distribution habitat, a large facility that handles the logistics of sending exports from the Jovian System—like food from Ganymede and minerals from Callisto—to where they are needed. The distribution station also houses a substantial black market operation that “distributes” additional items, including weapons, medical supplies, and stolen data.

#### MCRN-L4B (SUN-MARS L4)

This Martian military base is mainly used for training soldiers to operate in microgravity. A rumor also persists that classified weapons testing takes place here. Station MCRN-L4A also appears on the registry of Lagrange stations, but it lacks all information about the station’s purpose or capabilities.

#### VENUS OBSERVER (SUN-VENUS L1)

This uncrewed observation post was put in place after the Eros Incident when the protomolecule began its mysterious construction on Venus. It makes constant recordings of the planet, and the station’s AI can focus on specific areas of interest based on pre-set criteria (such as sudden movement, specific patterns of spectral analysis, and the appearance of objects that might be artificial).

entertainment. Still, you don’t have to be wealthy to visit L-Vegas, as it also caters to a sizeable “economy” clientele, who are offered rooms and food that would be hard to distinguish from those on Ceres, except for the higher spin gravity (0.4 g).

#### PROSERPINA STARWORKS 7A

Popularly known as Sunflare station, this facility is a shipyard currently dedicated to the production of the company’s popular Sunflare series of racing spacecraft. Proserpina Starworks sponsors an annual race beyond L5 that is well-attended by both celebrity racers and those new to the sport.

#### RCE-L4

Royal Charter Energy (RCE) uses this station as a staging point for their research expeditions throughout the system and later beyond the rings. After the discovery of the ring station, RCE rapidly shifted their focus from colonizing moons in the solar system to doing so in the newly-available systems. This station helps in that goal by serving as a logistical hub, stockpiling colony materials outside the gravity well where colony ships can converge, take on supplies, and depart for their new worlds.



## SOLAR SYSTEM TOURS

One popular way for vacationers to explore Sol System is by taking a shuttle up to this station and going on a multi-leg tour of the system. Tour packages can accommodate numerous stops within the solar system and may last between few days to six weeks or more. A current popular circuit includes L4, L5, Luna, and Mars, and some travelers add on a visit to Ceres or Tycho Station.

## SPACEMALL

One of the nichest of niche shopping venues, this station combines small stores from several Earth corporations that offer goods useful for travelers going between the inner planets, or between the Inners and the Belt. Spacemall offers fuel, food, vac suits, tools, small electronics, bedding suitable for shipboard bunks, and other items of that nature. The food sold here includes both the vat-grown variety and a few moderately-expensive items shipped up from Earth, such as fruits and vegetables.

## THE HAPPIEST PLACE OFF EARTH

Catering to vacationers who have high disposable income but little desire to go on an actual adventure, this popular theme park offers intricately-designed rides, on-stage celebrity performances, a variety of dining options, and a general air of being pampered while enjoying cartoonish entertainment. Some of the rides here are placid appeals to nostalgia

and history, while the rest are thrill rides that make clever use of g-forces. The most famous ride is the Corkscrew Comet, a roller coaster that zips around the outside of the station. Entire decks on the station are devoted to recreating environments from Earth and Mars, using a combination of practical and visual effects—the “Belt Simulator” being a popular example. Dining opportunities at the park range from nostalgic classics like fried tofu sticks to high-end restaurants serving real meat and vegetables prepared by famous chefs. Nearly every experience at the park is accompanied by the ever-present character drones, robots that look like human-sized cartoon animals. The character drones sing, dance, talk to guests, serve food, run errands, and frequently engage in cartoon-like fights with each other.

## VAN LEEUWEN RESIDENCE

This is the personal residence of Charles van Leeuwen, a wealthy recluse who relocated to this point at L3—on the far side of the sun—to achieve his dream of living as far from Earth as he could while still being able to receive occasional supply shipments. Van Leeuwen also finds it appealing that he cannot even receive transmissions from his former home planet. (When Mars’s orbit takes it near L3, some Martians attempt to communicate with van Leeuwen, but he has so far ignored them all.) Fortunately for van Leeuwen’s privacy, the only other major habitat at L3, the new Counter-Earth station, is several thousand kilometers away and has not even attempted contact so far.

## CERES

As mentioned in **Chapter 10** of *The Expanse Roleplaying Game*, Ceres Station is the port city of the Belt, home to more than six million residents. No other city in the Belt rivals its size or population. Enormous reaction drives, built into the rock of Ceres (and Eros), required more than a decade to build up and perfect a spin that produced the centrifugal force we call spin gravity. The station, built by Tycho Manufacturing and Engineering Concern, is under the surface of the asteroid Ceres, consisting of a webwork of underground tunnels—tens of thousands of kilometers’ worth—laid out in multiple layers.

Most of the people living on Ceres are Belters under contract with an Earth or Mars corporation. Some Belters resent the thought of a station run primarily by Belters for the benefit of the inner planets, seeing the place as a symbol of old-fashioned colonialism. Earth news dominates the feeds, Earth vids are the primary entertainment, and attempts at replicating Earth meals with vat-grown foodstuffs is commonplace.

A thousand ships dock at Ceres every day, carrying people and all manner of raw materials, food, and manufactured goods necessary for use on Ceres or more distant ports. Because of the bustling activity of the station’s ports, about a million visitors are on the station at any given time.

Besides the inhabitants, people all over the Belt and beyond rely on Ceres Station for a variety of factors, most notably as a distribution hub for materials of all sorts. It’s also a relay point for tightbeam transmissions to and from just about anywhere in the system, producing or retransmitting numerous feeds of information or entertainment.

## THE PEOPLE OF CERES STATION

Ceres Station is mostly populated by Belters, though a significant number of Earthers and even a few Martians live and work here, too. Before the Eros incident, the station was governed by the UN, but after the Eros Incident, it was handed over to the OPA, with Anderson Dawes as governor.

The circle of life on Ceres was so small  
you could see the curve.

—*Leviathan Wakes*



### ORGANIZATIONS

Two of Ceres Station's most well-known groups are the following.

#### ORGANIZED CRIME

This is not a single organization, of course, but a variety of criminal families and gangs that call Ceres home. Notable criminal groups include the Aryan Flyers, the Golden Bough Society, the Hand, Loca Greiga, and Sohiro's Crew. Some specialize in a single type of activity (as the Golden Bough do with protection rackets), while others are equal opportunity offenders.

#### STAR HELIX SECURITY

Crime is common on Ceres, and Star Helix is here to keep it manageable. This private security company served as the station's police force until the Eros incident. Their primary station house took up several levels and two square kilometers of internal space, starting three levels down from the asteroid's surface. During the handover of Ceres Station to the OPA, Star Helix pulled out of Ceres, with the new governor, Anderson Dawes, now organizing his own security forces.

### STATION FEATURES

Standing inside Ceres Station, a person can hear and feel the vibrations coming from docking activity, the functioning of the reactor core, the flow of water and air through endless recycling tubes, and the movement of more than six million people. It's warm and humid, and the air has the astringent smell of endless recycling, except when dominated by the other scents of Ceres, like curry, carbon lubricant, and sweat. It's also noisy from countless voices and machines and music.

Like most spin stations, the centrifugal gravity is a light 0.3 g. The gravity is greatest at the outer edge (the "lower" levels) and lowest at the core (the "upper" levels). The reverse is true about the Coriolis effect. Lights are kept at the same level throughout the day; the station had experimented with an artificial day/night cycle when it first opened, but this proved unpopular.

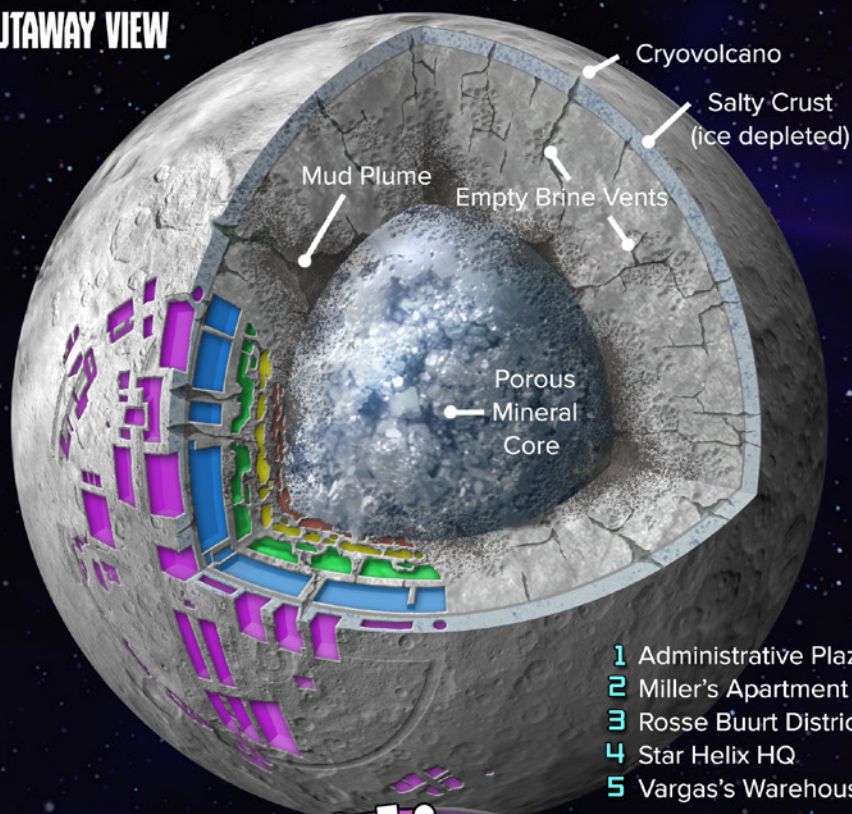
Several different schemes of internal navigation are in use on the station. First, the station is divided into radial sectors, each with a number. Second, the levels of the station are also numbered. Some areas of the station are given a district name, such as the Salutorg District, especially when the area is notable for some specific feature. Finally, residents refer to directions relative to the station's spin as "spinward" (in the direction of the asteroid's spin) and "anti-spinward" (the other way).

Corridors tend to be wide, in some places as wide as ten meters across. They have a gentle slope in both directions, reflecting the small size of the asteroid as compared to a planet. Some corridors are the plain off-white color of the spray-on insulation foam used to cover the bare rock of the carved-out tunnels, while others are painted in earth tones, or primary colors, or covered in ads or graffiti. Floors are commonly the polished stone of the asteroid.



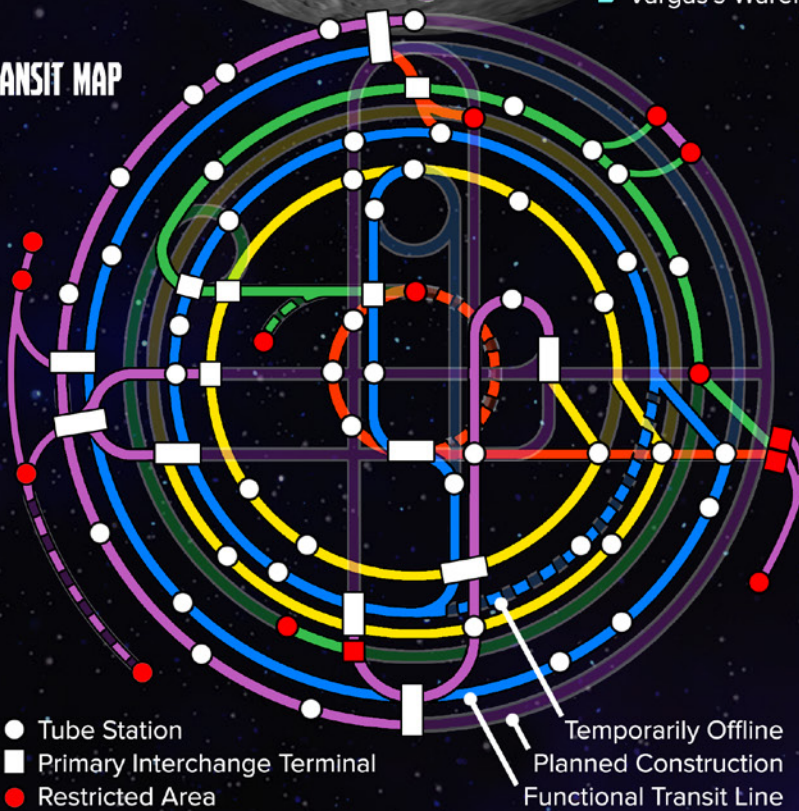


## CUTAWAY VIEW



- 1 Administrative Plaza
- 2 Miller's Apartment
- 3 Rosse Buurt District
- 4 Star Helix HQ
- 5 Vargas's Warehouse

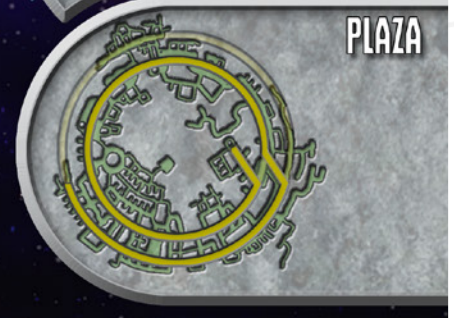
## TRANSIT MAP



## CENTRAL



## PLAZA



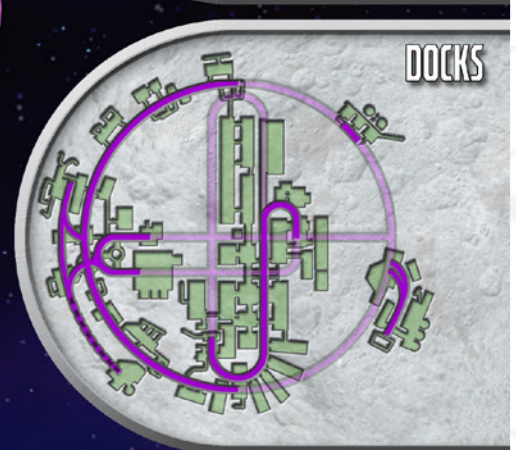
## MEDINA



## MIDTOWN



## DOCKS



## CERES STATION



## GOVERNOR'S MANSION AND ADMINISTRATION COMPLEX

Also known as the “governor’s palace,” the “governor’s quarters,” or the “governmental quarter” (depending on who you ask), this ritzy administrative area is located out near the surface of the station and extends several levels deep. The complex features gardens, fountains, walking paths under arched ceilings, sculpted stone walls with recessed lighting, columns decorated with ivy and ferns, and pillars that appear to be made of sedimentary rock from Earth. The entire area smells like living plants and soil, and shops in this area are of the high-priced variety.

## RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The living spaces of Ceres feature décor and amenities intended to be soothing to the inhabitants, especially Earthers who grew up under natural sunlight and a vast blue sky. These areas commonly feature vaulted blue ceilings and artfully concealed lighting in warm sun-tones. Residential tunnels can be as wide as a hundred meters, often devoting half of that space in the center to parks containing carefully cultivated grass and plant life. Just as in a terrestrial city, children run and play and even fly kites in these spacious areas.

Residences here are commonly called “holes,” varying widely in size, quality, and price. Some are even located in the excavated caverns that housed the massive engines used to spin the asteroid up. In addition to size and location differences, the ability to perfume the air can do a lot to distinguish one home from another; popular scents and semipheromones include coffee, cinnamon, apple, baking bread, floral scents (with names such as EarthLily). (Unscented areas, by comparison, have the astringent smell of air that’s been recycled millions of times.)

## “UPPER” LEVELS

As with any asteroid that has been spun up to produce spin gravity, “up” on Ceres is toward the center of the asteroid. The closer one gets to the asteroid’s center, the lower the gravity and the greater the Coriolis effect (which can make people unsteady and nauseated). These “upper” levels of Ceres are not commonly visited by tourists, a fact reflected in the grime of the tunnels, the harsh white LED lighting, and the occasional signs of disrepair. Low-rent holes are available for rent in the upper levels, characterized by stone walls, furniture repurposed from retired ships, and straps to keep you from drifting out of bed while you sleep.

## TRANSPORTATION

Since Ceres is more of a city than a mere space station, getting from point to point is a bigger undertaking than simply walking there or taking a lift. Luckily, residents and visitors have several options.

### SMALL VEHICLES

Electric carts and bicycles are common ways of getting around inside the station, and both are available for rent or purchase.

### TUBE STATIONS

Subterranean tube cars are another popular way to get around the station. The cars are round and windowless, displaying screens with news or entertainment instead of the featureless stone a passenger would see if they could view the carved-out tube walls three centimeters beyond the skin of the car. Tube stations are numerous, often crowded, smell like oil and ozone, and feature stone benches for waiting passengers.

## AMENITIES

Only the largest stations have the space, resources, and population to support features like the hotels, universities, parks, and similar amenities present on Ceres. Examples include some of the following.

**CERES CENTER FOR JIU JITSU** This is a popular martial arts academy, catering equally to residents who want to learn self-defense and professional combatants. The center is located near the port level, with the stronger gravity considered better for training. Built out of a converted storage area, the dojo features a central mat surrounded by workout machines, punching bags, and racks of practice weapons.



**CERES MINING AND TECH UNIVERSITY** This technical school has been around nearly as long as Ceres Station itself. In addition to instruction on mining techniques and technology, CMTU features several departments in other disciplines, including a well-respected biosciences lab. CMTU has a friendly rivalry with Ceres Polytech, especially in the area of high-energy physics.

**THE UPPER CRUST HOTEL** The priciest hotel on Ceres Station, the Upper Crust features its own casino, a high-end restaurant, a VIP lounge that serves actual scotch from Earth, multiple entertainment stages, and suites of rooms that are as expansive as they are expensive. As its name suggests, the Upper Crust Hotel is located near the surface of Ceres, giving it the benefit of proximity to the docks as well as the strongest gravity.

## THE DOCKS

Ceres Station's docks run along the asteroid's equator, visible as a band of steel, titanium, and ceramics. Pilots must compensate for Ceres's rotation when docking, but the good news is that once a ship is moored to the station, it gains the benefit of the asteroid's spin gravity. Each sector on the station can accommodate 20 docks, and each dock has multiple berths.

Inside the docks, mechs, cranes, and stevedores move cargo about; people buy tickets and meet arriving family members and hail electric cart drivers; and the smells of lubricants, ozone, piss, and old food intermingle. The activity never stops here, where a thousand ships might be docked at the same time. The docks also never quite get clean, perpetually displaying a layer of dockside grunge that cleaning solutions and air scrubbers cannot overcome.

Bright LED screens near the docks advertise the numerous amenities nearby. Lodgings range from coffin hotels to high-end establishments. Bars and cafes and snack kiosks sell food and drink of just about every type. Automated booths convert currency or display newsfeeds or treat minor injuries. And a large flight board lists arrivals and departures and the availability of tickets for short-range shuttles and longer-flight ships leaving the station.

## ENTERTAINMENT

The entertainment options on Ceres are similar to those on other large stations, though there are more of them. More brothels, casinos, and sporting events. More poetry clubs and shooting galleries and running groups. And many more bars and restaurants.

## BARS

Though the Ceres bar scene is diverse, thanks to the size of the population, one commonality between many of the pubs, bars, and union halls on the station is the quality of their fermented yeast-based alcoholic drinks. Belters have learned from experience that such brews can produce subtle and varied results. A popular example is moss whiskey, made on Ceres from specially engineered yeast. A few well-known establishments on Ceres are:

**THE BLUE FROG** This popular port bar is a replica of a famous bar in Mumbai, India and caters to the large number of travelers that visit the station each day. The place is usually crowded, noisy, and intentionally warm, simulating Mumbai's temperature and even its air pollution. Lights flash, bhangra music blares, and over it all, customers order food, drinks, drugs, and prostitutes.



**THE DISTINGUISHED HYACINTH LOUNGE** Located three levels up from the docks, residents of Ceres know this as a cop bar, popular with both station security and corporate security forces. The lounge is run by Javier Liu III, grandson of its first owner, an engineer who had helped spin up Ceres and took a liking to the place. The lounge's décor reflects previous generations as well, including tables and chairs set into the wall and ceiling for periods of low gravity (no longer possible since Ceres was spun up), with walls and columns adorned with snake plant and devil's ivy, traditionally used to supplement air recycling.

**TAPPAN'S BAR** This rough-and-tumble Belter bar is at the other end of the spectrum from the pubs that are popular with police and security forces. Tappan's is popular for its pool tables, its black economy under-the-table deals, and its hotheaded clientele.

## RESTAURANTS

Though Ceres Station is located firmly in the Belt, its origins as a corporate construct of the Inners greatly influences the menu at most eateries, at least until the takeover by the OPA. Rice, noodles, vegetables, fungus products, and fake meat are always popular, but over time, Belter staples like red kibble and dhejet became ubiquitous.

Dockside offerings include numerous kiosks, snack machines, and quick-service restaurants, many of which are corporate outlets like Spin Shack and Pizza Vat. The docks offer a few fancier joints, but the emphasis in the area is certainly on fast food.

The rest of the station is more varied. Food kiosks (automated and otherwise) are still common on all levels of all sectors, but so are restaurants all along the continuum from casual noodle bars to fancy establishments that import genuine meat from Earth. Coffee bars are popular all over, and the high ceilings in residential areas have led to the popularity of open, "outdoor" cafés.

## SHOPPING

Ceres Station has an abundant supply of places to spend your Ceres new yen. Whether you're a resident looking for groceries or new shoes, or you're a traveler simply stretching your legs at the station before journeying to Eros or the Inners or elsewhere, Ceres has it all—and more. High-end shopping is mostly available around the governmental quarter, while more economical trade (including gray market deals) can happen just about anywhere.

**GUN UP** This shop is popular among personal weapon aficionados, as well as anyone who needs to buy a gun or knife or have one repaired. Gun Up has both new and used items in stock and can also upgrade weapons in a variety of ways.

**TOYS BY CHO** This is the most popular toy store on Ceres for kids and adults alike. The toy spaceship line always sells well, especially the ones that can fly. Drones made to look like Earth animals have recently become popular pets for all ages.

**WAREHOUSE 35-B** Most savvy black-economy shoppers do their clandestine buying and selling at this disused warehouse near the center of spin, "Where the gravity is low and so are the prices!" The woman in charge is Ilina Volova, an established fence with a reputation for both good stock and quirky behavior. If the item you need is on Ceres, and you can both afford it and entertain Volova with a tale from your journeys, then it's yours.

## LIFE SUPPORT / INFRASTRUCTURE

Facilities designed to keep Ceres Station functional and habitable run throughout the station. Many of them are concentrated at the station's core (the "upper" levels), such as the reactor cores and water reclamation works, but some thread everywhere, including air scrubbers, ventilation fans, water pipes, security cameras, and temperature control modulators. Critical areas have maintenance hatches that workers can use to get into the spaces behind the tunnels.

While some food is imported from Earth and Ganymede and Europa, doing so is expensive, so most food needs are met by station-grown products. Ceres grows most of this in various hydroponic fields distributed throughout the station, producing a regular crop of fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Yeasts and fungus-related foodstuffs grow elsewhere on the station in massive vats.



## MEDICAL FACILITIES

Ceres Station has numerous medical facilities, ranging from back-corridor chop shops to gleaming, cutting-edge hospitals that are some of the best in the Belt. At the low end, a patient will be lucky to heal up from a wound without a permanent limp or some other complication, while the better facilities can efficiently replace or regenerate lost limbs or organs. (As mentioned in **Medicine** in *The Expanse Roleplaying Game*, medical treatments and replacement parts can require an Income TN ranging from 13 to 18, depending on severity and rarity.)

### HOSPITALS

The first among many major medical facilities on the station, Ceres General Hospital is perhaps the best-known hospital in the Belt, famous for both its facilities and its staff. For the most severe injuries or bio-replacement jobs, Ceres General refers patients to the University of Ceres Medical Center, an institution famous for its pioneering research and techniques. On the opposite side of the financial spectrum, Coreside Clinic is an example of an affordable medical center at the highest levels of the station. It's not *quite* a hospital, and it's not advertised publicly, but a woman at Sector Three Hardware charges a reasonable rate to patch up any damage a patient would rather not discuss with authorities.

### AUTO-DOCS

As in any major city or station, auto-docs are available around the clock for minor injuries. Located in every sector, these expert systems can analyze patients, diagnose problems, and offer limited treatments (generally of the pharmaceutical sort).

### DISPENSARIES

Many common drugs, both medicinal and recreational, are available from automated dispensaries. Some dispensaries function similarly to an auto-doc in that they can take the user's bio-readings to limit the risk of providing drugs that would be harmful. Others require the user to provide authorization for restricted drugs via medical records stored on a hand terminal or sent from a medical professional.

## TYCHO STATION

Rather than a space station that happens to be big, it's better to think of Tycho Station as a city that happens to be in space. Built one hundred years ago as the Belt headquarters and premier construction yard of Tycho Manufacturing and Engineering Concern—the company that spun up Ceres and Eros—Tycho Station is a major source of pride for the Outer Planets Alliance. Even though the founding corporation is from Earth, most of the station inhabitants are Belters, and the Belt is where their loyalties lie.

Tycho's primary purpose is that of a construction yard, able to build spaceships of any type as well as other large-scale construction projects. Its largest project to date was the *Nauvoo*, the largest ship ever constructed by humans. However, this is not just an enormous construction yard—it's a mobile one, fitted with a drive system that can take it anywhere in the system.

Tycho Station looks like a giant ball with two rings that rotate around its middle. The ball itself is called the construction sphere, and most of the station's ship construction and repair takes place within its vast interior. The sphere has a volume of more than sixty-five million cubic meters, which it uses for manufacturing and storage space—including spaceships.

The top of the sphere is mounted with six huge construction waldoes, arms that can maneuver parts for spaceships, hull plating, and even the ships themselves. At the other end, the bottom of the sphere is where the capital-ship-class fusion reactor and drive system are mounted, visible from the outside

as a conical projection fifty meters across. Put together, the station's features have led some to compare the shape of Tycho Station with that of an enormous spider—if a spider's legs grew out of its head.

Tycho Station is usually parked somewhere in the Belt, putting it a few days' travel from Earth, with a communication delay of less than a quarter of an hour.

There was no better place for the construction of grand dreams than Tycho. Along with the terraforming of Mars and the farms of Ganymede, it was a living testament to humanity's ambition and skill.

—Nemesis Games



## THE PEOPLE OF TYCHO STATION

This station is also known for being the home of some of the smartest people in the solar system. Four generations of engineers, biologists, habitat planners, mechanics, and other specialists have lived and worked here to help humanity grow beyond the inner planets. If you want to find the best technicians in the Belt, you come to Tycho Station.

At full capacity, fifteen thousand workers and their families live at the station. Children run and play in the hallways while large groups of people sit together in communal spaces. There's enough foot traffic during just about any part of the day—and especially at shift change—that you could easily think you're in the corridors of Mars, or even Luna. A strong reminder that you are not, of course, is the ever-present song of lang Belta—the Belter creole dialect—and the sounds of popular music like bhangra emanating from bars or work areas. Since the Eros Incident, banger music, which uses the sounds that transmitted from Eros (ghostly voices and other ethereal sounds) mixed with throbbing dance music, has become popular among young Belters.

The station's day is divided into three eight-hour shifts: one for work, one for sleep, and one for leisure. Because of this, inhabitants tend to socialize with those on the same shift rotation. This makes the station's population seem even larger than it is, because to any given person, most other people will always remain strangers.

### ORGANIZATIONS

A number of organizations, both formal and informal, have coalesced among the population of Tycho. Here are details about a few of the groups that color the day-to-day life in the station.

#### THE LIBRARIANS

According to rumors—and cryptic messages in the downloadable station directory—for the right price, a secretive cabal of elders can help you find any data you're looking for. This semi-mythical group of self-styled librarians claims to have access to databases, file shares, and actual books on every planet and habitat where they exist. Better yet (or perhaps not) they don't deal in money—only favors.



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### SETESHANG GAO

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No serious criminal gang has yet managed to operate on the station for long before being shut down by security, but a teen gang called Seteshang Gao, or “station dogs,” is becoming an increasing annoyance among vendors in the habitation rings. The gang is mostly harmless, but they like to create any kind of chaos they can get away with, from swapping food dispenser labels to reprogramming station signage to disabling security cameras. Gang members are recognizable by their mismatched boots and the lights they wear in their hair.

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### TYCHO MED-EVAC

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Tycho Station employs a small elite team of medics for rescue operations in and around the shipyards. Many of the medics are former military personnel, and all are trained in emergency medical procedures as well as spacecraft operations, zero-g maneuvering, and rescue mech piloting. As a priority asset to the station, two medical frigates are reserved for use exclusively by the med-evac team, who’ve been integral on several occasions in assisting the crews of ships that were disabled before they could reach Tycho Station, or miners who’ve become stranded in the Belt after a mishap.

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## STATION FEATURES

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Station directories are available at every entrance and major intersection to guide visitors to their intended destinations or to suggest options for those looking for entertainment. Guidebooks are available too, downloadable to hand terminals.

Wall screens are common in many areas of the station, in hallways, offices, and residential suites. Such screens are often set to display a view of the nearby Belt or show off whatever is under construction in the central sphere. Security cameras record activity in most public spaces, from corridors to maintenance accessways to tool rooms. Guards make regular patrols as well and are generally more efficient and trustworthy than the rent-a-cops employed by some habitats in the Belt.

Although the amenities on Tycho Station are more elaborate than on many space habitats, it still has the constraints of an artificial environment. It’s a common occurrence for visitors unfamiliar with station life to report worrisome humming or vibrations as pipes or conduits send water or air through the infrastructure. As a result, safety drills and lectures about the dangers of space are a frequent fact of life.

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### HABITATION RINGS

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The two counter-rotating equatorial habitation rings hold all of the station’s living quarters, restaurants, shops, offices, businesses, and recreational areas. Each rotating ring consists of several levels, with certain floors dedicated to a specific type of space, such as the visitors’ level, the maintenance housing level, and the multiple shopping levels. The rings are in constant motion to provide spin gravity for the inhabitants, except when the station is using its drive to move.

Visitors first enter a main corridor, which has numerous intersections both large and small. The big intersections lead to other sections of the ring, while the smaller ones connect to different compartments nearby, creating a labyrinthine web that a person could walk for hours without retracing their steps.

Compared to some stations, especially in the Belt, the living areas of Tycho’s habitation rings are extravagant. They boast wide corridors and open spaces decorated with climbing vines and other plant life, with plenty of room for electric carts to shuttle inhabitants all over the station. The hallways themselves are gently sloped due to the curvature of the rings, which can be disorienting for Earth-born visitors. Gravity here is a standard one-third g and has the subtle feel of Coriolis effect. The walls look like they’re made of a pale foam, and the air smells slightly astringent. The Tycho Manufacturing logo is a common sight.

Families live here, not just workers, so a visitor will see people of all ages: infants in strollers, kids playing in the park, rowdy teenagers blaring loud music wearing a variety of equally loud clothing, and young adults working their first job, trying to carve out a place for themselves in this point of stability in an ever-changing system.

Similar to the general atmosphere of Tycho Station’s living areas, the residences are fancy compared to those of most space habitats. Less-expensive, single-room cabins are available, but even these are better appointed and decorated than the cheapest rooms on a place like Ceres. The higher-end residences are suites of four high-ceilinged rooms plus a bathroom with a real water supply. These are the sort of dwellings available for rent on the visitors’ level, and the same design is used in the company quarters reserved for the station’s crew. All residential doors have faux wood texturing, and the station pumps a mild scent of grass and flowers into all residences.

A nondenominational chapel is available for station inhabitants, colorfully decorated in bland but inoffensive abstract shapes. The pews are made of bamboo but shaped and treated to look like various types of wood. Weekly services are conducted here by Buck Matlock, a grizzled old pastor known for his helpful advice and the pistol strapped to his hip.

## TYCHO STATION

TOP VIEW

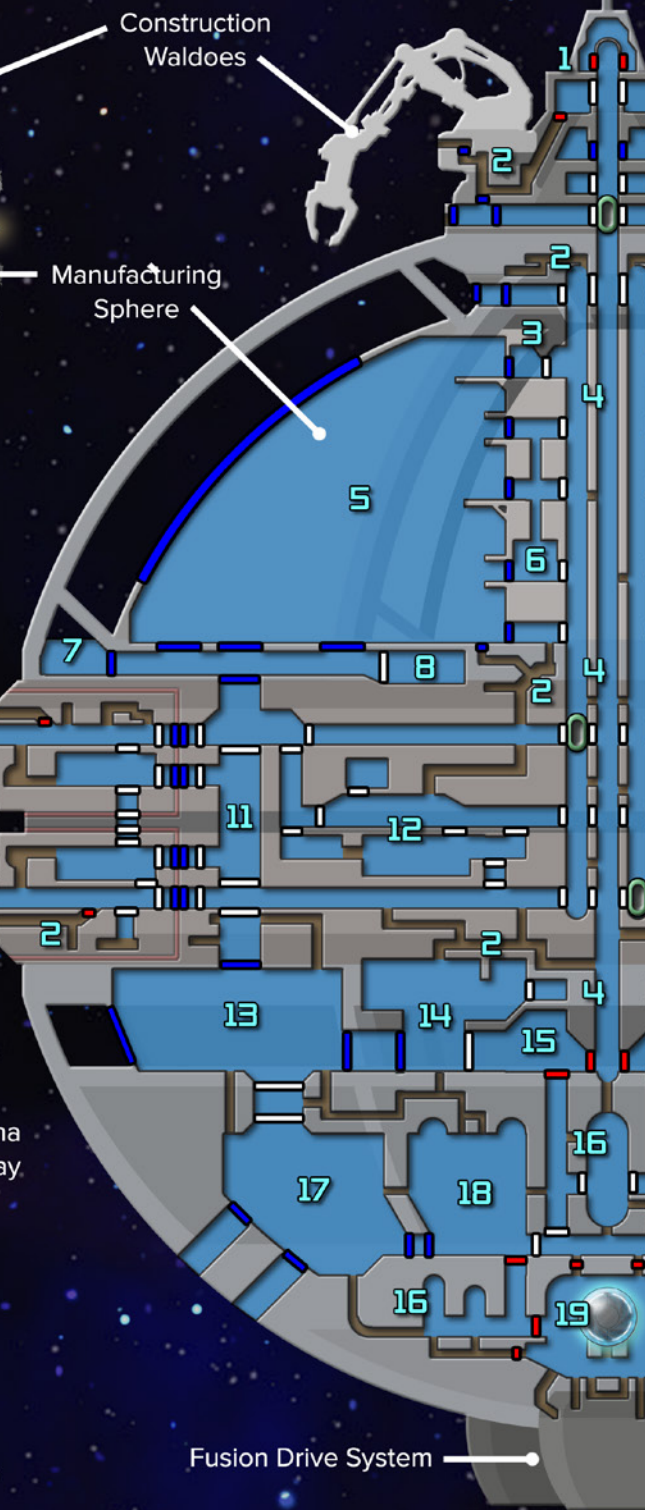


Habitat Ring

Fast Transit Ring

Habitation modules rotate within the rings to adjust between spin gravity and thrust gravity.

CROSS-SECTION



### KEY

- |                            |                          |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Control Center & Offices | 12 Union Halls & Cantina |
| 2 Maintenance Access Ducts | 13 Freight Receiving Bay |
| 3 Foreman's Office         | 14 Parts Warehouse       |
| 4 Central Tube Lines       | 15 Security Post         |
| 5 Assembly Bay             | 16 Fuel Siloes           |
| 6 Equipment Storage        | 17 Bulk Storage          |
| 7 Vehicle Access Bay       | 18 Engineering Bay       |
| 8 Vehicle Garage           | 19 Reactor Core          |
| 9 Habitation Decks         | — Standard Hatch         |
| 10 Tube Car Station        | — Airlock Hatch          |
| 11 Bulk Transfer Corridor  | — High Security Hatch    |

Fusion Drive System



Before the station activates its main drive, the habitation rings gently slow their spin until they come to a full stop. Then a series of complex swivel points, working like giant gimbals, reconfigure the orientation of the station's rooms to prepare for thrust gravity to take over. This allows each compartment in the habitat rings to reorient so that thrust gravity is “downward” relative to the room's layout.

Visitors are advised to be cautious at transitional areas between the habitation rings and the non-rotating (and therefore zero-gravity) areas of the station such as the ship docks. People moving into such areas will want to turn on their boot magnets or grab a handhold before they find themselves on the float. When taking a lift “down” to the construction sphere, a visitor will feel their weight drop continuously until, when they reach the sphere, they are in free fall.

## CONSTRUCTION SPHERE

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Also called the manufacturing sphere or the factory globe, one of Tycho Station's most famous features is this half-kilometer-wide sphere that houses a thousand construction and repair projects, all of which can be worked on at the same time. The shipyards contained within are considered some of the best in the system, popular for both their top-notch technical capabilities and the competence and helpfulness of their personnel. The sphere is large enough to hold any vessel short of a battleship, and the station's exterior construction facilities can work on ships even larger than that—which is how Tycho's engineers built the largest ship ever made, the *Nauvoo*.

When entering from one of the habitat rings, a long translucent access corridor leads from the lift to the construction sphere. Inside the sphere, curved corridors lead to ship berths. A glass-domed observation bubble oversees all operations here, but the structure of the sphere itself is made of ceramic and steel, dotted with maintenance panels, electrical junctions, and storage lockers. One common feature among the berths is metal plates that construction mechs use to “park” by magnetically locking into place.

From the inside, the sphere is filled with lights—some of them the illumination from construction sites, but others from the blinking navigation lights on ships, the glow of engines, and the sparks from non-stop welding operations. Construction here is constant, making the place reminiscent of a hive swarming with worker bees.

The construction sphere includes many repair sections, each capable of berthing and working on multiple spacecraft at the same time. As is common with spin stations, ships are parked in vacuum but tethered to the station's structure with a network of cables. Much of the work done here is performed using remote-controlled construction mechs, including specialized models tailored to welding, salvage, and demolition.

The very center of the sphere is a wide-open space where ships park to await departure clearance after they've finished construction or repair.

## ENTERTAINMENT

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Tycho Station is at least as well known for its many entertainment opportunities as it is for its construction facilities. In the leisure section of the habitation rings, you'll find bars, restaurants, brothels, gambling, and more. As with most things at Tycho Station, the establishments on the entertainment levels are heavily Belt-oriented, with games like shastash and Golgo, and music with lyrics in Belter cant. Here are some of the highlights of Tycho Station's entertainment offerings.

### BROTHELS

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Tycho station has multiple brothels, all licensed, satisfaction guaranteed. The brothels of Tycho cater to most budgets and entertainment preferences, including a variety of genders, body types, and accessories. The most expensive establishment, simply called Sandra's, has both a human concierge as well as an interactive electronic menu of services. A lower-priced alternative called Dockside Delights is usually more popular, in part due to its pricing but also because it's the closest brothel to most ship berths.

### GAMBLING

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Gambling activities are varied and plenty here, as well as heavily regulated and taxed. Tycho Station offers card games, dice games, and gambling machines. Video gambling of different types is also available right from the terminals in residential suites. Some of the bars take bets on sporting events both local and distant, highlighting the oddity of being so far from planetary events that betting can take place after the event has already ended, but before the results can reach the gamblers.

## MALTHUS PARK

A popular hangout for the station's children—and visitors feeling nostalgic for Earth—this is a carefully engineered re-creation of a terrestrial park, complete with live greenery, park benches, and a playground that can accommodate two dozen kids. For some station inhabitants, the park is the first and only exposure to a (somewhat) Earth-like environment they will ever experience. While the gravity is still low relative to Earth, the skilled gardeners here have managed to grow grass, small bushes, and even a few trees. Malthus Park is named after the designer of Tycho Station, Malthus Tycho.

## TYCHO FEED

In addition to re-transmitting all the other feeds it can receive from other locations in the system, Tycho has its own public entertainment feed. At different times of day, the feed offers news, children's programming, instructional videos, televised concerts, and drama or comedy series. A current popular segment is a "Learn lang Belta," a half-serious, half-parody show that teaches essentials of the Belter language.

## BARS

The first stop for many spacers visiting a station is the local bar, and Tycho Station is well-prepared for this impulse as numerous bars compete for patrons' drinking money. Each bar has its own character and its own focus: some are known for their food, others for their friendly atmosphere, and a few for their organ-damaging beverages.

**BLAUWE BLOME** One of the most popular bars is called the Blauwe Blome. The place is filled with Golgo tables, but it's even better known for serving a notorious drink called the Blue Meanie, a concoction so potent that the station limits the place to serving two per customer.

**CHANDA'S CLOSE** At perhaps the most humble establishment short of an automated kiosk, Pravalika Chanda literally serves drinks from a storage hatch. She has a legitimate license to serve drinks from here, though nearby offices sometimes complain when the line of people waiting for service in front of Chanda's Closet blocks their entrances.

**EXCELSIOR CLUB** The most high-end bar is the Excelsior Club, well-known for its ice sculptures, its outrageous prices, and for being a social destination for the station's elite. It's easy to get in if you're famous (and can afford the premium prices here), but if you're not, you'll need a reference from someone who is.

**LOCAL BREW** This is a working-class joint that serves its own vat-brewed beer. The bar has rapidly grown in popularity, expanding beyond its original clientele of maintenance workers and ship crews to attract a more diverse crowd, sometimes leading to friction between different groups of patrons.

## RESTAURANTS

For those who don't want to eat in a bar, the station has an even larger variety of restaurants, cafes, diners, teahouses, coffee shops, and food dispensers.

**APOLLO'S** Most people who have tried it agree that the coffee at Apollo's is the best on the station. Tycho Restaurant serves an excellent mocha when Jerome is working, and while the Excelsior Club produces superior foam art, Apollo's continues to deliver consistent, made-to-order, hot-but-not-flesh-damaging bulbs of caffeine-infused nectar. The signage inside claims the reason is the shop's fresh, top-quality coffee beans, but the owners won't say where these magic beans originate.

**TYCHO RESTAURANT** This is a small, popular restaurant just off the main hall with a white ceramic bar surrounded by tall stools. The lights are bright with a uniquely warm red tint. The joint usually plays a variety of syncopated harp-and-dulcimer music that's currently popular. It serves a decent imitation chicken vindaloo.

**LOW-G ITALY** Head chef Lauren Paquette is renowned for her ability to make fungus into noodles and vat-grown meat taste (almost) like Italian sausage or pepperoni or anchovies. The Londres Nova-style pizza is currently the restaurant's most popular dish, followed closely by the mushroom lasagna.



**TACOS DEL CINTURÓN** Though Juan Rodrigo has not had the same success at replicating Mexican food using Belt ingredients as Chef Paquette did at Low-G Italy, something keeps drawing the customers in. It might be the Mariachi band he pays to entertain his diners (consisting entirely of Rodrigo family members), or the low-priced *cervezas*, or just the novelty of seeing every imaginable Belt foodstuff used as a taco filling. Whatever the reason, Rodrigo is hoping to recreate the magic, and the family is now making plans to expand the business to other stations in the Belt.

**KIOSKS** Workers on the burn from one hallway to another often prefer to grab a quick meal from one of the many automated machines located throughout the station. Red kibble is a popular choice for those who want a quick, traditional Belter meal. Other options include tubes of protein paste, fungal beans with vat-grown rice, and saag aloo-in-a-cup.

## SHOPPING

Besides essential spaceship parts, Tycho Station also sells tools, drones, vac suits, mechs, electronics, weapons, and more. The following are a few example shopping venues.

**LOW-G HIGH TECH** This shop is a common destination for anyone needing a replacement hand terminal, recording devices, virtual reality viewers, and even cooking equipment. This is also where you can try out new software before you buy, including the newest games.

**DHAR'S USED DRONES & MECHS** This is one of the most affordable places to buy automated and semi-automated machines in the Belt. Though availability varies, the shop sells just about any kind of mech or drone besides police and military models; Dhar is a pacifist, so he has no interest in selling machines equipped with weapons. Because of Tycho Station's focus, most of the available stock is designed for construction, salvage, and repair purposes.

**THE BODY SHOP** Anyone who's anyone goes to the Body Shop for their personal body renovations and décor. Available upgrades include tattoos, skin coloration, dental decorations, limb extensions, facial mods, and more. Some modifications can be done by the shop's specialized auto-docs, but others are in the domain of the Body Shop's full-time doctor.

## ENGINEERING DECKS

Also known as “station south,” the engineering decks are located at the bottom of the construction sphere, just above the station's huge fusion reactors and massive drives. These decks contain main engineering, auxiliary engineering, tool shops, and storage. Because they are not inside the habitation rings, the engineering decks are on the float, except when the station is using its drive to travel.

Down here, at the far end of the sphere, the curve of the corridors is tighter. Tools and environment suits are plentiful, as are a variety of construction mechs.

## LIFE SUPPORT / INFRASTRUCTURE

A dedicated crew of specialists works at all hours to keep Tycho Station habitable, comfortable, and safe. Engineers keep station systems running, biologists and chemists ensure that food (both station-grown and imported) is safe to eat, and security officers try to keep people from hurting each other.

Several types of food production take place in the habitation rings, including yeast vats, hydroponics pools, and mushroom farms. Teams of nutritionists work at all such areas to ensure an optimal crop, aiming for food that is safe, nutritious, and as pleasant as possible to eat.



## MEDICAL FACILITIES

The medical bay on Tycho Station is state-of-the art, equal to those on Ceres or even Mars. Here a patient can receive treatment for anything from a headache all the way to limb and organ replacement, the latter taking the form of either a prosthetic or organically regrown bio-structures, depending on what the patient can afford. (As mentioned in **Medicine** in *The Expanse Roleplaying Game*, medical treatments and replacement parts can require an **Income TN** ranging from **13** to **18**, depending on severity and rarity.)

## DOCTORS

As with most of Tycho's facilities, the doctors here are regarded as some of the friendliest professionals in the Belt. Tycho Station's doctors include both generalists and specialists from all over the system. The medical team is led by Doctor Vittorio Li, who has been on staff long enough to deliver two generations of Tycho Station babies.

## AUTO-DOCS

For those who do not wish to be treated by a human doctor (for reasons of finance, privacy, or simple dislike of people), the station's auto-docs are available around the clock. Located on every deck of the habitation rings and in key areas of the construction sphere, these expert systems can take extensive readings on a patient, diagnose common medical problems, and in some cases, offer treatment (especially where the ailment can be resolved by administering drugs, radiation, or minor physical manipulation).

## DISPENSARIES

Many common drugs, both medicinal and recreational, are available from automated dispensaries. Some dispensaries function similarly to an auto-doc in that they can take the user's bio-readings to limit the risk of providing drugs that would be harmful. Others require the user to provide authorization for restricted drugs via medical records stored on a hand terminal or sent from a medical professional.

# SMALLER STATIONS

Although the major stations like Ceres, Ganymede, Titan, and Tycho attract the lion's share of attention when it comes to thoughts of occupied areas in the Belt, there are literally hundreds of small communities that have made their mark in the solar system. Many are transitory, lasting only the length of a job or until personalities clash and communities fragment, but some endure, becoming lasting—if not idiosyncratic—outposts in the dark.

It should be noted that many stations possess a gray legal status at best, if they're not outright illegal, as it's not uncommon for people to appropriate corporate or even military resources to form these outposts. With that in mind, though, legal arguments tend to lose weight in direct proportion to the distance from the Sun, or at least the nearest sizable enforcement body; the cost of reclaiming them is frequently prohibitive. However, residents of illegal stations are advised to cultivate a healthy level of paranoia regardless, as corporations and governments alike do find the need to make the occasional example in order to prevent all out anarchy.

## THE LODGE

During the early days of the first major push into the Belt, all sorts of ideas were floated concerning what could be done with humanity's newly extended reach into the cosmos. One incredibly ambitious project was Argus-3, a manned deep-space telescopic array that would push scientific understanding further than ever before in history. Plans were drawn for a compact station that would sustain a rotating crew of twelve scientists, capable of operating without replenishment for up to two years at a time, as well as a state of the art array capable of limited self-repair. Construction took almost five years and nearly bankrupted Hrafn Consortium, a venerable Scandinavian aerotech engineering firm, as unexpected costs and difficulties mounted. When it was finally launched, there were still enough concerns that, in an addition to the usual scientists, a skeleton crew of pilots and technicians would be on hand as

That seemed to be the human pattern—reach out to the unknown and then make it into the sort of thing you left in the first place. In Holden's experience, humanity's drive out into the universe was maybe one part hunger for adventure and exploration to two parts just wanting to get the hell away from each other.

—Persëpolis Rising



it was towed out to its intended station near Saturn to shake down the systems and avoid potential embarrassment.

Although the measures were prudent, no one could have foreseen what would happen back on Earth. The headquarters of the Hrafn Consortium were almost completely destroyed as part of a series of terrorist bombings by Dammerung, a Basic rights group calling for radical reform of employment wait lists, and all the senior executives were killed. In addition to the loss of most of its key personnel and the subsequent criminal trials that followed, the corporation's assets were tied up in complicated legal proceedings and ownership disputes, many of which are ongoing. A deep space observatory, while potentially valuable, had highly specialized equipment, resulting in few interested takers. Without active support for the crews, no scientific agencies wanted to use the array, and so it simply languished.

The station came to be occupied almost by accident, when its existence was rediscovered by an interfaith group of theologians and philosophers who fled the factionalism of Ceres station. It took what remained of their resources to reach the array and supply it for habitation, as well as some serious time learning the controls of its sophisticated equipment, but soon, the unique monastery/faith collective/experimental philosophy lab known as the Lodge was born.

## DAILY LIFE

Daily life in the Lodge is essentially monastic and divided into three distinct activities: upkeep, devotion, and fellowship. Upkeep is the least glamorous but no less necessary for it—the station was well made originally, but time has taken its toll, with constant work required to keep it running. In true Belter fashion, everyone is expected to pitch in—guests and residents alike—and long-term residents must learn the tasks and systems of the person they're replacing, and ideally, becoming conversant in at least one or two more positions in case of emergency. Upkeep takes at least an hour or two each day, even if it's just checking to make sure everything is nominal. If a more serious issue arises, devotions and fellowship are suspended until the problem is managed, in that order, so residents do their best to keep the Lodge running smoothly.

Devotion can take different forms, depending on the beliefs of the adherent in question, but several hours are set aside to allow them to observe the rites of their faith. Due to the station being on the float, certain practices may have to be modified for safety reasons, but the residents of the Lodge do their best to accommodate any rite so long as it doesn't pose a

material threat to the station or its residents, such as fouling air recycling or interfering with water filtration. This has led to some incredible scenes over the years as different practices mingle—or collide. Generally, however, relations have been harmonious between faiths—the station is simply too small and the personnel too open-minded and welcoming for serious rifts to develop. Traveling down a connecting corridor can be similar to a trip through time, or perhaps through the human psyche, as one observes a variety of faiths and practices on display, some as old as civilization, some newly formed in the stars.

It's also worth noting that while devotion can be a solitary affair, residents are actively encouraged to invite others into their observances in order to learn more about the different faiths on the station. Even if it is something not directly faith-related, taking part in another's rites is seen as a powerful affirmation of the community the Lodge is trying to create. It is not considered rude to decline such offers, so long as the refusal is respectful, but continued refusal without good cause indicates to the residents that this station may not be the best place for a particular individual.

Outsiders imagine that devotion would be the most complex part of station life, but in truth, fellowship is its most complicated component. Like any small station, keeping relations between residents as harmonious as possible takes serious thought and effort, especially when such a potentially divisive element as religion plays such a central role in the lives of everyone on board. Fellowship activities



vary, from preparing meals to watching films to playing games, or even ad hoc group therapy sessions, with residents making requests and rotating through them on a regular basis. The one thing fellowship is *not* is optional. Short of a dire medical or mental health emergency, everyone is expected to participate with an open heart and engage as best they can. Indeed, visitors and newcomers often find fellowship aggressive, even invasive, but Lodge members stand by the rigor of the exercises. As they put it, you are not required to feel a specific reaction to fellowship, but you are required to *feel*. Even if it makes you mad, that's something that can be discussed, an opportunity to deepen your relationships with other residents. But withdrawing cuts you off, and that simply cannot work in this environment.

One of the most popular fellowship activities on the station is a game the residents call the "Crossroads". They view it almost like a competitive sport, but outsiders tend to see it as more of a theology debate than a "game" in the usual sense. The premise is fairly simple: Each round, one person puts forward a solution, and then the other residents must describe what the original problem might have been and then how you could reach that solution following the tenets of their faith or philosophy. For example, the solution might be that a man forgives his brother's killer. One resident might describe how the incident was self-defense, and how the brother of the slain man used his faith to come to terms with the idea that his brother might have deserved to die, and therefore the killer should be forgiven. Another resident might detail a different scenario, where the brother was killed in battle, and therefore, his faith asks that he forgive the killer because the blame rests with the human desire to make war, not in the individual humans forced to take part in it. And so on.

A game of Crossroads can easily take hours and often begins during a meal, only to stretch out for some time afterward. Visitors are welcome to participate, and the residents will play down to their level a bit if guests don't appear to be too taken with theological thought experiments. There is no scoring, per se, but it is considered clever play to create scenarios that do not reach the given solution easily, as well as showcasing the strengths of a particular belief system. Conversely, while it is fair to raise a question if it seems like another player is ignoring a central part of their own dogma—another reason the residents enjoy learning about each others' faiths—it is poor form to split hairs or raise fringe hypothetical objections. Part of the exercise, after all, and where the game got its name, is showing how all faiths sometimes find themselves in the same place regardless of what paths they took; it's the coming together that matters.

It is also worth noting that the Lodge has an active drug culture, with hallucinogenics and euphorics being most common; the residents even devote part of their valuable grow space to cultivate their own organic supply. While recreational usage is tolerated, drug use is primarily encouraged as part of religious practices; however, station security must come first—those who put themselves, and especially others, at risk are not tolerated, and anything that puts a strain on the already limited food and medical supply is immediately shut down. That said, anyone who can bring an interesting new drug to the Lodge that will enhance the religious observances going on will find an eager and receptive audience, though getting rich off such a small, ascetic population is unlikely.

## THE EYES

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Whenever a new person arrives at the Lodge, they are strongly encouraged—though not required—to avail themselves of the Eyes, which is the rather poetic name given to the telescopic array. The observation chamber for controlling and viewing the telescope systems is as close to a holy of holies in the Lodge, and anyone using it is left undisturbed for as long as they require. The chamber itself has been padded and soundproofed, and a number of small niches have been installed around the room for the placement of devotional objects. Lights are generally kept low, often turned to a setting designed to imitate flickering firelight, though some scintillating, hypnotic, trance-inducing patterns have been programmed in as well. A number of displays have also been rigged that interpret the sometimes obscure input from the array into more readily comprehensible forms and shapes, which can be used for abstract meditation. Access to the Eyes is zealously egalitarian, the one thing residents never argue about—your time is your time, and when it ends, it ends, for the next to begin. In many ways, access to and use of the Eyes embodies the spirit of the Lodge community as a whole.

## LODGE RESIDENTS

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At present, there are only eight full-time residents of the Lodge—replacements for the other four positions are still under discussion. The residents don't have a formal hierarchy, though informally, seniority does have a certain weight, and at present, the three members who have lived there the longest are a de facto ruling council. Martian Grigori Karloff speaks for the station when it comes to dealing with outsiders; a big, genial, bearded giant, he is eloquent and charming, with a love of philosophical debate that stands out even against the Lodge's debate-loving population. He practices as part of a self-described neo-heathen triumvirate with his artist spouse Mya and a fiery yet compassionate Belter priestess who is simply known as Little Grandmother. Patient and profoundly creative, Mya is often consulted for fellowship activities involving



different art forms, while the industrious and pragmatic Little Grandmother acts as “station mother” and mixes many of the necessary oils and other sacred substances the residents require.

Other notable station residents include Reverend Doctor Margaret “Maggie” Strittmatter, a bubbly, hyperactive, and deceptively sly Earther mathematician and theologian devoted to constructing a neo-Christian doctrine in a way that adapts it to the realities of interstellar existence. She also likes devising puzzles and riddles for fellowship activities, even the occasional scavenger hunt. Maggie’s often found debating with a lanky, tattooed Belter biohacker known simply as Florentine, the go-to chef on the station whose transhumanist philosophy has undergone a profound shift since the Eros incident and the creation of the Ring, which proved that such positions were no longer purely theoretical. Quiet Earther and deist philosopher Professor Ben Babcock is a bit more solitary than the other resident, but he’s possibly the best listener, often sitting quietly for hours at a time as the others talk through problems or vent their frustrations, his occasional contributions even more supportive and insightful for their rarity.

## COULTON STATION

Before the discovery of the protomolecule and the race to explore the Ring systems, astrobiologists generally considered Titan to be the best chance to discover the existence of life elsewhere in the solar system due to the presence of both frozen and liquid water as well as a thick atmosphere. While surface conditions are punishing, the potential to make revolutionary discoveries meant that after the discovery of the Epstein drive, establishing a research outpost on Titan became a priority for a number of scientific institutions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, however, it wasn’t until corporate interest peaked in Titan’s vast ice reserves that serious efforts were made to establish a human presence on the moon. The ultra-luxury resorts that followed were a sort of lavish afterthought, even as they became the face of Titan in the minds of Inners. Science, as too often the case, ran a distant third.

Neither a corporate facility nor a coveted getaway spot, Coulton Station came about as part of the UN’s short-lived Partnered Exploration Act, which required corporations to match funds spent on business ventures with funds for scientific exploration. The truly massive expenditures flowing into resource exploitation efforts provided funds for a sophisticated, one-of-a-kind laboratory. Extensive satellite and autonomous probe studies were conducted to find a tectonically stable zone of the frozen sea, and when one was located, robot excavation equipment was deployed to create a massive cylindrical opening from the surface down almost to the underside of the ice. (Several smaller shafts would be completed later to allow deployment of probes and submersibles to the ocean under the ice, as well as placing passive sensor poles for data collection.) Using modular construction techniques, the installation components were lowered into the opening and assembled in place. Massive supporting “arms” anchor the installation into the ice and provide means to keep the ice from encroaching too close to the station’s walls via slow-release panels that vent waste heat from station operations. This unique teardrop shape and suspended installation was highly controversial at the time, though time has proven the critics incorrect—so far.

When it began operations, Coulton was a prestige research destination, and competition for spots was fierce. Early research work was extremely promising as well; while living organisms did not turn up, exploring Titan’s seas yielded fascinating data about the formation of the moon as well as the history of its parent Saturn. There were encouraging signs that life might be present, even if it hadn’t been captured for study yet, and patents on several breakthroughs in aquatic sensor and filtration systems provided a steady source of funding for the station even as original funding sources slowly dried up. The station crew was patient, ready to settle in for work that they knew could take years or even decades to return the results they were seeking.

Then the protomolecule changed the game.

Suddenly there was no question about life existing beyond earth, and while the horrifying impact of the protomolecule on Eros was sobering, it also stimulated the general consciousness a lot more than seeking simple organisms deep in the oceans of a remote moon. A truly alien organism capable of transforming what it touched and performing seemingly physics-defying feats, engineering was simply too hard to compete with, comparatively speaking. Astrobiology was still reeling from the impact of this revelation when the other shoe dropped, and the Ring opened up, offering more than a thousand new systems featuring novel species unlike anything in the Sol system. Untrained colonists were routinely making discoveries that would have been world-changing, career-defining achievements for scientists just a few years earlier.

Coulton Station went from a prestige posting to something of an afterthought as humanity rushed to explore the gates almost overnight. While the patents they developed have kept the station funded, the interest in their findings has diminished to a handful of fellow academics and some specialized journals. The staff remains as committed to their mission as ever, but sometimes it’s hard not to wonder if anyone else will even notice when the time comes to publish their results. Their determination certainly says something about human nature, though whether it’s to be admired as perseverance in the face

of long odds or stubbornness in accepting change is open for debate, and indeed, the residents regularly have exactly that discussion among themselves.

### DAILY LIFE

As it was a prestige location when it was launched, Coulton Station is surprisingly comfortable for a research outpost, though still quite claustrophobic to the eyes of those unused to living quarters in the Belt. Tethered high altitude turbines, nicknamed kites by the staff, generate ample wind power for the station's needs, while robust algae and fungal farms, as well as highly filtered local water, provide the backbone of the station's food and hydration needs. Thanks to Titan's low gravity, which is only .14 g, the installation is primarily staffed by Belter these days, though some Inners have stuck it out and become acclimated. Regardless of origin, the residents keep to a regimen of drugs and therapies designed to minimize the impact of extended low-g, and purchasing those materials is one of the main expenditures from the station's general fund.

Research activities occupy the bulk of the residents' time, and a mix of both long-term studies and short-term research projects are underway at any given time. It's an old joke that the labs are better maintained than the living quarters, but it's also a sign of the staff's strong focus on their mission that even if the world seems to have moved on without them, their determination remains as strong as ever. Stronger, even, judging by the obsessive hours most of the researchers clock in their labs. Considering how tightly packed the station is, this often means working long shifts in very close quarters. The scientists have adapted to this by becoming extremely blunt to the point where it shocks outsiders, although the residents seem to find this not only acceptable but highly amusing. A complicated web of nicknames and inside jokes layered on top of scientific jargon and lang Belta patois can make conversation hard to follow for newcomers, though the residents dial it back for guests when they remember they have any.

Recreation in Coulton is... quirky. As might be expected from a small population in such a remote location, the residents have developed a number of coping mechanisms to minimize interpersonal conflict and alleviate the physical and psychological stress of their living conditions. One week in every four is a quiet one, where the residents avoid playing music or speaking to each other more than absolutely necessary. During these weeks, the station hums with the sounds of computer processors and laboratory equipment, as well as the "ice music" that results from the shifting pressure exerted on the station's anchor struts by the surrounding ice. Largely eliminated by noise cancellation technology during regular station operation, these eerie grinding and cracking sounds can be very alarming to newcomers, though the residents seem to find them soothing, almost meditative.

Another form of relaxation is to don one of the bulky "snowsuits" required for surface exploration and simply wander away from the topside access hatch, taking images and video along the way. As the luxury resort domes can attest, Titan offers absolutely stunning vistas, and while Coulton isn't located in quite the prime locations the resorts are, the ice sea has a beauty of its own, and that's without factoring in the sight of Saturn in the sky overhead. Attempts are made at skating and even sledding every once in a while, though more for comedy than genuine enjoyment, as the suits are too bulky to make any sort of truly skilled performance possible. Clever videos of such efforts tend to earn high praise from colleagues, though, so a steady stream makes its way onto the station network.

Easily the strangest pastime on Coulton Station is "Olympus Underground", a long-running augmented reality game where residents portray various inhabitants of Olympus Manor, a fictitious high-end Titan resort. Residents create detailed





personas, sometimes several at once, complete with elaborate backstories and full costuming and makeup designs (or at least as elaborate as limited space and materials provide), and while the experience is primarily narrative, it also uses an arcane system of rules cobbled together from various game systems to adjudicate random events or determine winners in head-to-head contests. Originally intended as stress relief by way of a black comedy parody of the extravagant vacation culture found in the domes on the far side of Titan, the game soon took on a life of its own, which has spanned more than a dozen “seasons” so far with no end in sight. Residents sit down to discuss general themes or arcs they’d like to see each season, but play is generally spontaneous beyond that, with soap opera-level melodrama and outrageous twists encouraged.

## STATION PERSONNEL

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Although the original plan was to rotate scientific teams so that no one would have exclusive access to the facility, when attention shifted to the Ring and the bottom dropped out of the Sol system’s astrobiology field, the waiting list dropped basically nothing. Researchers can now stay more or less as long as they please, though as a courtesy residents are expected to honor it if another scientist comes along looking to do some work at the station. So far, it hasn’t posed a problem, as there’s always been someone willing to leave and make room for the newcomer.

Decisions are made by majority vote after a lively, all-hands discussion. A similar process nominates a single executive decision maker to serve as the voice of the station to the outside world, to arbitrate disputes, break ties, and otherwise be counted on to take decisive action when a committee vote would be too slow or impractical. Currently, this position belongs to Dr. Laila Kynes, an Earther who fell in love with life in the Belt during her first research trip and has no desire to return home, even though it’s taking a serious physical toll over time. Her dry humor and keen eye have made her a popular choice for the station’s executive role, and this is currently her third non-consecutive time in the position.

Another notable member of the station staff is Etienne “Teddy” Dufresne, the chief engineer. Towering and unusually solidly built for a Belter, Teddy can certainly be a bit of a comical sight squeezing into the crawl spaces and utility bypasses, but there’s no questioning the big engineer can keep the station running like no one else. They are an avid coordinator for the Olympus Manor game and maintain no less than four characters at any given time. Teddy also maintains the best makeup collection on the station, admittedly not a difficult feat considering the scientists typically don’t bring much with them, but their collection is no less impressive for that, and Teddy’s video makeup tutorials have made them a minor celebrity on social networks throughout the Belt. How they keep their nails so immaculate or their paint so flawless after a day spent digging through the guts of the station is a mystery to which only Teddy knows the answer, and they like to keep it that way.

If there’s a divisive influence on the station, it’s Dr. Solomon Keller, albeit it’s mostly a hidden one. While there are bound to be flare-ups and personality clashes in any station environment, and especially one as remote as Coulton Station, most of the time residents are good at talking through it and taking actions to prevent stress from accumulating. Dr. Keller is not one such individual, and what’s worse is that he is good at hiding his frustration and appearing to get along with the other station residents. In truth, he despises most of them for a variety of (mostly imagined) slights, and if it wasn’t for the fact that he’d built his whole career around the sort of work that can only be done on the station, he would have left long ago. Dr. Keller monitors one of the most ambitious experiments collecting specimens in the ocean deep under the ice and feels he’s close to a breakthrough. At the same time, his mental health is deteriorating as his paranoia and grudge-holding worsens, and it’s getting harder for him to hide his distrust and dislike of his peers. Strangers arriving could easily push him over the edge, and given the tight confines of the station, an outburst could turn deadly in moments.

## HADES’ GARDEN

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A deceptively low-tech station run by a Belter group known as Persephone’s Scythe, the heart of the Garden is the *Cerberus*, an old bulk hauler that has been converted to serve as laboratory and living quarters for the small but highly dedicated group of biohackers, guerilla farmers, and occasional eco-terrorists. It has been specially fitted to allow up to eight, large-pattern cargo containers to be “docked” on the hull at any given time, where they are attached by magnetic clamps and cheap, short-lived emergency airlocks while they’re loaded up. Exactly what they’re being loaded with is, of course, the reason for the Garden in the first place.

Although the opening of the ring gates offered humanity thirteen hundred potential new systems, many with habitable planets full of strange new life forms, the group that would become Persephone’s Scythe realized very quickly that these discoveries did little to help their fellow Belters—in fact, they made things much worse. As hard as life in the Belt is, it

arose out of necessity; Earth and Mars needed what the Belt provided. And the Belt certainly needed resources they simply couldn't produce themselves, or at least produce in the kinds of numbers to sustain everyone. It was an awful set of relationships, but a certain level of mutual need bound everyone together. When the Ring opened, however, the calculus changed. The Belt still couldn't survive on its own, but the Inners didn't need them anymore, at least not like they had to that point. And since adapting to planetary gravity is a luxury that many Belters can't afford, all those new worlds are as off-limits as Earth.

The Belt was going to starve, and the Inners would let it happen.

Or at least, that's what Persephone's Scythe believed, so they vowed to do everything in their power to keep that from happening. In the time before the Ring, they'd been a loosely knit group of scientists and sometime saboteurs, but now there was no more time for half-measures. If they were going to feed the Belt, it was time for more direct action. They stole a freighter and re-christened her the *Cerberus* and got to work producing the tools their fellow Belters would need to survive—and make the Inners afraid of what happens when they ignore those they've been stepping on all these years.

## DAILY LIFE

As the hub of a growing movement, the *Cerberus* is increasingly busy. Research still occupies the bulk of most of the residents' time, though that percentage is swiftly shifting. The scientists and techs onboard collaborate with other experts throughout the system to crack patented formulas and reproduce essential medicines, seeds, and materials at a fraction of their going cost. It's slow going, but each breakthrough substantially changes the lives of Belters across the system, so they consider the effort well worth the payoff. They also work to refine and improve upon technologies and pharmaceuticals that the Belt relies on, especially if those technologies are often substandard in some way; for example, they've already disseminated plans for easily produced parts that drastically improve efficiency in cut-rate air recyclers found in Belter ships and habitats throughout the system. While the extended network of corresponding experts makes the effort possible, the core group onboard drives it, deciding which projects to undertake and how to allocate the group's resources.

This is not to say the station doesn't have a legitimate front operation—they are known throughout the Belt for providing sharply discounted or even free food-stuffs, basic medicines, and even simple survival tech and spare parts. Stock varies, based on what they can purchase (or "acquire") at any given time, but word has definitely gotten around; there are always at least a few rock hoppers or broken down haulers hitched to the *Cerberus* at any given time, picking up charity loads for others or maybe just to see themselves through for a while longer. This sort of generosity might seem to make them ideal pirate targets, but arrangements with Black Sky, Golden Bough, and the Ceres wing of the OPA make it understood that messing with them would be a very bad long-term healthcare plan. The small but high-end arsenal onboard underscores the point nicely as well.

Of late, more space has been allocated for strategic planning as the Scythe prepares for aggressive expansion. While they aren't shy about using force when required, they fully realize they don't have the numbers to slug it out with anyone, so they focus instead on more covert actions: espionage, blackmail, sabotage, seduction, and subversion. Several operatives have closed in on many high-ranking pharmaceutical figures, while others have wormed their way into anonymous mid-level corporate and government posts where they're in a position to pass on valuable data and sow misinformation without drawing too much attention to themselves.





So far, they haven't acted on much beyond testing information to see if their sources are valid, but they're definitely building up to bigger things. Even if it's just "pulling a Holden", as uncoordinated leaking of major secrets has become known, they have the resources to do some serious damage to their targets—and the willpower to pull the trigger.

As might be expected from a station organized around a serious political movement, station residents don't tend to take much downtime—for most of them, the cause is duty and reward in one. That said, music is the blood of the *Cerberus* crew, so what downtime there is often expresses itself in impromptu concerts, dances, and even playlist parties where everyone passes devices around and has their fellow residents add some new music that they feel they'd like. Music rankings are also a small but fierce side action onboard, with weekly topics drawing song suggestions and residents voting on the music they feel best expresses the given suggestion. After all, as the residents like to point out, music is one stress relief they can indulge in while still continuing to work for the movement.

## THE CREW OF THE CERBERUS

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Brilliant, transgressive, and zealous to their cause, Dr. Kore Anin is the founder of Persephone's Scythe and still leads the movement, in addition to acting as the *Cerberus*'s nominal skipper. Born on Tycho, Kore was a child prodigy who showed great promise in biology and organic chemistry, as well as a keen love of classical mythology (as the group's name bears out). Despite graduating university at thirteen and earning doctorates in biology and biochemistry by twenty, Kore turned their back on a number of lucrative job offers from Inner corporations to stay in the Belt. Although they were passionate about Belter rights from an early age, they were radicalized after watching an agricornp starve out a Belter station protesting the cost of patented foodstuffs. Persephone's Scythe was born soon after and has steadily grown along with their zeal to keep the Belt alive. Beautiful and articulate, with distinctive blazing red hair, Kore's charisma allows them to retain contacts, unwitting and otherwise, among some of the Inner companies that once attempted to recruit them and is currently involved in espionage motivated liaisons with not one but two major biotech executives. While not a blind fanatic, their resolve has only hardened over time, and Kore can't wait for the rest of the system to learn what has been growing in Hades' Garden.

Kore's second in command and effective captain of the *Cerberus* in day-to-day matters is a laconic, one-eyed, former Martian marine who goes by the name Mournful Jake. She supplies the military know-how and organization that has helped the Scythe go from scientists and furtive rebels to a growing insurgency and keeps a tight lid on everyday operations. Powerfully built and covered with scars whose tales of acquisition are the subject of much whispered speculation, Jake often verbally despairs the task of turning intellectuals into an effective arm while secretly relishing the challenge. She's also in charge of weapons training and operational security, deciding when and where to move the *Cerberus* when it must shift position. Her weakness for cheesy *holonovelas* means that anyone who can provide fresh episodes and especially hot new programs instantly earns a place in her esteem.

Rounding out the notable residents of the Garden is Reese Cordova, the Scythe's chief researcher. Nobody knows for sure exactly how Reese met up with Kore, but he's been part of the inner circle since the beginning and shows prodigious abilities not just at conducting research but also organizing teams of scientists and engineers, to say nothing about keeping them productive. His accent indicates he grew up on or around Ceres, and his pale skin and close-cropped blonde hair further reinforce the image of someone who doesn't get enough—even artificial—sunlight, but Reese refuses to discuss his past; so far nobody's turned up a contact on Ceres that knows him. This makes some distrustful of the fast-talking Belter, but his organizational talents and head for research make him too valuable to lose.



## 3. TRADE IN THE EXPANSE

**T**rade is one of the oldest forms of human social interaction. Our earliest ancestors exchanged basic resources and information between hominid groups. Ships laden with goods sailed the Mediterranean thousands of years before the Roman Empire rose. Indigenous people in the Americas traded extensively, moving goods across vast distances, covering the entirety of both continents. Venetian families made unfathomable fortunes with handfuls of spice, and electronic components made in a few square kilometers in China landed in a billion people's pockets.

Trade in *The Expanse* RPG is fundamentally no different: when there's a need (or desire) for a resource, and that resource exists somewhere else, a merchant steps in to take the risk of transporting it from one place to another. If the merchant is smart, they buy the resource at a lower price than its sale price, and the profit goes into the merchant's pockets.

### THE NEW BUSINESS

The opening of the Sol system—and the activation of the Ring—has also created new opportunities for enterprising individuals and crews. At the most basic level, anyone with a ship, some cargo space, and a way to fill that space (capital to purchase a resource, a resource to trade for a resource, or a weapon to take a resource) can become a merchant.

Trading is not without its risks, and historical dangers like storms, pirates, and disease continue to threaten those who would seek to make their fortunes as merchants. However, as the old adage goes, great reward does not come without great risk. In the new trade routes both inside the Sol system and out, fortune—and fortunes—will always favor the bold.

As a rule, the farther you get from the cradles of civilization, the more people need basic things they cannot make or provide themselves. It's partially a function of size, and partially a function of availability. An outpost, colony, or station needs to be a certain size to be self-sustainable. Tycho, as large as it is, still imports food from Ganymede; it could, with modifications, be made self-sustainable, but smaller, far-flung stations would require far more effort. It's easier for them to import staples.

"The inner planets look on us as their labor force. They tax us. They direct what we do. They enforce their laws and ignore ours in the name of stability. In the last year, they've doubled the tariffs to Titania. Five thousand people on an ice ball orbiting Neptune, months from anywhere. The sun's just a bright star to them. Do you think they're in a position to get redress?"

—Pock-faced man on Ceres, *Leviathan Wakes*



Food, for example, is abundant on Earth, Mars, and Luna. It grows on stations like Ceres, enough for self-sustainability. Ganymede's agricultural centers fed the Belt and Outer System, which is why the Ganymede Incident was almost an unmitigated disaster, as the hundreds of stations too small for self-sustainability could no longer receive vital protein and carbohydrates.

The net effect is a colonial economy where these outposts are entirely dependent on goods from somewhere else for basic survival. Belter politics and gunboat diplomacy keep unscrupulous merchants from taking advantage of these conditions to bleed the Outer System dry. Mining, harvesting, and refining outfits can still offer their valuable trade goods in exchange for staples, which helps ensure a fair trade for commodities when food is at stake.

## THE TAXATION OF TRADE ROUTES

The rise of taxes and rules regarding trade is almost as old as the act itself. Governments skim a little (or a lot) off the top of each transaction, which in turn helps fund infrastructure and the well-being of the body politic. At least that's how it works in theory; on stations and settlements where local authority rests in the hands of autocrats with little to no oversight, it's not unusual for those at the top to skim more—and keep more of what they skim for themselves.

Each political entity, from the UN to the smallest OPA station, has its own laws and tariffs governing trade. They can swing wildly depending on political situations and the scarcity of certain goods. The UN and Mars also have their own stock markets, and trade goods can fluctuate quickly in value. Good merchants (or semi-honest pirates) keep their news feeds on at all times. A quick turn could mean a rapid change in trajectory as the merchant heads for another station.

## FUTURES

Futures contracts are alive and well in larger markets, which helps stymie price volatility, especially among raw materials. Many mining outfits rely on futures contracts to deliver everything from water to Helium-3, as it ensures they'll be fairly compensated for the massive investment these operations require. Independent operators and small merchant firms utilize futures contracts when dealing with the OPA and stations whose authority might be questionable.

Of course, if the leadership of those stations change, there's a chance the contract is worthless. That outcome is just as risky for the station as it is for the merchant, as a plunge in reputation means no one will deliver even basic necessities—and the settlement dies. Therefore, both sides profit from mutually assured destruction.

## THE LONG HAUL

Most boring ship I ever works, Boss. She don't break, she don't leak, she don't even have an annoying rattle to tighten down.

—*Leviathan Wakes*

While the most common way into the merchant life is for an individual or group with capital to take off on a ship with a hold full of stuff to sell, it can still be dangerous. All the risks associated with space travel could put an end to the venture—or the merchant's life—with alarming alacrity.

Wealthy merchants often avoid the hazards associated with a space venture by hiring crews to deliver goods for them. These crews and their ships are the long-haulers of the Sol system; maybe they're saving to buy their own goods for trade someday, or maybe they're just making an honest (or semi-honest) living taking goods from Point A to Point B.

There are more freighter crews than there are merchants aboard ships, deals having been arranged in advance and the delivery of goods merely the ink that dots the "i" on the contact.

## A RELAXED LIFE

Long-haul crews don't burn fast or long; they set a leisurely pace to save pellets and drift for weeks or months between ports. Crews tend to be small, usually just a handful of people to keep the ship running and know each other well. The route between Earth and Tycho is a long time to be cooped up in a tin can with a stranger or someone you don't like. Trips to the Ring and beyond can become unbearable even among the best of friends.

Where merchant ships are commonly newer and well-cared-for, freighters that make the long-haul runs are often rattletrap affairs, constantly in need of repairs and barely held together with spit and chicken wire. Some are true "ships of Theseus," more replacement parts than original structure, and they take on an organic look as they evolve (or devolve, based on your point of view) into slapdash collections of habitats, engines, and holds.

### A FAMILY LIKE NO OTHER

Due to the shared hazards and loneliness of the life, long-haul crews share a deep camaraderie, not only with themselves but with other crews. A freighter in trouble can contact another nearby long-haul team, with help nearly always guaranteed. The rescuer will burn hard and go to the crash couches if it means sticking up for a pal; they know the situation could just as easily be reversed someday. Mutual assistance is in everyone's long-term best interests, and a freighter crew that ignores a distress signal from a fellow freighter will quickly find themselves ostracized and blacklisted.

### THE DELICATE BALANCE

Merchants and freighter crews alike are the lifeblood of the Sol system. Without regular shipments of food, water, and raw materials, people on remote stations would quickly perish. This was never more evident than in the early days of the UN-MCR War when Ganymede nearly collapsed; food shipments were so disrupted that people throughout the Outer Planets literally starved to death, a fate unimaginable just months prior.

A disruption in food or water production is a herald of death and misery for many in the outer system. Earth, Mars, Luna, Ceres, and even Tycho are self-sufficient; Ganymede is as well provided the domes hold, but the smaller colonies and settlements beyond that are not. From Triton to Mercury, there are stations, labs, and towns that simply cannot survive without a steady stream of food and water. A kilo of fine cheese is a luxury unheard of when everything depends on inbound soy protein, vitamins, and H<sub>2</sub>O.

The sources of production drying up are only one of the problems in this crystalline supply chain. Merchant and freighter crews hold enormous power in this situation, able to kill a colony by cutting it off just as quickly as if the food sources collapsed. It would require the organized action of all merchants and freighters to completely end inbound trade, which to date has never happened—but the possibility is all too real.

Likewise, a military blockade could destroy a colony with ease (or force it to accept terms of surrender.) The UNN or the MCRN easily possess the capabilities to blockade a small or medium station, or a settlement on a large moon like Titan or Europa. The OPA aren't nearly as well equipped, but they could muster enough ship power to cut off a smaller colony elsewhere.

Of course, an enterprising merchant or freighter crew could try to run the blockade. Depending on its firepower and the capabilities of the vessel running it, the chances of success range from simple to suicidal. A good crew in a maneuverable ship could run a blockade of Dreadnaughts and never get scratched.

Of interest, the existence of the Ring and the colonies beyond offer a new opportunity to make the lives of millions of people miserable. Blockading the Ring from the Sol side could effectively cut off supplies to Medina Station and the colonies through the other Rings, which gives whomever blockades the Ring enormous bargaining power. It would require a major military operation to properly execute such an operation, however, because any superpower attempting it would immediately incur the wrath of the other two.

### LONG-HAUL INGENUITY

Military and civilian engineers alike sneer at the cobbled-together designs of long-haul freighters, but at least one outfit recognizes that in the randomness one can find inspiration and genius. The Boone Shipyards orbiting Mars, where some of the highest-tech civilian ships are built and christened, holds an annual exhibition and contest where freighter crews can show off their handiwork and demonstrate their ships' capabilities.

A weeklong event, the Boone Invitational begins with a boat show where participants don vac suits and admire each other's vessels from the outside. Interior tours are next, followed by a community vote on Best Ship, Best Galley, Best Hold, and several others.

On the following days, the Boone engineers set up a series of proving runs, where ships are put through various tests that demonstrate their capabilities—and the capabilities of their pilots. There are cash prizes for the winners. Evenings usually turn raucous as crews that usually get little shore leave—or see people beyond their small circle—meet, carouse, and have fun.

The agreement for participation is that the Boone Shipyards engineering team can study the ships, and captains and crews who have interesting technological developments or innovations are paid extra in exchange for sharing this information with Boone—who then have the right to incorporate it into future ship designs.

The taxes and tariffs on basic supplies hovered just below too expensive to sustain life. And sometimes above it. The ships that ran on air so lean they courted anoxia, and the black market in usable hydroponics was a live and active one.

—Nemesis Games

### STORY HOOK: BEER RUN (SMUGGLING)

There's a new, fashionable, and legal club drug called Phoenix that's become popular among Earth's glitterati, and the New Silmaria resort on Titan has put out a call; demand is sky-high, and anyone who can deliver it will be paid several times market value. The trick is, and the reason Phoenix is so rare and valuable, the drug contains small amounts of a radioactive isotope that breaks down fairly quickly, meaning the delivery must be made in less than 144 Earth-hours.

Phoenix is only available on Earth and is expensive: the New Silmaria resort was clear that they're not issuing credit for this run. The crew must find and locate the drug, buy a large enough quantity, return to orbit (or take off), and burn hard for Titan. Upon arrival, they'll need to offload it as quickly as possible before it turns into useless sludge.

This adventure can be run one of several ways: as a comedy of errors where almost everything goes wrong; as a tense, ticking-clock thriller where every sub-encounter ratchets up the drama even further; or primarily focusing on the negotiations at either end of the deal, allowing the crew members some intense opportunities for dramatic roleplay.



## EXPANDED CARGO AND SHIPPING RULES

These rules expand on the **Cargo and Shipping Rules** introduced in *Ships of the Expanse*. Elements of these rules are reprinted here, and nothing here contradicts those previous rules. These are intended to provide an extra dose of realism and detail to make *Expanse* games where you might want to get into the nitty-gritty of trade a little more robust.

### MERCHANTS BUYING

Merchants looking to purchase something to ship (either themselves or by hiring a crew) head to the settlement or station's market or exchange area. These tend to be guarded and some form of identification (legitimate or otherwise) will be required to get in—and in many cases, a scan of a bank account showing a balance above a certain threshold. The larger the market, and more valuable the goods, the higher that number. To enter, a merchant (or someone pretending to be a merchant with spoofed ID) must pass a TN 13 Income test.

Locating a seller is the next step. A member of the crew makes an **Advanced TN 11 Business (Intelligence)** test with a time interval of 15 minutes. If the merchant is looking for something specific, increase the Target Number to 13. Use the Drama Die on the first successful test to determine what's for sale. The **Goods for Sale** tables below break down what's typically available at each location. If the test fails, another test can be made in 1d6 days.

To determine whether a deal is possible, the merchant character (or otherwise wealthy member of the crew) makes a **TN 11 Bargaining (Communications)** test. Failure means the deal falls through, either through bad haggling or simple lack of funds. Success means the cargo now belongs to the crew, with the modifier to Income based on the cost of the goods.

### TEMPORARY INCOME PENALTIES

A Temporary Income Penalty persists until it can be paid off. 1 Income can be spent to pay off up to a 3 Temporary Income Penalty, or each 1 Temporary Income Bonus can be spent to pay off 1 Temporary Income Penalty at a 1-to-1 ratio.

#### GOODS FOR SALE: MERCURY STATION

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                       | INCOME MODIFIER             |
|-----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1-2       | Scientific Data and Samples | -2 Income                   |
| 3-4       | Fuel Pellets                | -1 Income                   |
| 5         | Raw Materials (Ore)         | -2 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 6         | Grain Alcohol               | -1 Temporary Income Penalty |

#### EXAMPLE MERCURIAN GOODS

**SCIENTIFIC DATA:** Solar Research, Radiation Exposure Studies; Heat Studies

**ORE:** Iron, silicon    **GRAIN ALCOHOL:** Distilled Gin, White Dog Whiskey, Vodka

#### GOODS FOR SALE: EARTH

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                               | INCOME MODIFIER             |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1         | Luxury Goods/ Consumables (see <b>Trade Goods</b> ) | -3 Income                   |
| 2         | Art, Artifacts, or Handcrafted Goods                | -2 Income                   |
| 3         | Electronics/ Seeds/ Entertainment                   | -1 Income                   |
| 4         | Machine Parts/ Tools                                | -1 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 5         | Textiles/Silk/Wool                                  | -1 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 6         | Food/ Nutrients                                     | -1 Temporary Income Penalty |

#### EXAMPLE TERRAN GOODS

**LUXURY GOODS:** Cheese, Scotch, Wine, Vinyl Records    **HANDCRAFTED GOODS:** Clothing, Scented Soaps, Jewelry

**ART AND ARTIFACTS:** Museum-Quality Paintings or Sculptures, Ancient Coins, Photographs, Ancient Weapons

**ELECTRONICS:** Computers, Personal Communications Devices, Entertainment Systems

**ENTERTAINMENT:** Films and Music on Physical Media, Children's Toys and Books, Licensed Products

**FOOD:** Sushi-grade Fish, Beef, Mutton, Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

### GOODS FOR SALE: LUNA

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                     | INCOME MODIFIER             |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1         | Luxury Goods/ Pharmaceuticals             | -3 Income                   |
| 2         | Military Electronics/ Weapons             | -2 Income                   |
| 3         | Electronics/ Entertainment/ Fuel Pellets  | -1 Income                   |
| 4-5       | Raw Materials (Ore)/ Machine Parts/ Tools | -2 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 6         | Food/ Nutrients / Water                   | -2 Temporary Income Penalty |

#### EXAMPLE LUNAR GOODS

**LUXURY GOODS:** See **Terran Goods**    **ORE:** Silicon, Magnesium, Iron    **FOOD:** See **Terran Goods**  
**MILITARY ELECTRONICS & WEAPONS:** Firearms, Munitions, Explosives, Targeting Computers, Military-grade AIs, Protective Gear  
**ELECTRONICS AND ENTERTAINMENT:** See **Terran Goods**

### GOODS FOR SALE: MARS

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                     | INCOME MODIFIER             |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1         | Luxury Goods/ Pharmaceuticals             | -3 Income                   |
| 2         | Weapons/ Alcohol                          | -2 Income                   |
| 3         | Electronics/ Entertainment/ Fuel Pellets  | -1 Income                   |
| 4         | Raw Materials (Ore)/ Machine Parts/ Tools | -3 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 5         | Textiles/ Cotton/ Silk                    | -3 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 6         | Food/ Nutrients/ Water                    | -1 Temporary Income Penalty |

#### EXAMPLE MARTIAN GOODS

**LUXURY GOODS:** Gold And Platinum Jewelry, Wood Items, Designer Clothing  
**WEAPONS:** High-end and Military-grade Guns and Armor    **ALCOHOL:** Martian Whiskey, Beer, and Wine  
**ELECTRONICS:** Computers, Personal Communications Devices, Entertainment Systems  
**ENTERTAINMENT:** Films and Music an Physical Media, ebooks    **ORE:** Iron, Sulfur, Phosphorus  
**FOOD:** Fish, Beef, Mutton, Venison, Hothouse Fruits and Vegetables, Protein Mixtures

### GOODS FOR SALE: CEREUS

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                     | INCOME MODIFIER             |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1         | Luxury Goods                              | -2 Income                   |
| 2-3       | Entertainment/ Fuel Pellets               | -1 Income                   |
| 4-5       | Raw Materials (Ore)/ Machine Parts/ Tools | -2 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 6         | Food/ Nutrients/ Water                    | -1 Temporary Income Penalty |

#### EXAMPLE CERESIAN GOODS

**LUXURY GOODS:** Gold and Jewelry, Gemstones    **ENTERTAINMENT:** Ceresian Films and Books, Pornography  
**ORE:** Iron, Gold, Nickel, Titanium, Tungsten    **FOOD:** Grains, Protein Mixtures

### GOODS FOR SALE: JOVIAN SYSTEM

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                         | INCOME MODIFIER             |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1         | Scientific Data and Samples/ Genetic Material | -2 Income                   |
| 2-3       | Fuel Pellets/ Pharmaceuticals                 | -1 Income                   |
| 4         | Raw Materials (Ore)/ Machine Parts/ Tools     | -2 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 5-6       | Food/ Nutrients/ Water                        | -1 Temporary Income Penalty |

#### EXAMPLE JOVIAN GOODS

**SCIENTIFIC DATA:** Reports from Europa, Samples of European Life    **ORE:** Iron, Molybdenum, Uranium, Cobalt, Helium-3  
**FOOD:** Protein Mixtures, Grains, Hothouse Fruits and Vegetables, Goat



## GOODS FOR SALE: SATURNIAN SYSTEM

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                       | INCOME MODIFIER             |
|-----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1         | Scientific Data and Samples | -2 Income                   |
| 2-3       | Fuel Pellets                | -2 Income                   |
| 4         | Raw Materials (Ore)         | -2 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 5-6       | Water                       | -1 Temporary Income Penalty |

## EXAMPLE SATURNIAN GOODS

**SCIENTIFIC DATA:** Studies and Materials from Titan; Ring Studies; Studies from the Upper Cloud Decks

**ORE:** Aluminum, Titanium, Tin, Tungsten, Plutonium

## GOODS FOR SALE: TYCHO STATION

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                     | INCOME MODIFIER             |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1         | Luxury Goods/ Pharmaceuticals             | -3 Income                   |
| 2         | Weapons/ Military Hardware                | -2 Income                   |
| 3         | Electronics/ Entertainment/ Fuel Pellets  | -1 Income                   |
| 4         | Raw Materials (Ore)/ Machine Parts/ Tools | -3 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 5         | Grain Alcohol/ Recreational Drugs (Legal) | -2 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 6         | Food/ Nutrients/ Water                    | -1 Temporary Income Penalty |

## EXAMPLE TYCHANESE GOODS

**LUXURY GOODS:** Designer Clothes, Jewelry, Select Terran and Martian Goods

**WEAPONS:** Handguns and Other Personal Firearms

**ELECTRONICS:** Upgraded AIs, Navigational and Targeting Systems, Personal Communications Devices, Entertainment Systems

**ENTERTAINMENT:** Anything Terran or Martian, Pornography **ORE:** Iron, Tin, Aluminum, Titanium

**GRAIN ALCOHOL:** Gin, White Dog Whiskey, Vodka **FOOD:** Anything from Ceres or Jupiter

## GOODS FOR SALE: URANIAN AND NEPTUNIAN SYSTEMS

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                       | INCOME MODIFIER             |
|-----------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1-3       | Scientific Data and Samples | -2 Income                   |
| 4         | Raw Materials (Ore)         | -2 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 5-6       | Water                       | -1 Temporary Income Penalty |

## EXAMPLE URANIAN AND NEPTUNIAN GOODS

**SCIENTIFIC DATA:** Studies from the Upper Cloud Decks, Materials from Triton, Data from the Triton Array

**ORE:** Platinum, Mercury, Cobalt, Magnesium, Lithium, Diamond

## GOODS FOR SALE: MEDINA STATION

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                | INCOME MODIFIER             |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1         | Alien Artifacts/ Alien Animals       | -4 Income                   |
| 2         | Alien Plants                         | -3 Income                   |
| 3         | Alien Scientific Samples (Soil etc.) | -2 Income                   |
| 4-5       | Alien Materials (Exotic Wood etc.)   | -2 Temporary Income Penalty |
| 6         | Food/ Nutrients/ Water               | -1 Temporary Income Penalty |

## EXAMPLE MEDINA GOODS

**FOOD:** Protein Mixtures, Exotic Meats from Alien Species



### MARKETS BEYOND THE RING

Buying and selling at stations, bases, and outposts on the other side of the Ring gates varies greatly in the prices and quality of goods. Settlements are glad (very glad) for any luxury items from home, but many outposts, being financed by governments or corporations, strictly limit the import of goods to merchants and haulers on their “approved” list—in much the same way a 19th-century mining company would require its employees to purchase goods at inflated prices from their own company stores.

That being said, there’s money to be made on the frontier if a merchant or hauler crew is interested.

#### GOODS FOR SALE: THE FRONTIER

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                | INCOME MODIFIER             |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1         | Alien Artifacts                      | -4 Income                   |
| 2         | Alien Animals                        | -3 Income                   |
| 3         | Alien Plants                         | -2 Income                   |
| 4         | Alien Scientific Samples (Soil etc.) | -1 Income                   |
| 5-6       | Alien Materials (Exotic Wood etc.)   | -1 Temporary Income Penalty |

### SELLING GOODS

Once they arrive safely at their destination, merchants still need to unload their goods to make a profit. (Before they do, however, if everything works out, they can buy something else, sell it, and make even more money.) The same initial tests apply to get into the market or exchange: a TN 13 Income test. Once inside, a successful Advanced TN 11 Business (Intelligence) test with a time interval of 15 minutes nets them a sale. How much they make is determined by the Drama Die, as shown on the table Sale Results below. If the cargo is listed as a key import for that location (see the tables for Key Imports in the Trade Goods section below), add +1 to the Income Modifier.

The maximum sale value (Income Modifier) that can be received is +2 over the cost. In other words, if a cargo has a cost of -1 Income, then the most it can be sold for is +3 Income (meaning the crew nets +2 Income). The exception to this is if the cargo is a **key import**, in which case the maximum sale value is +3. Of course, the crew can choose not to sell the cargo at a given port if they are not making enough profit or taking a loss.

#### SALE RESULT

| DRAMA DIE | INCOME MODIFIER                            |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------|
| 1         | +4 Income                                  |
| 2         | +3 Income                                  |
| 3         | + 2 Income                                 |
| 4         | +1 Income                                  |
| 5         | +3 Temporary Income Bonus                  |
| 6         | +1 to +3 Temporary Income Bonus (roll 1d3) |



## FREIGHTER CREWS FOR HIRE

### ACQUIRING CARGO

| DESTINATION     | TN | THRESHOLD |
|-----------------|----|-----------|
| Any Destination | -2 | 10        |
| Set Destination | +2 | 20        |
| Short           | +3 | +5        |
| Medium          | 0  | 0         |
| Far             | -1 | -5        |
| Beyond the Ring | -3 | 0         |

A crew looking to pick up a merchant's cargo for a freight run follows the tried-and-true method of putting a shingle out on a newsfeed—or dropping a few words in the right ears in bars and clubs. Either way, a member of the crew makes make an Advanced TN 11 Business (Intelligence) test with a time interval of 1 hour. The target number and success threshold are determined by using the Acquiring Cargo for Freighters chart. In general, the further a ship is willing to travel, the easier it is to find a hauling job. Flexibility (being willing to go wherever is needed) also makes locating cargo a lot easier.

Once an opportunity is identified (the first successful test), the Drama Die determines what type of cargo is available. This varies from location to location, and each major trading hub has their own **Cargo Available** table below. Note that an even larger expanded list of goods is available in the descriptions of these locations in **Trade Goods**, below.

### CARGO AVAILABLE: MERCURY STATION

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                       | INCOME MODIFIER           |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1         | Scientific Data and Samples | +2 Income                 |
| 2-3       | Fuel Pellets                | +1 Income                 |
| 4         | Raw Materials (Ore)         | +2 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 5-6       | Grain Alcohol               | +1 Temporary Income Bonus |

### CARGO AVAILABLE: EARTH

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                               | INCOME MODIFIER           |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1         | Luxury Goods/ Consumables (see <b>Trade Goods</b> ) | +3 Income                 |
| 2         | Art, Artifacts, or Handcrafted Goods                | +2 Income                 |
| 3         | Electronics/ Seeds/ Entertainment                   | + 1 Income                |
| 4         | Machine Parts/ Tools                                | +3 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 5         | Textiles/Silk/Wool                                  | +2 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 6         | Food/ Nutrients                                     | +1 Temporary Income Bonus |

### CARGO AVAILABLE: LUNA

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                     | INCOME MODIFIER           |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1         | Luxury Goods/ Pharmaceuticals             | +3 Income                 |
| 2         | Military Electronics/ Weapons             | +2 Income                 |
| 3         | Electronics/ Entertainment/ Fuel Pellets  | + 1 Income                |
| 4-5       | Raw Materials (Ore)/ Machine Parts/ Tools | +2 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 6         | Food/ Nutrients/ Water                    | +1 Temporary Income Bonus |

### CARGO AVAILABLE: MARS

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                     | INCOME MODIFIER           |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1         | Luxury Goods/ Pharmaceuticals             | +3 Income                 |
| 2         | Weapons/ Alcohol                          | +2 Income                 |
| 3         | Electronics/ Entertainment/ Fuel Pellets  | + 1 Income                |
| 4         | Raw Materials (Ore)/ Machine Parts/ Tools | +3 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 5         | Textiles/ Cotton/ Silk                    | +2 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 6         | Food/ Nutrients/ Water                    | +1 Temporary Income Bonus |

### CARGO AVAILABLE: CERES

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                     | INCOME MODIFIER           |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1         | Luxury Goods                              | +2 Income                 |
| 2-3       | Entertainment/ Fuel Pellets               | +1 Income                 |
| 4-5       | Raw Materials (Ore)/ Machine Parts/ Tools | +2 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 6         | Food/ Nutrients/ Water                    | +1 Temporary Income Bonus |

### CARGO AVAILABLE: JOVIAN SYSTEM

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                         | INCOME MODIFIER           |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1         | Scientific Data and Samples/ Genetic Material | +2 Income                 |
| 2-3       | Fuel Pellets/ Pharmaceuticals                 | +1 Income                 |
| 4         | Raw Materials (Ore)/ Machine Parts/ Tools     | +2 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 5-6       | Food/ Nutrients/ Water                        | +1 Temporary Income Bonus |

### CARGO AVAILABLE: SATURNIAN SYSTEM

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                       | INCOME MODIFIER           |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1         | Scientific Data and Samples | +2 Income                 |
| 2-3       | Fuel Pellets                | +1 Income                 |
| 4         | Raw Materials (Ore)         | +2 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 5-6       | Water                       | +1 Temporary Income Bonus |

### CARGO AVAILABLE: TYCHO STATION

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                     | INCOME MODIFIER           |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1         | Luxury Goods/ Pharmaceuticals             | +3 Income                 |
| 2         | Weapons/ Military Hardware                | +2 Income                 |
| 3         | Electronics/ Entertainment/ Fuel Pellets  | +1 Income                 |
| 4         | Raw Materials (Ore)/ Machine Parts/ Tools | +3 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 5         | Grain Alcohol/ Recreational Drugs (Legal) | +2 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 6         | Food/ Nutrients/ Water                    | +1 Temporary Income Bonus |

### CARGO AVAILABLE: URANIAN AND NEPTUNIAN SYSTEMS

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                       | INCOME MODIFIER           |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1-3       | Scientific Data and Samples | +2 Income                 |
| 4         | Raw Materials (Ore)         | +2 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 5-6       | Water                       | +1 Temporary Income Bonus |

### CARGO AVAILABLE: MEDINA STATION

| DRAMA DIE | GOODS                                | INCOME MODIFIER           |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1         | Alien Artifacts/ Alien Animals       | +3 Income                 |
| 2         | Alien Plants                         | +2 Income                 |
| 3         | Alien Scientific Samples (Soil etc.) | +1 Income                 |
| 4-5       | Alien Materials (Exotic Wood etc.)   | +2 Temporary Income Bonus |
| 6         | Food/ Nutrients/ Water               | +1 Temporary Income Bonus |



## TRADE GOODS EXPANDED

A merchant needs something to buy or sell; collectively, these items are called trade goods. They encompass everything from raw minerals—even water—to crafted goods and works of art. The merchant buys them from one market, not necessarily their source, and transports them to another market in the hopes of making a profit.

The variety of trade goods is as vast as there are people in the Sol system. Everyone wants something, and if there's a market, a source, and enough money, it can happen.

The basics—food, water, and in some cases oxygen—tend to be cheap to produce and cheap to buy and sell, even though they're absolute necessities for survival in space. Asteroids and moonlets are routinely stripped down for minerals, producing basic metals in quantities that have made the expansion of humans into space possible. Some, like gold or platinum, still have some value, largely emotional, but for the most part, the cost of extraction and shipping is what a buyer pays for.

Anything that requires advanced manufacturing, from the simplest tool to an infinitely complex artificial intelligence processing core, starts escalating in price. So too do foodstuffs beyond protein supplements and toilet bowl wine. Rarer materials like wood, silk, or cotton also fetch decent prices.

Beyond that, luxury goods are where the real money is made—provided a merchant can find the right buyer. Works of art, especially from pre-spaceflight Earth, are highly valuable, along with historical artifacts. For example, a genuine Roman coin could feed a small research station for a year.

At the far end of the spectrum are items brought back from worlds beyond the Ring. Alien animals and plants, not to mention artifacts, could purchase an island back on Earth. Trade beyond the Ring has opened an entirely new economy to the Sol system, and people are only beginning to understand its nuances.

Finally, illicit goods like drugs, weapons, technology, and some kinds of genetic material can be worth a king's ransom. Of course they'll also get you tossed in jail (or an airlock) if you're caught with them, so smuggling is a profession best entered into with caution.

### MERCURY

Mercury Station (technically UNN-MCRN Joint Research Station Robinson) is a marvel of engineering orbiting the Sol system's smallest, innermost planet. It's not exactly a cosmopolitan hub of activity—roughly 5000 scientists, researchers, grad students, and prospectors call the Station home—but it does house a marketplace and has become a popular stop for inner system merchants trying to avoid piracy and other dangers beyond the Belt.

The Station is designed with heat dissipation in mind; its orbit around Mercury is highly eccentric, allowing it to maximize its time in the rocky planet's shadow. When it's directly in the sun's melting gaze, Mercury Station's heat dissipation systems kick into gear. While it can get uncomfortable inside, life isn't unbearable, and the station is attempting to move to a degree of self-sufficiency.

Notably, the Station has made a name for itself producing a special variety of grain alcohol using only the power of the Sun as a heat source. This booze, which is in the gin family, fetches a great price outside of the Station, and nearly every science team aboard has set up their own still to meet the climbing demand.

#### KEY MERCURY IMPORTS

- Food, Water, and Oxygen
- Entertainment
- Textiles

#### KEY MERCURY EXPORTS

- Grain Alcohol (Mercury Station variety)
- Raw Materials (Ores)
- Machinery and Tools

### EARTH

Although it's a faux pax in some circles to say so, there are simply things made on Earth that have no equivalent anywhere else—and people will pay enormous premiums for “the real thing.” Typically these things include craft goods and luxury items, but also extend to items of personal interest. For example, launching a chunk of the Berlin wall up the gravity well and hauling it out to a research station around Neptune is astronomically expensive and functionally pointless, but if the director of the station has an affinity for late 20th century history and wants a new decoration for her office, and she's willing to pay, then just such an artifact can be acquired.

Earth doesn't necessarily create items for export at a large scale, as it's busy feeding and attending to the billions of people who live there. Some manufacturers, businesses, and artisans recognize the opportunity in selling to exporters, especially if said exporters are willing to pay to get their materials into orbit.

### EARTH CONSUMABLES [RARE]

A healthy portion of Earth-based exports are consumables such as food and alcohol. Regardless of the reasoning, some people are willing to pay more for Scotch distilled in Aberlour, Scotland, even if any mining team with a still and a passing knowledge of chemistry could recreate something that's flavor is so close its differences are indistinguishable. Having the label, the bottle, the cork, and the prestige of the entire package just *matters*.

What Earth doesn't export is raw materials. It no longer makes economic sense to mine minerals—or even, in most cases, construct heavy machinery with those materials—and launch it into orbit. It would cost less for mining company to attach an Epstein drive to a small, mineral-rich asteroid and send it into an Earth orbit than it would to launch the same sized rock from the surface.

The planet's strong gravity and atmospheric density—second only to Venus among non-giant planets—means a good deal of business is conducted in orbit. Launches are restricted to small ships; since igniting an Epstein drive on or near the surface would result in an environmental disaster (and the deaths of anyone nearby), launches are restricted to conventional engines, which means cargo must go into orbit in small batches using specially-designed reusable rockets and cargo pods, or a ship made for launching cargo.

Likewise, merchants wishing to land on Earth to conduct business take their goods down in a dropship or similar sort of skiff that can navigate the planet's atmosphere, land safely, and take off. Larger firms utilize drones that can land cargo precisely at a spaceport (or their private warehouse facilities).

### LUNA

As it's under the jurisdiction of the United Nations, it's easy to mentally classify Luna as an extension of Earth. While the population there has achieved self-sufficiency, there's still a steady flow of materials to and from Luna's surface (and subsurface) cities. The Helium-3 mines and refineries on Luna are one of the UN's primary source of fuel pellets. Plus, the millions that call Luna home still need and want all the creature comforts of Earth or Mars. That means a steady trade up and down the gravity well, with freighters coming from Mars or the Belt often stopping at Luna before the final orbit around Earth.

Luna's low gravity allows much larger ships to land, so it's a natural stopping point for merchants inbound to Earth. An entire industry has grown up around the convenience of selling goods to a middle-person who lands it on Earth to resell. Many merchants who lack the funds, vehicles, or resources to attempt an Earth landing find this an agreeable solution to offload their wares.

This also makes Luna the logical trafficking point for drugs and other illicit cargo coming from the outer system. Belters especially, brewing chemicals without the watchful eye of governments or police, find Luna a convenient dumping ground for their cargo. As such, goods from the Belt tend to be watched much more closely by the UN authorities on Luna, and smuggling becomes a game of cat-and-mouse between the merchants and the military.

### WEALTH AND POWER

Luna is rich in iron but poor in many other mineral resources, so the majority of these must be flown in. The vast majority of these feed Luna's refining and manufacturing industries. Its low gravity makes Luna ideal for building heavy machinery, including ships

#### RARE CONSUMABLE EARTH EXPORTS

- Scotch (single-malt and blend)
- Champagne
- Cheeses
- Rare meats, frozen and cured
- Certain illicit drugs (contraband)

#### KEY EARTH EXPORTS

- Amber
- Ancient and Historical Artifacts
- Animals, as Pets
- Animals, Exotic (Contraband)
- Art
- Handcrafted Goods
- Electronics
- Entertainment
- Religious Implements
- Genetic Material
- Plant Seeds
- Salt
- Silk
- Wood
- Wool
- Fertilizers and Soil Enhancers

#### KEY EARTH IMPORTS

- Fuel Pellets
- Art
- Scientific Research
- Technology (specifically Martian)

### THE ARMSTRONG CHALLENGE

There's an underground competition among Belter pilots landing on Luna called "The Armstrong Challenge." On their final descent, they attempt to land without the use of their autopilot or navigation computers. It's an exceptionally dangerous maneuver, especially with a larger ship, and the "rules," such as they are, stipulate it's only to be attempted when landing on a pad in an open field where no one can get hurt.

Even so, a ship does occasionally have a very rough landing (the autopilot is reengaged if it looks like the landing will result in damage or harm), and those who complete The Armstrong Challenge wear it as a badge of social honor, with all the appropriate bragging rights.

Word of the Challenge has slowly leaked out because of these bragging rights, and Martian pilots have started trying it, much to the dismay of Lunar authorities.

A pilot attempting the Armstrong Challenge must make a successful TN 19 Piloting (Dexterity) test.



## KEY LUNA EXPORTS

- Aluminum
- Machinery
- Machine Parts
- Refined Chemicals
- Spacecraft and Vehicles
- Helium-3
- Fuel Pellets
- Electronics

## KEY LUNA IMPORTS

- Minerals
- Cloth
- Luxury Goods
- Entertainment
- Drugs (illicit)
- Food
- Technology (specifically Martian)

## KEY MARTIAN EXPORTS

- Food
- Chemical Compounds
- Raw Materials (Ore), Machine Parts, and Tools
- Luxury Goods
- Entertainment
- Pharmaceuticals
- Textiles
- Alcohol and Recreational Drugs

## KEY MARTIAN IMPORTS

- Textiles
- Luxury Goods
- Pharmaceuticals
- Earth-Based Consumables
- Entertainment

## KEY CERES EXPORTS

- Water, Food
- Chemical Compounds
- Machine Parts and Tools
- Raw Materials (Ore)
- Alcohol and Recreational Drugs

## KEY CERES IMPORTS

- Textiles
- Luxury Goods
- Pharmaceuticals
- Earth-Based Consumables
- Entertainment

and vehicles, that deploys to the rest of the system. The UNN accounts for the vast majority of these facilities; Luna functions as a combination drydock and arsenal, and everything from Navy dreadnaughts to light interceptors are built in Luna orbit.

Some facilities are devoted to constructing civilian craft (in fact, some Navy contractors build both), and vessels from rumrunners to runabouts are always available for sale—in new and refurbished varieties. Buyers with the right assets and contacts could buy (or build) a completely decked-out luxury yacht, a slick blockade runner, or a miniature warbird.

## MARS

Mars is the “second Earth,” the first place humanity turned into a livable planet once the Sol system colonization began. As such, it has an old and well-developed economy, robust manufacturing facilities, and pretty much any luxury you can find on Earth. Home to millions, Mars is completely self-sufficient but still imports a sizable number of goods, mostly raw materials that aren’t naturally found on the planet and creature comforts from Earth that cannot be substituted.

Mars’ gravity and thin atmosphere mean ships can land easier than on Earth, but it can still be an experience to take off fully loaded. Burning an Epstein drive in atmo isn’t illegal but can only be done at remote spaceports custom-built just for that purpose. It can be a pain for a large freighter to load cargo at one of those ports, so bigger ships still use landing skiffs and dropships.

Like Earth and Luna, there’s no one “market” on Mars—each city and town has their own trading areas, and there are corporate entities with branch offices all over the planet. Anyone wanting to do business seeks out one of those offices, or simply puts out a notification on the newswire. Because Mars’ market is so huge, it should only be a matter of minutes before buyers and sellers are connected.

## THE BELT / CERES

The biggest, most prosperous, and most self-sufficient port in the Belt is Ceres. The dwarf planet also acts as a key hub for moving goods to and from the smaller stations and settlements in the Belt. The big players try to avoid going out to, in their words, “pissant little tin cans” where the market for their goods is tiny, relying instead on selling to big wholesalers at Ceres and letting local Belter haulers and small-time operators move the goods out to the periphery.

Ceres also acts as a major market for selling Belter goods—mostly ore and parts—on to the rest of the System. It’s more for this reason that it’s a key stop on the major trade routes—also because minerals and water tend to be dirt cheap.

Belters love a good party, and they’re more than happy to bring in the goods to make it happen. They also want Earth and Mars-based luxuries; they’re one of the main consumers of real Scotch off-Earth. While the markets on Ceres aren’t as hopping as those on Tycho, they’re still a great place for an upcoming crew to buy, sell, and make a reputation.

## THE OUTER PLANETS

Inner System attitudes notwithstanding, settlements beyond the Belt—the bulk of the OPA—are vibrant, active colonies. What they lack for in size they make up for in spirit. They’re also active consumers of goods like luxury items and pharmaceuticals from the Inner System, and major exporters of goods like ore and fuel back to the Inner System.

The OPA also has its own baked-in trade lanes; the farms on Ganymede supply the vast majority of food to the Outer System and the Belt, and water harvesting around Saturn and in the Belt is a desperately needed lifeline for every colony beyond Mars.

The two largest trading hubs in the Outer System are Ganymede and Tycho, although they serve two drastically different purposes. Tycho is a crossroads where traders stop on the way to the far reaches or the ring, while Ganymede is a major exporter whose key demands are luxury goods and entertainment.

### JUPITER

Ganymede is the largest settlement in the Jovian system, but colonies on Europa and Callisto are growing and starting to give Ganymede a run for its proverbial money. Ganymede also has the unique distinction of being the starting point for the UN-MCR War; its surface is still littered with debris of ships deorbited in that conflict.

Today Ganymede is still a pale imitation of its former self even though its farms have gone back to almost full production capacity. Freighters routinely come and go dropping off needed water and much-desired luxury items from the Inner System, then loading their holds with proteins and other foodstuffs bound for the far reaches of the OPA.

Callisto and Europa don't have the food resources to export, but they make up for it with minerals and water, respectively. Both settlements are smaller than Ganymede and therefore lack the demand (and resources) for truly niche luxury goods, but such items are always appreciated.

### SATURN

Basking in the glow of Saturn's mighty rings, a variety of stations and colonies oversee ice harvesting in orbit and element gathering from the daredevil prospectors who dip into the gas giant's clouds to extract different materials. Life at Saturn is understandably laid back, so long as the food shipments arrive on time and a steady stream of booze and recreational chemicals flow in.

Saturnian markets are staid affairs compared to the raucous trading on Tycho, Ceres, or even Ganymede. The gentle vibe of the system seems to have taken over, and deals are hashed out over the course of a day, as negotiations are punctuated with various ritual drinks and breaking of bread. Saturnian settlements welcome basics and anything else from Earth or Mars that might alleviate the boredom. They'll happily export water and many chemical compounds impossible to get elsewhere.

Titan's resorts and pleasure domes, getaways for the wealthy and the lucky, constantly import luxury goods from Earth and beyond. It's a rare resort that won't have a pour of your favorite Scotch ready—as long as you're prepared to pay. Many of them used special contractors—essentially militarized merchant vessels—to haul in goods, but they have been known to offer contracts to reliable freighter or merchant crews who can quickly hustle in luxury goods.

### TYCHO STATION

Tycho has become a jewel in the OPA's crown. Despite the ability of the UNN and MCRN to obliterate it with a couple of well-targeted nukes, it has persevered and ridden out the "troubles" of the UN-MCR War. It's a thriving trade center, being the central axis for inbound trade in the Outer System, and a major stopping point for ships arriving from the Ring. Many a merchant would rather dump their goods on Tycho and return to Medina rather than spend the time and resources dragging them all the way to the Inner System.

Tycho's markets resemble an Old Earth bazaar, with every kind of good represented. Tycho itself does not make much for export—only ships and other manufactured goods—but it acts as a clearinghouse for merchants so literally anything could be had for the right price. In fact, someone could make a personal fortune by never leaving the station and simply purchasing goods from inbound merchants and selling them to haulers heading to the Inner System.

### URANUS AND NEPTUNE

The Uranian and Neptunian Systems are distant, cold, and barely populated. While outposts exist on Miranda and Triton, they serve two main purposes: prospecting and mining, and scientific research. The observation array on Triton has shown the universe in detail unheard-of, while the mines and refineries on Miranda are the true final outpost for industry in the reaches of the OPA.

The colonies in the Uranian and Neptunian systems, even the (relatively) large ones on Triton and Miranda, have a very drab and depressed quality to them. Their markets are similar—very businesslike, where a deal is conducted in an hour after months aboard a ship to get there.

#### KEY JOVIAN EXPORTS

- Raw Materials (Ore) (Callisto)
- Fuel Pellets
- Water (Europa)
- Rare Metals
- Food (Ganymede)
- Scientific Data and Samples
- European Life (heavily regulated)

#### KEY JOVIAN IMPORTS

- Oxygen
- Textiles
- Luxury Goods
- High-end Consumables
- Pharmaceuticals
- Entertainment

#### KEY SATURNIAN EXPORTS

- Water
- Chemical Compounds
- Raw Materials (Ore)
- Scientific Data and Samples

#### KEY SATURNIAN IMPORTS

- Food, Water, Oxygen
- Textiles
- Luxury Goods
- Pharmaceuticals
- Alcohol and Recreational Drugs
- Entertainment

#### KEY TYCHO EXPORTS

- Machine Parts and Tools (made at Tycho)
- Pharmaceuticals (made at Tycho)
- Chemicals (made at Tycho)
- Luxury Goods
- Food, Water, Oxygen

#### KEY TYCHO IMPORTS

- Food, Water, Oxygen
- Textiles
- Luxury Goods
- Pharmaceuticals
- Raw Materials (Ore)
- Alien Goods (from Medina)



## KEY URANIAN / NEPTUNIAN EXPORTS

- Raw Materials (Ore)
- Machine Parts and Tools
- Fuel Pellets
- Industrial Diamonds (Neptune)
- Rare Metals

## KEY URANIAN / NEPTUNIAN IMPORTS

- Food, Water, Oxygen
- Textiles
- Luxury Goods
- Recreational Drugs
- Alcohol
- Entertainment

## KEY MEDINA STATION EXPORTS

- Alien Artifacts
- Alien Animals
- Alien Plant Life
- Alien Resources (Wood, etc.)
- Scientific Data and Samples

## KEY MEDINA STATION IMPORTS

- Food, Water, Oxygen
- Textiles
- Luxury Goods
- Recreational Drugs
- Alcohol
- Entertainment

Trade goods needed are standard on any colony world: water and food, entertainment and drugs. Miranda is a major exporter of fuel pellets and ore; Triton is almost exclusively an exporter of rare metals, including famous Neptunian diamonds.

## MEDINA STATION

Although technically not in the Sol system (perhaps technically not even in the universe at all), Medina Station acts as a de facto frontier outpost for humanity—the “last stop” before the wilds beyond the Rings. The Station is a repurposed generation ship and is enormous, housing thousands of people, lively markets, and hopping (relatively speaking) nightlife. Frontier life tends to take on a “work hard, play hard” mentality on Medina, with clubs and bars that could make Tycho partygoers blush.

Additionally, Medina has yet to become fully self-contained, even though it has the infrastructure to do so. As a result, Medina still requires much of the basic necessities of life just as it’s looking for booze, club drugs, and the latest video games. Keeping Medina supplied has become a full-time job for many a long hauler in the OPA, and the fact that Medina operates as the key trading point between goods coming from the far sides of the Rings into the Sol system certainly doesn’t hurt. A cargo hold full of alien plant life could literally be worth more than the ship hauling it.

The markets in Medina, collectively known as “New Rialto,” possess some of the same rough-and-tumble frontier spirit as the rest of the Station. Trading is loud, public, and punctuated with high-fives and hugs. Everyone on the Station knows fortunes are being made every day, and life on Medina has attracted a fair share of people with what used to be referred to as “entrepreneurial spirit.” Others might characterize it as “extreme greed.”

Regardless of how it’s portrayed (or received by a newcomer), Medina Station’s merchants also possess an almost paradoxical benevolence for each other. If someone loses everything on a dangerous venture beyond the Ring, the others will come together to pitch in to help them—despite not thinking twice about screwing the same merchant in a deal on the New Rialto trading floor.

## BEYOND THE RING

Trade to destinations beyond the Ring Gate is a highly lucrative, highly dangerous affair. Crews can make fantastic sums simply hauling water to the right exoplanet colonies, and the alien artifacts returned from beyond the Rings are the stuff fortunes are made of. If venturing beyond the Ring, add +2 to any Income Modifier for the sale of goods to an exosystem colony, or the return of cargo to Medina or the Sol system.

## TRADE ROUTES

Like the traders on Old Earth, merchants in *The Expanse* (and freighters hauling cargo) have developed sophisticated trade routes that take advantage of supply and demand across the Sol system. A handful of these are detailed below; crews can discover—or create—their own.

## EARTH-LUNA-MARS

**Earth:** Pick up luxury goods.  
**Luna:** Sell part of the goods; load ore. **Mars:** Sell luxury goods and ore; buy luxury goods and entertainment.  
**Luna:** Sell everything. Repeat.

## CERES-MARS

**Ceres:** Pick up ore. **Mars:** Sell ore; pick up luxury goods. Repeat.

## CERES-EARTH

**Ceres:** Pick up Ore. **Earth:** Sell ore; pick up consumables and luxury goods. Repeat.

## GANYMEDE-TYCHO-CERES

**Ganymede:** Pick up food.  
**Tycho:** Sell some food; pick up luxury goods and goods from Medina. **Ceres:** Sell all; pick up ore. Repeat.

## TYCHO-MEDINA

**Tycho:** Pick up food and water.  
**Medina:** sell all; pick up alien goods. **Tycho:** Sell all. Repeat.

## MARS-TYCHO

**Mars:** Pick up luxury goods. **Tycho:** Pick up goods from Medina. **Mars:** Sell all. Repeat.





## PIRACY

Despite its romantic connotations, driven in no small part by popular media, piracy is a legitimate and real problem in the solar system, especially in the Belt and beyond. Pirates are not wobbly-walking swashbucklers; they're desperate robbers who take great personal risks because they're left with very little choice—making them dangerous at best and ruthless at worst.

The closer a merchant ship is to a patrolled UNN or MCRN trade lane, the less likely it is to encounter a pirate attack. Pirates stick to trajectories where a more powerful naval vessel couldn't quickly alter trajectory and burn to stop criminal activity (or, more likely, catch up with the pirates after the fact). However the UNN and MCRN patrols can only do so much, and as the two governments have become embroiled in their own conflicts, pirates have taken advantage of the reduction in merchant protection to pick off ships with greater and greater audacity.

Off the trade lanes is a different, darker story. Merchants taking these routes—even if it saves time and fuel—are rolling the dice for their safety. It's not that there's a pirate lurking around every asteroid; as much as the pirates would like a merchant captain to think this, it's simply not true, and the chances of attack are still fairly slim—slimmer if the merchant vessel is well-armed or has an escort.

Still, piracy does occur—and is on the rise. Like corsairs of old, modern pirates take advantage of surprise, speed, and fear to shock their prey into surrender. The best can take a ship without firing a shot; others will lay waste with particle cannons and railguns until the hapless merchanteer is a drifting hulk, then pick its bones dry like vultures.

## SPACE HEISTS

Pirate attacks are almost always carefully planned—in a way, they more closely resemble heists than indiscriminate robberies. It's a rare pirate who sits in a trade lane waiting for a random ship to pass by. Instead, they have contacts at different harbor-master or Port Authority offices across the system who, for a price or a cut of the take, feed the scallywags information about shipping traffic.

"So either tell us why you're taking the risk of putting us up, or we go get back on our ship and try our hand at piracy."

—Leviathan Wakes



## PIRACY BEYOND THE SLOW ZONE

While the Sol system is heavily populated, heavily trafficked, and heavily patrolled, the frontier nature of the systems beyond the Rings make them perfect for pirates looking for ripe pickings. Mounting an expedition to one of those systems is no mean feat; it requires planning, preparation, supplies, and high-quality cover when passing through the Hub.

Still, a pirate crew looking to knock over a rich freighter full of alien artifacts or other goods that will command astronomical prices could do worse. Military and mercenary patrols beyond the Ring gates are so thin, and often ill-equipped, that should they luck into (or have prior knowledge of) a rich freighter, a pirate crew could make enough to retire.

All ships must file flight plans and declare cargo manifests with the local authorities. If a relatively undefended ship leaves Ceres with a hold full of valuable luxury goods, it takes a quick tightbeam from a crooked official (often a low-level, underpaid employee) to drop this information in the pirates' hands. It's up to the pirates to then plot the attack, often choosing the most advantageous location on the route. From there, they either set a trap or go in guns blazing.

The object of either method is to get the target to surrender. Ammunition costs money, and a firefight increases the chance that the pirates' ship is damaged, requiring costly repairs. The most powerful weapon in a pirate's arsenal is fear. Attacking with alacrity and targeting vital ship systems to damage them, all while broadcasting further threats (which can be unimaginably graphic), all try to get the surprised and stunned merchant crew to "strike their colors" and give up. Some merchant crews have ex-military personnel; others are purely civilian—and if the pirate did their homework on the ship, they'll know which is which.

Lubberly, civilian crews usually—but not always—surrender right away, especially if they were caught unawares. Tighter-disciplined crews may fight back, but it's typically a quick calculus of the value of the cargo, the cost of repairs, and the lives of the crew. Insured Earth- or Mars-based merchants may run up the white flag immediately, as long as they're confident they won't be murdered, safe in the knowledge they'll be compensated for losses. A desperate, down-on-their-luck crew may decide the best option is to go down fighting. Of course, a ship that puts up enough of a fight (or causes enough damage) may actually repel the pirates.

Once the ship surrenders, the pirates board in vac suits in case the merchants have turned off the climate at atmosphere in parts of the ship. What happens next depends on what kind of information the pirates have and what their objective might be. If they're after something highly valuable, they'll track down the cargo as quickly as they can, sometimes resorting to torture or murder to get the merchant crew to cough it up. If they're after general loot, the pirates will load as much as they can as quickly as they can. Hardcore ruffians will make off with a crew's personal effects, even just out of spite.

### THE GETAWAY

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After the deed is done, the pirates need to escape as quickly as possible. Hard burns leave traces, and many pirates have figured out circuitous routes to take back to a base or safe haven. They'll have disabled the merchanteer's comms systems, which take time to repair, although an emergency distress beacon will activate right away. The pirates then hope for a clean getaway. Tactics they might employ include a short, hard burn followed by floating and altering trajectory with maneuvering thrusters; flying outside the elliptical; burning on one trajectory and executing a quick "turn and burn" to go over their own trail; and going on the float to disguise themselves as another piece of junk.

### SELLING THE SWAG

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Once the pirates make a clean getaway, they face the biggest question of all: what to do with the loot. Technically burying it on a desert island in a treasure chest is no longer an option, but some pirates opt to do the next-best thing: offload the cargo in a contain on a tiny, unmapped asteroid (or even just floating in the void of space) so they can pick it up later when any heat dies down. This also has the added benefit of freeing up space in the hold for more loot.

The ultimate goal is to offload the cargo and make some money (or trade the cargo for necessities, up to and including food, water, parts, and fuel.) That requires a pirate-friendly port. Anything in the inner system is tightly controlled by the UN or MCR; the OPA tends to be far more tolerant of cargo that appeared without a proper manifest, but even that is changing.

There are no stations that cater entirely to pirates, at least insofar as they buy cargo. Most pirates resort to the tactics of freebooters since time immemorial: they bribe the right officials to look the other way. Again, this will vary from port to port, but with the right incentive, even the most stalwart protector of the law might be persuaded to allow *just one crate* of loot off a ship. Just one, of course.

### PIRATE PORTS

There are no official pirate ports; any romantic notions of anarchist collectives run by free spirits where criminals are harbored have been quickly squashed by the UNN and the MCRN, sometimes simultaneously. Any pirate port advertising itself as such is inviting annihilation by a dreadnaught or battleship. They simply don't exist.

However, the farther one gets from the watchful eye of the three superpowers, the less interested port authorities become in where cargo might have come from (and the likelier those authorities are to accept a bribe to look the other way when it falls off a visiting starship). Those aren't pirate ports per se, but they're definitely pirate-friendly.

There are only three completely pirate ports in the Sol system: Hadrás in the Belt; Upsilon between Jupiter and Saturn; and Far Horizons near Neptune. Each of them are slapdash stations fashioned from the corpses of old ships, cargo containers, and pre-Epstein fuel stages left littering the system as junk. They house between 100 and 500 people each, and happily stay off the superpowers' radar by restricting who visits (and blasting unwelcome strangers into paste.)

Hadrás is known for its wild parties, driven by the quick exchange of illicit cargo that semi-legal merchants are only too happy to fake manifests for and carry on to the rest of the system. Upsilon is a massive hub for the drug trade in the Outer System, and Far Horizons acts as a stopping off point for pirates taking their activities beyond the Gate.

Another concern for pirates is the availability of repairs for their ships. All but the most stringent UN or MCR ports tend to not ask too many questions about battle damage, but forensic analysis of images and renders from a docked ship could potentially match a pirate vessel to flight footage recorded by its prey. As one captain said, "there's no such thing as too much paranoia when it comes to your boat." The handful of pirate stations bumbling around the Belt and some of the outer system trojans offer repair services and won't narc on their fellow freebooters, but the quality of the job is nowhere near what you might find on Ceres or Tycho Station, so captains must constantly weigh the risks against the gains.

### LONG-TERM PROSPECTS

Pirate life ranges from pure desperation to a way to make a comfortable living, although it's always a life on the edge. Every member of a pirate crew has a rap sheet and can't even so much as start a tightbeam conversation with their mother without risking detection and annihilation. The UNN and MCRN share lists of wanted pirates and have a mutual agreement to capture and turn over scallywags captured in each others' territories. The OPA has no such agreements with the other two superpowers but will still actively hunt pirates when it suits their needs.

Other than their criminal proclivities, pirate life is not terribly different than life aboard other ships, except it's always centered around the next big score. If pirates don't steal, they don't eat. Although pirates aren't branded with hot irons anymore, criminal databases are almost as bad, and once a pirate embarks on a life of crime it's nearly impossible to go back.

### THE MAKINGS OF A PIRATE

What makes a person or crew turn pirate? The same reasons anyone becomes a criminal: a situation where breaking the law appears more attractive than following it. In *The Expanse*, that could mean anything from being accused of a crime you didn't commit to the need to eat without any recourse. Some prefer "the life" to being tied down by a government or taking advantage of Basic, but the politically-minded pirate usually

### LAWS AND PUNISHMENTS

Piracy is illegal in the jurisdictions of the UN, MCR, and OPA. Given the amount of data the average ship collects, it's also a difficult charge to dodge if a crew actually engaged in piracy. Piracy itself is a prison sentence of anywhere from 5 to 500 years, depending on the value of the goods stolen and the number of violations.

It's when assault and murder are added to the mix that pirates can really run afoul of the law. Kill a merchant crew and a pirate will find themselves locked in solitary with the key thrown away. Kill enough of them and there's a pretty good chance a pirate hunter or military captain will accidentally decompress whatever airlock the pirate finds themselves in.

### STORY HOOK: THE TREASURE FLEET (PIRACY)

The entire system is buzzing about a massive find of alien artifacts from beyond the Rings. Scientists, exoarcheologists, and corporations alike are champing at the bit to get their hands on them—and aren't particularly concerned who they buy the artifacts from. That's where the crew comes in.

The artifacts are coming to the Sol system in an armada of five freighters, dubbed "The Treasure Fleet" by the media. It's almost like they painted an open invitation for scallywags on the side of the ship! The crew must decide where to hit The Treasure Fleet: there are advantages and disadvantages to attacking it in the Sol system versus on the far side of the Rings. The fleet will be armed, so it's going to take a show of force—of some kind—to get them to surrender.

This adventure is best run like a heist: a puzzle that the crew must solve in order to make the most out of their ill-gotten gains. Because The Treasure Fleet is five ships strong, there's an argument to be made for taking only what's most valuable, which makes for an interesting part of the puzzle. There's the added challenge of possessing "hot" cargo that they potentially need to smuggle through the Hub and somehow offload back in the Sol system.

All in a days work, matesys.



doesn't last long when push comes to shove.

Once a person goes down the pirate path there's no going back; amnesty has never been granted by the UN or MCR, and it seems doubtful it ever will. A privateer's commission is not the same thing as forgiveness of piracy, and while one government may dangle dropping charges as an incentive for a crew to take this offer, the others certainly won't. So, once a pirate, always a pirate, and as a popular saying goes on Hadrus Station: "Look around and count how many old pirates you see."

## PRIVATEERING

Privateering is state-authorized piracy. In exchange for clemency, a government authorizes a pirate to attack ships of other governments. Sometimes those attacks are in the authorizing government's sovereign space; other times, the privateer can roam far and wide looking for targets.

A privateer's authorization only extends as far as its *issuing* government has authority or jurisdiction. Because privateering is essentially open provocation of hostilities between one government and another—a justifiable cause for war—it's used sparingly and only in times of conflict.

The exception to this rule is the OPA (and eventually the Consolidated Navy) and the Free Navy, who both employed privateers to harangue the other side.

## SMUGGLING AND ILLEGAL CARGO

Smuggling is the act of transporting goods illegally, either out of or into a port. Unlike piracy the crew doesn't steal goods they smuggle; it's an intentional act and involves specific buyers and sellers. That doesn't mean a crew can't smuggle stolen goods, though.

Moving contraband differs from moving regular cargo in that it's not on a manifest, not recorded in ship or authority records, and doesn't (usually) have an ID chip. Rather than a specific contract to fulfill, or an open market at which to find the highest bidder, smugglers operate on handshake agreements, good faith, and chutzpah. This can be dangerous for the smuggler, especially a new and inexperienced one, who runs the risk of being cheated, maimed, or killed outright upon arrival. There are simply no protections in this line of work apart from wits, weapons, and skill.

## SCOUNDRELS ALL

A good smuggler is a mix of a merchant's business sense, a conspiracy theorist's paranoia, and a daredevil's ability to flout danger. Like pirates, those attracted to the smuggler's life are not romantic figures with a heart of gold: they're ruthless criminals who may seem charismatic on the surface but would just as soon airlock their mother if it meant getting the goods through and getting paid.

Smuggling is often combined with legitimate trade to help disguise it. Of an entire hold, only one container or crate could be contraband goods. Other ships are designed (or retrofitted) from the ground-up for smuggling. They have honeycombs of hidden compartments, false walls, little niches, and spaces that aren't on the official ship blueprints. They may not even look like freighters at all; racing pinnaces, light corvettes, and even luxury craft can and are outfitted for smuggling. After all, what better place to hide contraband than under the fancy carpet in some rich person's floating pleasure palace?

## THE FINE ART OF SMUGGLING

Hiding the goods is only part of the challenge; that's just a way to avoid a visual inspection. Smugglers have to contend with technology specifically developed to make their lives miserable, from ID chips affixed to cargo to smart manifests to substance detectors that work on the atomic level. The good news is that every one of those measures has a counter. ID chips can be spoofed (or destroyed). Smart manifests can be hacked. And substance detectors can be fooled or scrambled.

Still, any smuggler who isn't going to get caught on their first flight out of dock has their work cut out for them. When in doubt, or in a pinch, there's always the old-fashioned solution of bribing the inspector and hoping they'll go on the take.

Smuggling jobs run the gamut from the mundane (a special kind of food whose export is restricted) to the extraordinary (the last surviving member of a family who has a price on their head). Because the definition of contraband is so broad, one run varies wildly from the next.



## ILLICIT CARGO

Sometimes things are just flat-out illegal to move. These include, but aren't limited to, some kinds of pharmaceuticals (drugs), weapons, and technology. People still smuggle them but doing so is a far greater challenge than, say, an ancient Roman statue because technology exists to specifically interdict the drug and weapons trades.

### DRUGS

The illegal drug trade is divided into two categories: recreational drugs, of which only the hardest and most dangerous are illegal; and medicinal drugs that governments have restricted for one reason or another. If a medicinal drug falls on the restricted list, chances are it was developed for military purposes, or its developing corporation lobbied for a restriction to prevent the drug from falling into the hands of someone who could duplicate it.

Recreational drugs are common across the Sol System and range from mild sedatives to hallucinogens lasting days. Attitudes towards recreational drugs are fairly laissez-faire as long as the user takes responsibility for their actions; only those with awful side effects or questionable composition (they were brewed in a box somewhere and might contain harmful elements) are one-hundred percent illegal.

Still, many stations and settlements like to keep tabs on the flow of drugs so they can monitor usage and, more importantly, take their cut of the trade. For this reason, legal drugs flow into the hands of authorized distributors—while smuggled drugs go straight to dealers or syndicates (or, in rare cases, an individual end buyer).

Unless a crew is moving a large quantity of drugs—always a possibility—the dope can be easier to smuggle and hide

### STORY HOOK: BEER RUN (SMUGGLING)

A wealthy businessman hires the crew to move some rare beer from Luna to his private yacht beyond the Belt for a fancy shindig. The beer, however, is on a restricted exports list and can only be flown off Luna illegally. The local law catches on to the scheme and will give a merry chase to any ship leaving with the beer.

The crew must hatch a plan to fly the beer to the yacht without getting caught by the police. The businessman is willing to toss quite a bit of money at the problem in exchange for the prestige of having this rare, exotic drink at his party. The law dog chasing the crew won't give up until they're caught and behind bars.

This lighthearted adventure should have plenty of chases, opportunities to pull one over on the police, and tomfoolery of the best type. Ultimately, it comes down to a battle of wits between the crew and the law dog pursuing them, with opportunities to demonstrate that the crew is smarter.



than other, larger contraband. The downside is that port authorities routinely scan for chemical signatures of thousands of kinds of drugs during inspections, so physically hiding the cargo is only the first step. The goods still need to be masked, either by hiding them within other chemicals or jamming the scanners. Even then, a good scanner could potentially penetrate that masking; professional drug runners utilize specially-shielded cargo spaces and even old classics like swallowing rubber balloons.

## WEAPONS

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Weapons and munitions are a different story. Many a smuggler made a pretty penny by running guns, warheads, and high-tech ammunition from Mars to the Belt, and without smuggled weapons, the OPA Navy would be a shadow of its current self. Guns are bigger, warheads produce chemical and radiation traces, and the penalties for getting caught are severe. The UN and MCR, and more recently the OPA, jealously guard their weapons—so they don't fall into enemy hands, and because they can simply be expensive to produce and should go to their home soldiers first. Besides, you never want an enemy reverse-engineering your best technology.

Smuggling munitions, weapons, and military tech like power armor carries its own special level of risk. Some high-tech equipment carries a “kill switch” that must be hacked or otherwise disabled; the smuggler who doesn't finds their cargo hold exploding and a massive hole in their ship. While “regular” illicit cargo like drugs or restricted items are the jurisdictions of port authorities or police departments, militaries can and do interdict gun runners; a lackadaisical smuggler can quickly find themselves facing the business end of a very large ship.

Weapons smugglers are a breed apart (and they'll never miss an opportunity to tell you so) in no small part because of this risk. They've developed their own subculture among smugglers, with their own tricks to avoid authorities.

## THE GUN RUNNERS' TRICK

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Gun runners in the pre-UN-MCR War days invented a technique that's been copied since, but due to its trickiness and the time involved, it is really used only for weapons: a freighter underway, accelerating under the power of its Epstein drive, releases an uncrewed cargo container on a trajectory to intercept their destination. The container is actually a drone, with its own thrusters and a simple AI navigation computer for minor course correction and eventual deceleration. The smugglers then take a circuitous route, leading any pursuers on a merry chase and establishing plausible deniability if they're caught and boarded: no guns here!

The crew times their arrival at the destination in time to intercept the cargo drone, retake control of the goods, and deliver them to the buyer. For a trusted transaction with a regular customer, the gun runners might even program the drone to automatically land or stop at a preset destination, where the buyer takes control of the cargo and transfers payments to the smugglers' accounts.

The amount of trust this arrangement requires is astronomical; once the goods are delivered, there's no authority to enforce a lack of payment on the part of the buyer. The thread that keeps these agreements together is the small (by Sol system standards) community of gun runners who all talk to each other. If a buyer gets a bad reputation—even from one sour deal—that deal may be their last with a reliable smuggler.



## 4. PLANETSIDE SERIES

**H**uman stories were confined to and perfected on one planet for millenia, so there's nothing saying an *Expanse* series must take place out among the stars, at least not all of the time. There's plenty happening on Earth, Mars, and the major stations and settlements of the system—enough to occupy a crew of characters for an entire campaign, if you want. This chapter looks at setting your *Expanse* game planetside—having things largely happen down a gravity well—involving the events and conflicts on Earth, Mars, or one of the other important places within the system.

### PLANNING THE SERIES

Planning a planetside *Expanse* series starts like any other: consulting the players and looking at what general themes the series might involve. In particular, it's key to make sure the players are on-board: For some, an *Expanse* series *must* involve a ship out in space or it's just not *The Expanse*. In that case, you should look at some alternatives, like the crew having a home base on a planet but venturing out into space regularly, or perhaps you could run a series with parallel structure. Likewise, the nature of a planet-based series affects things like character concepts, how the characters fit together as a group, and what their dynamics look like. It's a different sort of crew dynamic when the characters aren't confined on a ship for long periods of time and can just book a ticket to a whole different part of a planet!

The following are a few particular elements of a planetside series to take into account in your planning process.

#### CHARACTER ORIGINS

Space and the Belt are places where characters of different origins mix and mingle. Things are different planetside. Belters have difficulties in normal gravity and are not even likely to tolerate the low gravity of Mars long enough to do much more than visit. Similarly, Martians (and often Belters) feel agoraphobic and overwhelmed by the vast, open spaces of Earth. This makes it more difficult for a group of mixed-origin characters to easily live and work together on the surface of the same planet.

Baltimore was Earth writ small, crowded and bored. Its citizens were caught between the dismal life of basic and the barriers of class, race, and opportunity, vicious competition and limited resources, that kept all but the most driven from a profession and actual currency.

—*The Churn*



That's not to say you can't, for example, include Martian or Belter characters in an Earth-bound series, just that such things are going to be unusual and require some special handling. Drug treatments and medical procedures can make it possible for Belters to tolerate life in a gravity well, but they're expensive, time-consuming, and potentially dangerous to long-term health. It is certainly easiest if most of the characters in a series set on Earth are actually from there. Alternately, you can set your planetside campaign on Mars, Luna, or a large station in the Outer Planets where any type of character is comfortable. Barring that, take into account the information on origins in the *Expanse* core book and look to modify things accordingly. Perhaps characters with different origins have had time, prior to the start of the series, to acclimate to the environment, at least enough so it doesn't significantly hinder them. They might still have certain tendencies—like a preference for the indoors—but it's more of a personality quirk than anything involving game system modifiers.

## HOME BASE

A planetside series opens up literally wider vistas for the characters. The default assumption of *The Expanse* RPG is the characters are the crew of a ship, and even a large ship only has so much room. This can leave a campaign set on a planet feeling a bit “adrift” without the central, unifying element of a ship that the crew calls home.

The solution to this is to establish another home base of some sort for the characters, whether it is the headquarters of whatever agency or organization they work for, a safe house in a particular city, a neighborhood bar in one of the districts of Mars, or even the oddity of an isolated farmstead in one of the remaining wide-open spaces of Earth. It should be a relatively safe place where the crew can regroup, where their adventures often begin and end, and where they can store things from equipment to personal momentous, much like the role of a ship.

## PARALLEL SERIES

If you want a “best of all worlds” approach for your *Expanse* game, you can aim for something where the crew has various opportunities to leave the planet and go into space, visiting nearby orbital stations, for example, or making the Earth-Luna run. Keep in mind that even for organizations with means, trips into space are costly, so they're not likely to happen casually, and not for anything that can be handled by a simple comm call. Still, there may be plenty of reasons why political or corporate operatives might be sent to handle off-world matters in person.

Another option to provide the players with some time in space while also maintaining a series set on a planet is to run parallel series involving two different, but possibly connected, crews of characters. One crew operates primarily on a planet while the other operates primarily in space. System-wide communications can connect them, although transmission lags might mean communications are more like passing notes at the game-table rather than live conversations. This approach to an *Expanse* series also reflects the structure of the novels themselves, where not everything is happening on-board the *Rocinante*, but also in the halls of power on Earth and Mars.

In a parallel series, either each player has two characters (one planetside and one in space) or the player group is split into two, one group with planetside characters, the others with characters in space. The split does not have to be even, perhaps one or two players portray characters on Earth or Mars while the rest play the crew of a ship in the Outer Planets, for example. The trick for the Game Master is to keep both groups of characters engaged, switching between groups frequently enough during play to keep the players from getting bored or distracted. Sometimes, this may involve both “tracks” of the game focusing on the same overall plot. Other times, the two groups of characters may be focusing on separate things—or at least they may *seem* separate until they eventually converge. For an example of one type of parallel series framework, see the **Settlement Series** later in this chapter.



## STARTING POINTS

The material presented in this book is set between *Cibola Burn* and *Nemesis Games*, but it can easily be adjusted to fit into any timeframe. The following are a few of the main starting points to consider when designing a planetside campaign.

### THE EARTH-MARS CONFLICT

This is around the short-lived Earth-Mars conflict following the incident at Ganymede Station. Battle lines are drawn between the two great powers of the Inners, who divide up the territory of the Belt between them as they warily keep an eye on the clouds of Venus, nervously wondering what the protomolecule is doing with the remains of nearby Eros Station.

This is an intensely divided and partisan starting point: Earth and Mars are literally at war (declared or otherwise) while politicians on both sides are investigating both the Eros incident and the encounter with an “anomaly” (a Caliban hybrid) that wiped out both Earth and Martian Marines on Ganymede. Characters may be involved in these events in some fashion, or they could be among the billions of people going about their lives while this particular chapter of history unfolds around them. Since most of the pivotal events take place out in the Belt or in the halls of power on Earth or Mars, it’s quite possible for characters active during this time to be aware of the events, but not really impacted by them, for the most part.

### THE EXODUS

Once the Ring opens to the network of over a thousand other systems, the status quo shifts dramatically. Millions of people set out for new frontiers, new worlds, and new opportunities, and the old rivalries in the Sol system seem to matter less and less. After attempts to slow the exodus, the great powers have little choice but to try and manage it as best they can.

For Earth, the flow of people through the Ring gates provides a much-needed pressure valve. Millions on Earth who cannot otherwise work or do much of anything except live on Basic leave the planet in droves. This means shifting priorities for Earth’s authorities, as well as factions from the corporations seizing new opportunities and locals looking to fill newly created spaces. There is also the matter of Earth’s have-nots, who lack legal identities and therefore access to these new opportunities, watching people with means leaving them behind.

If the exodus through the Ring rocks Earth, it comes as a death-blow to Mars. A significant number of Martians also choose to leave home, abandoning the Great Enterprise their ancestors dedicated themselves to for generations. Those left behind trudge forward as best they can, but Mars becomes increasingly underpopulated, understaffed, and forgotten. After all, who wants to devote their entire life to a terraforming project they’ll never see the end of when there are a thousand or more Earth-like worlds out there just waiting to be explored and settled?

Initially, Martian society is in a state of shock and denial about hemorrhaging its population and pioneer spirit, but it becomes increasingly clear that it’s everyone for themselves in the new balance within the system. Some Martians work with the breakaway faction already preparing to take what they see as the best and brightest through the Ring, intending to form what will become the Laconian Empire. Others work unknowingly with the future Laconians, a thriving black-market enterprise to acquire everything the new colony will need, while also supplying Martian material to the Free Navy faction of the Belt.

### THE FREE NAVY CONFLICT

Things change significantly in the Sol system during the conflict with the Belter Free Navy led by Marco Inaros in *Nemesis Games*. They launch an offensive against the Inner Planets by bombarding Earth with three major asteroid strikes, devastating the planet’s infrastructure. Millions are killed outright in the initial strike, and the ensuing devastation leads to the deaths of billions more in the weeks and months that follow. See the *After the Fall* Series framework for more about running an *Expanse* series on Earth following the bombardment.

While Earth’s population struggles to survive, the Consolidated Fleet of Earth, Mars, and the OPA fights a war in space against the Free Navy, eventually culminating in an attack to free Medina Station from Free Navy’s control. The conflict ends when a large number of Free Navy ships are deliberately caused to “go dutchman” in their transition through the Sol ring gate, trying to reach Medina Station. They vanish from both normal space and the Slow Zone and are not seen again.





## PREQUEL SERIES

Everyone comes from somewhere, and many in the system hail from either Earth or Mars. One use of a planetside “series” in *The Expanse* RPG is telling the stories of where characters came from before they left their home worlds or system.

The prequel section can resemble a “mini-series” with a predetermined length, shorter than the typical ongoing RPG campaign. It can be especially useful for advancing the player characters up to a certain level, such as where they can attain their first specialization, in order to make them more defined and capable when it comes to the launch of the main series. A prequel series—or set of prequel stories—can also be intended to accomplish the following:

- **Establish Relationships:** Prequel stories can establish player-character connections early on in order to expedite progressing the main story plot and to avoid confusion. So, for example, the *Roci* crew’s time on the *Canterbury* is part of their prequel story, although it’s not until they’re all thrown together on the *Knight* that they really become a group distinct from the rest of the ice-hauler’s crew.
- **Fill-in Backstory:** Individual or group prequel stories can establish things about characters’ lives on their home worlds, particularly for Earthers and Martians before they ventured out into space, but also for Belters who grew up on a large station.
- **Provide Motivation:** It’s one thing for a player to say that their character wants revenge on a hated enemy

or is heartbroken over a loss, but it’s another to actually play out those moments, providing the players a sense of what their characters feel about a given situation. For this same reason, as with all elements of an ongoing series, make sure the players are okay with playing out these elements of their characters’ backgrounds, especially if they are traumatic or emotionally complex.

- **Foreshadow:** The GM can use prequels to foreshadow later events or characters in the regular series. A key thing to note is that, more than a regular series, prequel stories are moving towards a pre-determined end point, so the Game Master can take a bit of a heavier hand in guiding things in the right direction.

In setting up a prequel story, consider if the story is “back-filling” elements of the characters and whether it will be

played with the whole group, individuals, or a subset of the full crew of characters.

### PREQUEL OR PRELUDE

A “prequel” series or story is essentially a “flashback” of some sort, intended to fill in important details about the characters and their stories. This generally means the state of the characters’ “future” selves (from the point of view of the prequel) is known and that there is an “end-state” things are moving towards. For example, if one member of the crew has a cybernetic replacement arm due to a combat-related injury, and the prequel story takes place before that injury, the GM may have to arrange the circumstances of the game so that the “destined” injury occurs. The goal of the prequel is to clarify elements of the backstory—but not to change them significantly.

A “prelude,” on the other hand, is a lead-in to a larger or main story, but the outcome of events in the prelude is less pre-determined. Indeed, what happens during the prelude could significantly alter players’ concepts of their characters, and the GM should allow some flexibility in terms of updating or revising the characters based on events in the prelude before the start of the regular series. In particular, this includes things like changing Relationships, but it may also alter character Background, Profession, or Drive as well. Think of the prelude as a “test-drive” of the characters, allowing the players to get a feel for them and to adjust details, modifying them accordingly.

### GROUP OR SOLO

Since prequel stories often detail character backgrounds, they may involve times before the members of the crew have met. In these cases, the Game Master may want to run solo stories for individual characters, fleshing out their backgrounds. The other players might take the roles of characters in a particular character’s solo prequel, or they may simply not play in that part of the story. These types of games can be run online and/or in-person and might even be done via text through live chat, a collaborative document, or by exchanging emails.

Otherwise, the GM can plan the prequel story as a group activity, intended to either quickly introduce the members of the crew to each other or to take place during a time after they met, depending on how long ago that was at the intended start of the regular series. To use the example of the *Expanse* novels again, the GM could run a group prequel set on the *Canterbury*, when the members of the crew were all together and at least acquainted with each other, or they could do solo prequel stories involving the earlier lives of the characters, such as the novella *The Churn*, which involves Amos’ earlier life in Baltimore on Earth.

### LONG INTERLUDES

Prequel and prelude stories may offer longer than normal interludes between scenes or adventures. For example, during an Academy Days series, stories might only take place once per semester, with interludes of months in between. The guidelines in Chapter 5 of *The Expanse* RPG simply say that the Game Master decides and announces how long the interlude will be, so the players must plan their characters’ interlude activities accordingly. For interludes longer than a week or so, the GM may wish to break the total time down into “rounds” of smaller segments, similar to the rounds used in action time. This allows the players to take turns resolving their interlude activities and to subsequently plan or choose different activities based on the outcome of their initial ones.

**Example:** Steve, as GM, has declared that a six-week interlude will take place following the end of the current story and the beginning of the next. All of the players have the opportunity to plan their characters’ activities during this time. Steve breaks things down into easier to manage interlude rounds of a week each, asking each player to describe their character’s activities for week one in turn, then going to week two, and so forth. One of the characters starts out Recovering from fairly serious wounds, so their plans are predicated on just how quickly they recover.

### INTERRUPTING INTERLUDES

Sometimes, declaring how long an interlude lasts can give away important details in the story. The players may assume nothing important is going to happen until the interlude ends, or drawing other conclusions from its expected length. Most of the time, this doesn’t matter, but sometimes the GM may want to interrupt an interlude, ending it sooner than expected, in order to spring a surprise event on the characters. In these cases, any incomplete interlude activities when the interruption occurs remain unresolved and have no effect, and the game returns to playing out in encounters until the GM declares the next interlude.

**Example:** The crew of the *Roci* splits up for an extended interlude of six months while the ship is being repaired at Tycho Station. Each of them declares their intended interlude activities: Alex visits his ex-wife on Mars, Amos going to Earth, Naomi to Ceres, and Holden is uncertain about what he’s going to do until the GM mentions that journalist Monica Stuart gets in touch, wanting to talk. The GM runs a few separate encounters for the characters, breaking-up the interludes, then throws everything back into encounters when Naomi and Monica are both abducted separately, Alex and Bobbi Draper are attacked on Mars, and Amos is on Earth when the first rocks from the Free Navy bombardment hit. Turns out the crew’s “break” will be a good deal shorter than six months...



## SERIES FRAMEWORKS

The following are some frameworks for planetside *Expanse* series in the style of the frameworks presented in **Chapter 15** of *The Expanse RPG*. Each framework is accompanied by a sidebar of ready-made story hooks; some also discuss how different starting points affect the concept for the framework (see **Starting Points** previously). Feel free to mix-and-match ideas from different frameworks to create your own planetside *Expanse* series.

### STREETS OF EARTH SERIES

The urban areas of Earth are vast, with a population density that is difficult for most modern-day people to imagine. As has been the case throughout history, people fall through the cracks in those cities, finding themselves on the outside of the laws and restrictions set on licensed childbirth, employment, and the availability of Basic Assistance. Some don't even fall, instead choosing to jump away from a life of nothing but Basic in hopes of finding something meaningful, desperately seeking to feel something.

This series focuses on those spaces on Earth inhabited by people outside of the law and society. Whether they intend to be or not, chances are the characters are criminals. They might be “unlicensed” births with no real legal identity or people who have broken the rules in one way or another and ended up on the outside. Outsider and lower-class characters and backgrounds abound, and talents like Carousing, Fringer, and Improvisation are vital. There may be some occasional down-and-out middle- and upper-class types, but they're the exception rather than the rule and may take pains to conceal their true origins. Already criminals, characters might have cybernetic and bio-tech modifications—legal or otherwise—to help them get by, but such things are expensive and can lead to characters owing powerful patrons, possibly for the rest of their lives.

Far from the grand exploration of *The Expanse*, the primary goal is survival. Adventures in a *Streets of Earth* series often involve trying to secure basic necessities, from finding ways to pirate electricity or fresh water to acquiring medicine, food, or other materials. Characters must also navigate the power structures and alliances of the streets, which are ruled by criminal gangs, while avoiding the attention and wrath of the authorities and the corporate interests supporting them. The primary long-term goals of this type of series are either to establish a stable foundation, clawing their way to the top of the hierarchy of the criminal gangs, for example, or else finding a way out, whether that means gaining “legitimacy” on Earth or securing a way off-planet and heading for the stars. These distinct endings can transition a *Streets of Earth* series into a new, totally different campaign.

Run long enough, this series can also transition to an **After the Fall** series framework (following). The survival skills characters have learned outside the system may serve them well following the collapse of Earth's infrastructure, although even they will find that many of the contacts and other supports they once relied upon no longer exist.

### STREETS OF EARTH STORY HOOKS

The following are some story hooks for a *Streets of Earth* series:

#### THE CHURN

There's a significant shift in the balance of power in the crew's neighborhood (or a nearby area). A former boss or gang in power has slipped or been eliminated. The resulting power vacuum has set off a gang war to consolidate control: battle lines are drawn, with people on both sides being targeted. Characters could be allied with a particular faction, with an interest in securing power and influence for them, or they might just be caught in the crossfire, doing their best to keep their neighborhood from being destroyed by the opposing forces. In spite of themselves, a capable crew might even find that winning the conflict has put *them* in charge of things!



### MILK RUN

The crew has information about a shipment of useful supplies, providing them with a golden opportunity to hijack them on behalf of their community, employer, or patron. Ideally, they need to accomplish the job and then disappear without a trace, giving the authorities as little reason as possible to come after them. Of course, it may well be that they're not the only ones interested in these goods, and the tip-off that seems too good to be true may turn out to be a carefully-laid trap.

### THE MISSING

People in the crew's neighborhood are going missing, but they're the kinds of people the authorities don't really care about. If anyone is going to look into these disappearances, it's up to the crew to do it, and it quickly becomes clear that someone does *not* want them looked into. The crew discovers a corporation has been snatching people from the streets to use them as guinea pigs for human-trial experimentation. They're on the verge of a valuable breakthrough in pharmacology, biotech, or cybernetics, and don't want their work disrupted.

### THE RUNAWAY

A corporate or political bigwig's kid has disappeared onto the streets, resulting in a considerable reward out for anyone who can find and bring them back home safe and sound. However, a little detective work reveals that the missing kid—any age from a teen to young adult—doesn't really want to be found, which leads to a plethora of questions: did they leave on their own? Were they coerced? Or, more nefariously, were they abducted? What's more, is it just familial love and concern that put a price on the runaway's safe return or is there more to it? The crew must first find the runaway to learn more, but they're almost certainly not the only ones looking.

## UNITED NATIONS SERIES

For better or worse, the United Nations is the governing body of Earth, balancing the needs of billions of people alongside stewardship of the home world of humanity and Earth's place in the system. Although humans have long since left their cradle for the stars, there's still only one place in the universe where "life as we know it" exists perfectly in-tune with millions of years of human evolution. Even when Earth's military and economic power weakens, there is nothing to replace its unique role.

Characters in a UN series work for the central government in some fashion, although not necessarily the same fashion. They might be functionaries within the vast bureaucracy, possibly holding far more power than their titles or offices would otherwise indicate. They could be "special envoys" or agents of a UN secretary, under-secretary, or office, acting as trouble-shooters who get important things done behind the scenes with a minimum of disturbance. At the far end, a *United Nations* series edges into an **Espionage** series (following), with the characters as intelligence operatives working on behalf of Earth against its enemies.

Ultimately, the goals of the UN are the goals of the crew in this series: protecting Earth and its interests and ensuring the safety of its citizens. Of course, the characters may have their own personal agendas, whether they are furthering their political careers, influencing UN policy from the inside, or working on behalf of a mentor or patron within the organization. Depending on the starting point of the series (see **Starting Points**, previously) the goals and tactics of the UN can shift significantly, from trying to maintain power and influence in the system and exert control over the Ring to turning inward to deal with the crisis on post-bombardment Earth while fighting a war against the Free Navy.

### UNITED NATIONS STORY HOOKS

The following are some story hooks for a *United Nations* series:

#### ESCORTS

The characters are assigned to the escort detail of a UN diplomat or other official as they go about their own responsibilities. They have to provide security and may need to deal with the demands of their boss's staff, while also navigating the shark-filled waters of politics. Their boss might turn out to be one of the good ones, targeted by rivals inside or outside of the government, or they might turn out to be dirty, in which case the characters are faced with a choice when they find something potentially compromising. As a result, assassination attempts against their boss take on a whole new light, potentially coming from a faction with a legitimate axe to grind.



### THE FARM TEAM

The crew is made up of junior diplomats and members of their support staff, such as logistics, technical, and security personnel. They make up a “farm team” the UN sends to deal with relatively minor, local incidents in need of arbitration and negotiation. They have to deal with the problems of people at the lower echelons of Earth society, sometimes required to fight their way up the ladder to get the attention of officials focused on bigger things. This offers potential crossover with the **Streets of Earth** framework. They might be associated with a particular region the characters call home (whether they are from there or not), or they could be fairly mobile, going from place to place and assignment to assignment, as needed. The more and better the team does, the more responsibilities they’re assigned.

### NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK

What better place to disappear than in a sea of billions of people? The characters need to find someone who has gone missing in one of Earth’s most populous areas, places like the urban sprawls of the North American Shared Interest Zone, the Common European Interest Zone, or the Maharsjknhta-Karnataka-Goa Communal Interest Zone. Their target clearly does not want to be found, using fake identities (and associated hand-terminal accounts) along with the gray market economy to evade notice. The characters must plunge into the area they’re searching, and possibly its criminal underworld, to find their target. Once they do, who knows why UN authorities want them? It’s most likely beyond a local criminal matter and could be connected to far more important events going on in the system.

### SEARCH AND RESCUE

The crew is investigating stolen military ordinance in one of the dense urban centers of Earth when a powerful explosion devastates multiple city blocks. Their investigation rapidly evolves into a search and rescue mission to aid first responders in helping the injured and trapped while simultaneously considering the possibility that the explosion was caused by the crew’s quarry. Was it a deliberate act of terrorism? A smuggling arms deal gone terribly wrong? Can the crew find those responsible before they use the chaos and confusion to slip away and evade justice?

## RED PLANET SERIES

For generations, Martian society has been focused on their great endeavor: to transform the Red Planet into a new Eden. The discovery of the protomolecule and all that followed set into motion a series of events taking Martian history down a very different path from the destiny envisioned by its founders. A Red Planet series can take place on a distinct Mars depending on what starting point the Game Master chooses (see *Starting Points*, previously).

Characters in a *Red Planet* series may be military or former military personnel with the Martian Congressional Republic Navy or some other branch of the service (such as the Marines), but Mars is also a highly technical society, suitable for characters with intellectual abilities, focuses, and talents, with additional opportunities for more social Martians who know how to navigate the inner workings of organizations. Notably, chances are all of the characters in this series will be Martians; Belters are not particularly comfortable even on low-gravity Mars long-term while Earthers tend to stand out and are even less welcome due to political tensions.

Initially, a *Red Planet* series can focus on life on Mars leading up to the incident at Ganymede (see **Starting Points**, previously). Tensions run high once the Earth-Mars conflict begins, and characters can become entangled in the diplomatic and political maneuvering between Earth and Mars as anti-Earth sentiment grows.

### MARTIAN EXODUS

The opening of the Ring signals the end of the Martians’ great endeavor, whether they know and acknowledge it or not. At this point, factions within Mars are already planning to abandon the red planet for greener pastures; the writing is on the tunnel walls. In particular, there’s a significant uptick in smuggling operations to covertly move equipment, supplies, and even ships off Mars, putting things in the hands of the Free Navy or preparing them for a swift transit through the Ring towards what will become known as the Laconia system.

As these preparations happen behind the scenes, Mars is experiencing significant unemployment and the return of a large number of military personnel from the short-lived Earth-Mars conflict, many of them with lasting trauma and injuries. These Martian vets can be potential player characters or a plot source for the crew of a *Red Planet* series. For example, an old military buddy, who’s now on the run for knowing too much, is in trouble with organized crime after tracking down vets who

have mysteriously gone missing due to joining the criminal underground or the Laconian exodus. Alternatively, the crew might be hired to deal with the increase in “drunk and disorderly” incidents from vets who are out of work and out of hope.

### MARTIAN DECLINE

After the bombardment of Earth and the Free Navy conflict, Mars is a world in decline, transforming into a “ghost planet” of hangers-on who refuse to give up on the dream of a green Mars, looking for a place in the new order of the system. However, what remains of the Martian populace is becoming increasingly multicultural as the planet absorbs refugees from Earth and the Belt and tries to change generations of fairly unbending Martian attitudes. This allows for a more mixed-origin crew than most starting points for a Mars campaign.

This period of a *Red Planet* series offers several opportunities for a crew. The Martian underworld is still as active as ever, finding plenty of business in drugs, smuggling, and the “reallocation” of resources. Martian security is overworked and understaffed, so private investigators and freelance security consultants can always find work from clients in need, but not all of them will be able to pay top rates. Martian society is looking for new direction and purpose, to somehow revive the terraforming project—in spite of the almost nonexistent need for it—or to discover something else that can allow Martians to once again feel the sense of pride they once felt for their world and culture.



### RED PLANET STORY HOOKS

The following are some story hooks for a *Red Planet* series:

#### GREENER PASTURES

A scam operation is taking advantage of the number of Martians leaving in hopes of settling on Earth-like worlds beyond the Ring. They promise opportunities to get onto priority lists for colony ships before taking the victims’ life savings and vanishing. When some of the victims are friends or acquaintances of the crew—or simply looking to hire them—the characters must track down the scam artists and recover what has been stolen from secret online accounts.

#### THE DRAUGHT OF ARES

A military-grade fight drug called “ares” has been finding its way into the Martian underworld, enhancing criminal muscle, almost entirely suppressing their pain and fear, and inflaming their urge to fight. Not only is it causing violent incidents and juicing up criminal operations, ares has created an underground fighting circuit filled with down-and-out military types willing to dose up and beat on each other for entertainment and illegal gambling. The crew needs to investigate the source of ares and find a way to shut it down before it can do even more damage. Do they approach the fight club as competitors? Or do they use their contacts in the underworld to infiltrate the ares operation and bring it down from the inside?

#### THE CONSPIRACY

The characters join the booming Martian smuggling business that begins after the opening of the ring gates. They might be involved with an up-and-coming operation that moves contraband, takes payments, and asks no questions. They could be investigating the “disappearances” of certain things (and even people) for the authorities in order to report it for the media. Or perhaps they’re running a freelance gig or favor to a friend. In the latter case, they might go undercover, posing as criminals to join the operations and acquire inside information, bringing the crew into contact with some dangerous people who’re willing to take extreme measures in order to cover their tracks.



### A NEW SHERIFF

A Martian neighborhood is increasingly under the influence of organized crime, which is running a protection racket and squeezing local residents and businesses for “insurance” payments to ensure that nothing “unfortunate” happens. The crew is contacted in hopes they can help to convince the gangsters to ease up on the neighborhood or, better yet, leave them alone entirely. Martian security is already on the take, meaning the crew can’t expect any help from that quarter; they need to come up with a plan to deal with the criminals themselves.

## ACADEMY DAYS SERIES

One thing Earth and Martian military officers share is their time in training, an experience that often creates lasting bonds and connections throughout their careers. An Academy Days series focuses on the experience of education at a military academy, or even just a boot camp for enlisted personnel, with the crew as new recruits going through their initial training and first learning to work together as a group.

Naturally, characters in an *Academy Days* series are primarily military personnel. The default crew is all new recruits, but other characters can include civilian staff on base, higher-ranking commissioned officers, or even “exchange program” personnel from other branches of the service or other factions in the system. Naval and Marine trainees might share some exercises, for example. Following the end of the Earth-Mars Conflict, there’s an increasing effort to forge ties of understanding between the Inner Planets, so cooperation between Earth and Mars military trainees could be one example.

An *Academy Days* series makes for a good prequel or prelude for military-background characters (see **Prequel or Prelude** at the start of this chapter). For example, all of the members of an espionage team or the crew of a ship might have served together previously. In fact, it may well be how they first met. In some cases, a character’s military career might be short lived, while for others, it may continue even into the present day of the series.

While many stories in an *Academy Days* series revolve around training and the challenges associated with it, there is plenty of room for other kinds of adventures involving the characters’ personal lives and connections, as well as larger plots that brush up against the day-to-day operations of a group of military cadets.

### ACADEMY DAYS STORY HOOKS

The following are some story hooks for an *Academy Days* series:

#### CHAIN OF COMMAND

One of the cadets’ immediate superior officers has it in for them—or some of them, at least. Snap inspections, extra work, demerits, and added demands. Nothing is ever good enough for them, either. It seems clear the characters’ superior wants to push them to the breaking point in hopes they will either wash out or simply quit, but why? They might have a reason for their attitude towards the characters, or they might simply be vindictive. Perhaps it’s all a test of some sort to see if the characters have what it takes for some special training or assignment.

#### THE CODE

The characters become aware of a fellow cadet who is involved in some shady, or even criminal, activity, ranging from selling illegal pharmaceuticals on base to selling military supplies or equipment to smugglers. They need to decide if and how they’ll deal with the problem, including reporting up the chain of command. Things get more complicated, however, when it becomes evident there are



higher-ups involved and covering for the criminal cadet. How high does the corruption go? And what can a group of trainees do about it without any hard evidence to back up their claims? The crew might decide to take matters into their own hands—such as staging a sting operation—or they might run smack into a secret Internal Affairs investigation that also considers them potential co-conspirators.

### FIELD OPERATIONS

Part of the cadets' training involves actual field operations with commissioned officers and crew, perhaps aboard a ship or at a station. The characters are expected to carry out various duties and operations as well as observe and learn. While they're on-assignment, a crisis arises that puts them to the test. Perhaps the ship they are on is attacked or suffers a catastrophic systems failure. Maybe there's a rogue caliban hybrid (from **Chapter 13** of *The Expanse*) that somehow survived and crashed on a planet or moon but has now awoken from cold sleep, confused by trying to carry out its last instructions. Alternately, the characters might face a test of character when they're given a clearly illegal and immoral order, like slaughtering helpless civilians, and must decide if they want to risk court martial by mutinying against their superiors.

### SURVIVAL TRAINING

The crew is sent on a survival training mission: a dangerous wilderness with minimal supplies, or even a long trek across a hostile environment in vac suits. The training is grueling, but something also goes wrong, ranging from unexpected weather to technical failures or other problems. The cadets are separated and lose communication with home base. They need to figure out how to survive, overcome the local hazards, and reach help before they perish from exposure, lack of oxygen, or similar threats. Are the "unexpected" problems real or just a set-up to further test their abilities? For an added complication, consider adding rival characters to accompany the crew, forcing them to work together in order to survive.

## CORPORATE INTERESTS SERIES

Nation-states are not the only major players within the Sol system; powerful mega-corporations exert considerable influence as well. For a long time, they've relied on the status quo between the inner and outer planets for their business and their profits. More recent events, however, signal potential opportunities for those companies perceptive and nimble enough to take advantage. The fall of Protogen and later of Mao-Kwikowski Mercantile signal a feeding frenzy in the corporate sphere, with markets, resources, and territories to claim. From the corporate perspective, business is business, and whether Earth or Mars rise or fall, the company's bottom line remains the most important thing.

Characters in a *Corporate Interests* series may be ambitious careerists solely interested in advancement and success, cynical veterans who sold-out their ideals, pragmatists just looking to make it day-to-day, or even wide-eyed idealists or passionate firebrands who think they're going to change the way people do business. They could even be a combination of all of the above. Ultimately, they are all tied to the company in one way or another.

A variation on the *Corporate Interest* series is one where, rather than working as agents for a vast and powerful mega-corporation, the crew is part of a small, ambitious start-up, perhaps one with a revolutionary new product they intend to produce and market before their competition can undercut or eliminate them. This could be a piece of software, new hardware, or even something derived from studying protomolecule technology.

In many regards, the stories of a *Corporate Interests* series are much like those of a **United Nations** or **Red Planet** series, since the characters effectively work for an organization with the resources and influence of a nation-state. Rather than a political agenda, however, the crew is involved in both protecting the company's interests and exploiting potential new opportunities for profit. This may allow for opportunities to create a "black ops" team of characters with any number of less-than-legal capabilities and assignments.

### CORPORATE INTERESTS STORY HOOKS

The following are some story hooks for a *Corporate Interests* series:

#### CORPORATE ESPIONAGE

The crew is assigned the task of acquiring some valuable information, personnel, or material—or some combination thereof—from a rival company. Their employer may have "inside information" about the targets from an informant, who



may be able to help the characters but could just as easily sell them out if the target company's security personnel find the informant first. The crew needs to map out the locations of their targets, the security standing in their way, and the best way to achieve their goal without drawing attention until it's too late to stop them. This hook can also be run in reverse, with an outside corporate espionage team after something belonging to the crew's corporation, or with the crew hired to protect corporate interests.

### A QUESTION OF ETHICS

Someone in the corporation leaks information to the characters prior to suddenly suffering a fatal "accident," or disappearing altogether. The information leads the crew to discover their corporation is conducting experiments involving offshoots of protomolecule technology, extremely dangerous experiments with "test subjects" snatched from the streets of Earth—people the authorities don't care are missing. What do the characters do with this knowledge? And who, if anyone, can they trust to help them? It's possible the experiments represent a "rogue" operation within the company, but it's equally likely the entire management structure is compromised and in on it—and willing to do whatever is necessary to keep things quiet.

### OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

The crew's corporation has taken interest in a maverick start-up that has developed something of interest, such as a piece of software with the potential to revolutionize or create a new market. The company wants to acquire the start-up in an outright buy-out and sends the crew either to negotiate the deal or to escort and support the executive in charge. Of course, they're not the only ones interested in what the start-up has to offer, and their corporate rivals are willing to play dirty in order to ensure their offer is the only one considered. Things could get even more complicated if the owners of the start-up are not all in agreement, or if one or more of them want something completely illegal or immoral, which the corporation might be willing to provide whether the player characters like it or not.

### IN THE FAMILY

No one fights like family, which is especially true within corporate "families" as well. When a power struggle develops within the corporation between different influential shareholders and executives, operatives with abilities like the crew are valuable assets. Their immediate boss, or "handler," within the company might look to secure the characters' loyalties for their faction while others try to lure them away, or eliminate them as potential threats. If the characters have enemies within the company, this is an opportunity for the crew to move against them—or unexpectedly find themselves allied with former rivals.

## STATION SERIES

Although "planetside" most often refers to Earth or Mars in the Sol system, technically, it can relate to any series where the crew is expected to stay in the confines of a gravity well, even if that means a moon, asteroid, or space station rather than a planet. As *The Expanse* novels demonstrate, a lot happens onboard various stations throughout the system, so there are plenty of opportunities for adventures and intrigue.

A *Station* series tends to overcome the issues discussed under **Character Origins** at the start of this chapter: Characters can hail from anywhere when they end up on a station, although different starting points may make things more challenging for Earthier or Martian characters outside the Inner Planets (see **Starting Points**, previously). Characters can belong to the station's crew and command hierarchy, or they might be "unofficial" members of the crew, people with connections and influence, but not necessarily formal responsibilities. On stations with a large civilian population, the crew could be part of the station's private police force, shading into elements of a **Corporate Interests** series (previously), such as Detective Miller working for Star Helix at the start of *The Expanse* series.

Depending on the size and population of the station, a *Station* series can also be a bit more intimate than other planetside series. Even on a large station, the crew is likely to have a home base or particular area or "neighborhood" of the station they frequent. The GM can develop local businesses, locales, and supporting characters to flesh out this area and help bring it to life for the players.

*Station* series adventures tend to come to the characters. Since many stations in the system are crossroads, it's not too difficult for that to happen. The nature of the station and its interests tends to affect the kinds of stories the crew may

encounter. Tycho Station is some fifteen thousand people firmly under the command of Fred Johnson and his faction of the OPA, for example, whereas Ceres Station has changed hands from UN control to the OPA and has a population in the millions while Luna is strongly connected to Earth and becomes the seat of Earth's government-in-exile following the bombardment. The Game Master can even feel free to create a station suited for the type of stories they want to tell: The system is vast, and there is a *lot* of room.

### STATION STORY HOOKS

The following are some story hooks for a *Station* series:

#### ASTEROID ARCHEOLOGY

The station plays host to an unusual crew: asteroid “prospectors” who are not looking for valuable mineral or water-ice resources, instead studying previous visitation and habitation of bodies in the Belt—“asteroid archeologists,” as it were. Over the generations of human expansion out past the Inner Planets, countless ships have been lost in the Belt, along with numerous sites that have been abandoned for a variety of reasons. Some of these sites were interdicted by Earth or Mars, but such restrictions become less meaningful as the inners turn their attention elsewhere. Some of the archeologists are interested in mapping and finding out what’s there, want to fill in certain gaps in history, or hope to find something valuable either to science or for their own wallet. Things can get complicated for the station when the archeologist crew brings aboard mysterious cargo containers holding who-knows-what, or when they leave for a nearby expedition and disappear, possibly leading to a search-and-rescue operation. You can even run a whole series with the player characters as asteroid archeologists, moving from site-to-site and station-to-station to do their work.

#### DISASTER STRIKES

Stations are delicate, life-sustaining bubbles in the midst of a hostile void. When disaster strikes, damaging the station’s systems, the crew must scramble and work together in order to survive, help people in danger, and repair the vital systems in time to prevent the deaths of everyone on board. The source of the disaster can be a rogue meteor or asteroid strike or collision, a Free Navy or pirate raid, sabotage, or negligence leading to serious technical problems, possibly even some leftover damage from the Earth-Mars conflict. While the disaster most likely involves damage to the station, it could also be something like a virus in the main computer system. Fixing the problems might necessitate interior or exterior operations in vac-suits, escaping or moving through damaged sections of the station, or shutting down and repairing things like power distribution, reactors, computer systems, or life support.

#### PLUMBING THE DEPTHS

The story begins with an investigation into the most mundane—and vital—of things on the station: water. There is evidence of water loss in the station’s systems, most likely suggesting someone is tapping into and draining off part of the water supply. The crew can follow the complex systems of monitored pipes and water-recyclers to track down the source, but the larger question is who is doing it and why? The most mundane explanation is simply someone stealing water, either for their own use or to sell on the black market, especially if there is a shortage on the station. More sinister possibilities include a need to supply illegal scientific experimentation on the station, ranging from hydroponic growth of illegally-obtained plant samples from beyond the Ring to mixing-up dangerous chemical compounds.





### SIEGE

Stations are vulnerable targets, especially without ships to protect them, so you can build a story around a faction (like the Free Navy, pirates, or a governmental or corporate body) seizing control of a particular station for their own purposes. How does the crew handle the siege or occupation of their station? And what, if anything, do they do about it? Why do the occupiers want the station? And what kind of resistance do the characters organize to oppose these forces? This type of story can have the interesting effect of turning rivals or enemies on a station into temporary allies, at least until the immediate problem of the occupiers is dealt with.

## ESPIONAGE SERIES

The opening of the Ring has provided humanity with a vast opportunity, and the conflict with the Free Navy provides the factions of the Sol system with their first common enemy. Nevertheless, there are many people within the home system of humanity who don't trust each other, or who want to secure their positions and future in one way or another, of which information is key. Hence, there are many opportunities for spies to operate within the system.

Characters in an *Espionage* series can work for any of the various factions in the system: Earth, Mars, the Belt, the multiple factions of the OPA, or various corporate interests. They might even be freelance operatives, working for the highest-bidder, although that involves playing a dangerous game of loyalties, and running a high risk of one client or another looking to dispose of the crew in order to tie-up loose ends. Naturally, characters in an *Espionage* series want a mix of covert, investigative, interaction, and technical abilities that help them to do their jobs. Specialties like the Agent, Commando, and Thief are likely to be common.

*Espionage* series characters have to navigate the often morally-gray territory of the so-called “wilderness of mirrors,” deciding who to trust and where their own loyalties lie. Allegiances and goals can shift quickly, given the events that occur in a relatively short amount of time. Former rivals—from Earth and Mars, for example—can find themselves working together, or turning against their former allegiances, when priorities change.

### ESPIONAGE STORY HOOKS

The following are some story hooks for an *Espionage* series:

#### DEEP COVER

Any other story hook from this chapter or from *The Expanse RPG* can also work for an *Espionage* series as a “deep cover” operation! The crew might be posing as anything from a media team to criminals or corporate operatives when in fact they work for an intelligence agency, gathering information and passing it along to their superiors. They may have been placed undercover for a particular purpose or as “sleeper” agents to be activated when there is a need. One example is the **Martian Exodus** scenario, when Martian deep cover agents for Earth or another faction are activated to find out what is happening within the Martian Navy behind the scenes. Unexpected circumstances can also force the characters to break cover, such as operatives working to infiltrate criminal organizations on Earth suddenly having to deal with the events of the bombardment and all that follows in an **After the Fall** series (see the following).

#### THE MARTIAN LABYRINTH

Following the defection of a substantial portion of the Martian Congressional Republic Navy through the ring gates to the Laconia system, there's a strong interest throughout the Sol system in a post-mortem: Who was involved? What resources do they have, and what are their plans? Intelligence agents from a variety of factions may find themselves following the trail of Winston Duarte, looking to reconstruct a picture of his covert operation. They may also find there are still elements within the Sol system interested in keeping Duarte's operations and plans—and their own roles in them—secret. It may take years to unravel the scheme, and different factions may have different pieces of the puzzle.

#### THE ROGUE

When a former mentor and superior from the crew's agency goes rogue and disappears, they are assigned the task of tracking them down and either bringing them in for interrogation or eliminating them to ensure they cannot compromise operational security—at least not any more than they already have. The rogue agent may have defected to another



faction, using inside information they can provide as a bargaining-chip. They might have simply wanted to get out of the game, looking to quietly disappear. They could have even been coopted into a scheme like the Free Navy or Duarte's abandonment of the Sol system, leading the crew into those situations. The agents need to follow their former colleague's trail through the system, and perhaps even through the Ring to the unknown stars beyond.

## THE VENUS FILE

One of the characters' contacts reaches out to them about a mysterious data-file that supposedly contains information transmitted from the lost science ship *Arboghost* just before it was disassembled and destroyed by the protomolecule. The nature of the data is unclear, but it was stolen from the UN and all copies erased or corrupted, making the copy their contact is reporting the only one available. The contact is dead not long thereafter, the storage device containing the Venus File missing, and the chase is on for the characters to find who took it and what they intend to do with it. What the data-file contains is up to the GM: It may be useful information about the nature of the protomolecule, a message from a human intelligence integrated into the tech from Eros, or even a transmission of some kind from the alien technology itself.

## MEDIA SERIES

The system is vast, and there is a lot going on. Events millions of kilometers away can change the lives of everyone, and sometimes all people can do is watch as history unfolds in front of them. When they do, it often matters who they watch and what they are told and shown. There are more feeds and channels than ever, but the role of the media as a window onto the wider world has never been more important. At least, that's what you tell potential clients and patrons when it comes to the stories you want to follow and tell.

A *Media* series can focus on what they used to call journalism, reporting the news and filming documentaries of the important people, places, and events in the system, or it can involve a focus on entertainment, filming fictional (or fictionalized) stories for audience consumption. Often, the line between news and entertainment, witnessing and voyeurism, is blurred. Characters in a *Media* series can be a production crew, traveling around the world, or even off-world, in pursuit of their stories and scenes.



One or more of the characters might be in front of the camera, others behind it, or using their skills to gather the information presented to it. Alternately, this might be a parallel series, with some characters as the at-home production crew, others in the field gathering and transmitting the raw footage back to them. Specializations like the Hacker, Socialite, and Star are common for a *Media* series, and social and investigative abilities and stunts are vital in getting the job done with style.

Most stories in a *Media* series are about the pursuit of stories, adventure in quest of news and information. The right story at the right time, presented in the right way, can make or break careers or even bring down mega-corporations or governments. Once a story is broadcast, the genie is out of the bottle and almost impossible to recall. For that reason, people and organizations in *The Expanse* guard their secrets carefully, employing their own public relations staff and spin-doctors to manage exactly what gets out there and how people perceive it.

## MEDIA STORY HOOKS

The following are some story hooks for a *Media* series:

### BREAKING NEWS

A new sensation is sweeping everyone's feeds, "Right Now News" has scooped some significant stories ever since the opening of the Ring, and your team (and possibly your employer) would very much like to know how they're doing it. Investigating the new channel's personnel and operations turns unexpectedly threatening, making it clear someone does *not* want RNN looked-into, and they're willing to kill to protect it. The truth is that RNN is in collusion with the causes of many of the disasters, crimes, and other crises they report on, perhaps in cooperation with the Free Navy or Duarte's Martian expatriates, providing a useful distraction throughout the system and keeping all eyes on their manufactured events—or chasing after the manufacturers, as in the crew's case.

### LETTERS FROM HOME

While often whole families of people leave the system for worlds beyond the Ring, many are left behind for various reasons. The crew embarks on an ambitious "Letters From Home" series of interviews with people who have seen loved ones or family members depart for distant worlds. They get to hear a wide range of stories, from the touching to the tragic, and might also uncover some interview subjects in need of help from time to time, or concerned about people who might not have left in the best of circumstances. You and your players can really get creative with this, collaborating to come up with interview subjects and their stories in hopes that they'll be sent through the Ring and transmitted to worlds, and people, around distant stars.

### ONE-ON-ONE

If you want to have the player characters meet some of the famous figures of the *Expanse* series, having a news or documentary crew meet them for a sit-down interview is a good option. You can indulge in some in-character interaction and roleplaying, let the players ask questions, or perhaps even play both sides of things, with one or more players taking the roles of the interviewees as well! Naturally, the interview might be interrupted by a threat or crisis, like an old enemy looking to settle a score or seizing an opportunity to try and make a character like Holden, Avasarala, or Sgt. Draper look bad. Then the crew gets to team-up with their favorites to both handle the problem and get a good story in the end!

### POST-MORTEM

Although the story about Mao-Kwikowski Mercantile and the protomolecule is all over the system, there's a hunger for the behind-the-scenes story, the in-depth, *real* story. Mao and his surviving family have disappeared into either a government prison or protective custody, but there may still be leads to follow. Of course, the United Nations and Martian Republic have classified nearly all of the relevant documentation and information, but there were too many people involved to make the story go away altogether. If nothing else, the crew of the *Rocinante* is still out there, along with people in the OPA who know some things. Your production team is assigned to dig up deep background on everything that led up to Eros, Venus, and the opening of the Ring, no matter who tries to stop you.

You can also run this adventure (or series of adventures) as a follow-up to another *Expanse* series. For example, if you run the *Abzu's Bounty* campaign, a news crew might follow-up on the loose threads from it and look into the fate of the *Abzu's Bounty* and Sebastian Pope's involvement. They could end up meeting and even interviewing their former player characters and putting together a public view of the whole series! Of course, just as with Mao, Protogen, and Eros, there will be factions who don't want the truth to come out.

### AFTER THE FALL SERIES

Life on Earth after the Free Navy bombardment offers all of the “adventure” anyone could want and then some. For billions of people—those who initially survive, that is—life goes from getting-by on government Basic Assistance to a daily struggle to survive on a world in the grip of an impact winter, where virtually all essential infrastructure has broken-down. It is a time that tests and transforms people, and forges new communities and leaders.

Characters in an *After the Fall* series might be ordinary people thrust into extraordinary circumstances, just looking to band together for mutual assistance and survival, at least at first. Even if the characters don’t have a lot of practical ability focuses and talents, they’ll tend to pick them up fairly fast. In fact, the GM may want to run a prelude that “trains up” characters to their full level 1 abilities, or even takes them beyond that, allowing for some rapid advancement for the first 2–3 levels, as survivors pick up new skills and abilities.

Beyond just survival, longer term goals come into play for an *After the Fall* series. At first, it is just about shelter, food, medicine, and relative safety. Beyond that, characters may have their own goals, whether it is to find a missing friend or loved-one, to find a way off Earth, to reach Luna (and then possibly head out to the Belt or even the Ring), or to do something lasting on Earth. The effective end of the world can change many things; it’s an opportunity to settle scores, follow dreams, or otherwise do what previously seemed impossible.

Sooner or later, a successful crew in this series is going to run up against what remains of Earth’s governmental authorities. As the chaos begins to die down, the UN government on Luna starts exerting their influence over Earth again, trying to restore order and rebuild the shattered world. This can lead to some delicate, even tense, negotiations, when UN functionaries sweep in, backed up by UN troops, and declare themselves in charge.

#### BABYLON’S ASHES

Alternately, the crew in this type of series could be made up of specialists: military, first-responders, aid-workers, and the like, who are on search-and-rescue and humanitarian missions on a world desperately in need of help. In this case, the characters have the advantages of training and some support, even if the challenges they face are still overwhelming. Their goal is less about survival and more about helping other people to survive, if they can.

The crew may work for a surviving division or faction of the government on Earth, or answer directly to the new government that organizes on Luna. Eventually, they may find themselves on the opposite side of the recovery equation mentioned previously: Moving in to stabilized areas of the world to “reestablish order” that some of the locals might not welcome, given all that has happened in the interim.

#### AFTER THE FALL STORY HOOKS

The following are some story hooks for an *After the Fall* series:

##### EARTHSHOCK

The series kicks off with a literal bang as the characters survive the initial bombardment before finding ways to stay alive—and each other (if they have been separated). They may have prior relationships, or circumstances might throw them together and force them to get along. Initially, they need to decide how they are going to deal with the immediate needs of food and shelter and what their next moves will be after that. In particular, do they stay put and try to set up some sort of safe haven, or do they move towards a particular goal, such as a means of getting off-planet?

##### DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

The good news is, there is a well-stocked and stable disaster shelter not far from where the characters gather following the bombardment. The bad news is that it belongs to a doomsday cult of survivalists who have been preparing for this day for years. Now that the end of the world has arrived, they’re not going to just give up their shelter or any of its carefully hoarded supplies without a fight. The crew needs to decide if they want to take on the survivalists, try to steal from them, or possibly even join them! They might do so sincerely or intending to infiltrate and take them down from within, but they find the group more than a little suspicious of outsiders.





### WHO RUNS THIS TOWN?

As the area around the crew emerges from the initial shock of the bombardment, a powerful and charismatic leader begins gathering people around them and looking to consolidate power and resources. Initially, that means seizing supplies, weapons—pretty much anything of use, as well as looking to recruit able-bodied people with useful skills and abilities. The crew may be approached for recruitment, or targeted for elimination, if they look to be a threat. They'll also need to decide if they want to do anything about this new warlord setting up a fiefdom in their backyard. Do they look to forge an alliance (of convenience or otherwise)? Or do they try and send a message that *they* run things in the area, or at the least stand up for the notion of the community running things opposed to a self-appointed tyrant.

### MISSING

A lead falls into the crew's hands: a lost personal item, a low-res photo or video, a scrap of clothing with some blood on it (sufficient for DNA sampling)—something that shows a particular missing person is still alive. This could be someone important to one or more of the characters, perhaps a loved-one, family member, or even an enemy, who was missing and believed dead. Alternately, it could be a Very Important Person of some sort: a politician, celebrity, or someone important to a wealthy corporate type. Does the crew follow-up on the leads to track this person down? What do they do when they find them, and how do they deal with the possibility that they are not the only one's looking?

## SETTLEMENT SERIES

While exploration and settlement of planets orbiting distant stars through the ring gate network is covered in more detail in the *Beyond the Ring* sourcebook, there is room in a planetside series for characters and events on multiple planets, including what is going on back in the system.

A *Settlement* series can run parallel to a series taking place on a frontier planet or focus in what is happening back in the system. While settlements on the far side of the Ring are largely on their own, relay stations and communications do make their way to and from the Sol system, allowing for organizations “back home” to help manage, offer advice, and monitor what is going on. The United Nations, Mars, and various corporations and other factions have interests in the settlements as well as experts keeping an eye on them and their progress.

Characters in a *Settlement* series may be those experts, such as a team working with the settlement personnel on a distant world. The Sol system team is most likely made up of experts in planetary sciences, exploration, and social or group engineering, reporting to higher-ups in their organization. They must provide their remote settlement with advice, information, guidance, and sometimes conflict mediation or even emergency assistance, as much as can be offered in terms of remote data-packets transmitted through the wormholes on an hours-long delay.

Meanwhile, the team may have to deal with other matters at home, including attempts to spy on or interfere with their operations, rivals within their own organization, political interference in their work, and so forth. Things in a *Settlement* series can shift following the bombardment of Earth, with settlement teams either officially disbanded, forced to work freelance, or relocated to Luna or elsewhere in the system, and sometimes called upon for their expertise in managing crises on Earth as well as distant frontier planets.

Given the back-and-forth nature of a *Settlement* series, it makes an interesting one to play by email or forum post, using written letters and even short video messages to reflect the primary kinds of interactions that characters have,

corresponding with the settlers. It can be run as a parallel series (see **Parallel Series**, previous) with the players controlling characters at both ends of the communication: on the settlement planet and back in the Sol system. Guidelines for advanced and challenge tests from *The Expanse* RPG core book can handle cooperation via communications over long periods of time.

### SETTLEMENT STORY HOOKS

The following are some story hooks for a *Settlement* series:

#### EXPLORATION

Initial exploration of some of the gate systems is conducted by remote probes, transmitting their telemetry back to a relay within the Slow Zone and then back through the Ring to the Sol system. The same is true of initial survey missions involving in-person crews. Game Masters can run a remote exploration where a survey team is given initial data on a system and has to decide their priorities. If they discover something significant, they have to deal with how to pass that information along to their higher-ups and what recommendations to make. The initial exploration could transition to either a parallel series working with a crew dispatched to follow-up, or with the *Settlement* series crew going to continue their exploration in-person. Game Masters will find the *Beyond the Ring* sourcebook a useful resource for this type of story.

#### LAYING DOWN ROOTS

The crew is involved in the early days of settlement on a new terrestrial planet beyond the Ring, either serving as the ground crew and experts on Earth or Mars or in a parallel series with some player characters on the new planet and some back in the Sol system. When unusual and unexplained things start happening in the new settlement, the two sides of things need to cooperate to figure out what is going on and how to deal with a possible threat. It might be an ancient example of protomolecule technology reactivated by the presence of people on the planet, an unknown factor about the planet's environment or ecosystem, or it could be something more mundane, but possibly using the specter of the protomolecule as cover for their activities. Things might be complicated if there is a faction within the settlement personnel, the ground crew, or both aware of a hidden agenda for the settlement that the crew and most of the settlers haven't been told.

#### THE SEARCH

The crew represents explorers and surveyors studying data on the various systems beyond the ring gates, a group or faction in search of a new world to settle, or some mixture of both. They're looking for an ideal world that fits particular parameters, possibly to suit a religious or cultural minority wanting to relocate. The crew has to navigate the bureaucratic requirements of acquiring and searching through information, applying for the opportunity to settle a particular system, and making decisions as to whether or not to go with an opportunity that is "close enough" before it slips away, or to wait in hopes that something better and more ideal comes along. If they're denied the opportunity to explore and settle what appears to be their ideal world, what do they do about it? This story can transition to one of the others given here, depending on the outcome.

#### TERRITORIAL DISPUTE

In the early days of exploration and settlement of systems beyond the Ring gates, there are occasional disputes in terms of exactly who is entitled to settle or exploit a particular planet, and who is empowered to mediate or settle such disputes. Negotiators may be dispatched to help arbitrate such a dispute, with the assistance of a "home team" back in the Sol system, receiving reports and updates of what is going on, and offering their own insights and suggestions. The home team may also be conducting negotiations (or even investigations) on their end as well, such as between two corporate parties involved in a dispute, or two or more governmental factions. Developments on one side of the Ring might affect the situation on the other and vice versa.





## S: ORGANIZATIONS OF THE EXPANSE

**T**his chapter offers detailed rules for creating your own organizations. These could be GM-controlled organizations that the PCs encounter or player-owned and operated organizations. Player organizations open up an entirely new way to play *The Expanse* RPG whether it be a scientific endeavor, independent mining operation, smuggling base, or whatever the players come up with. Sample organizations and threats are also included as a guide for creating your own organizations and to make this easy for GMs who don't have the time to go through the creation process.

### ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations such as megacorporations, media corps, security firms, and religious groups usually exist as purely narrative element that the characters interact with or sometimes decide the fate of in broad terms. This is ideal for organizations the characters only visit occasionally, or when the organization, such as Tycho Manufacturing and Engineering Concern or Vector Security, serves as a backdrop for larger-than life adventures exploring the solar system and visiting the worlds beyond the Ring Gate. For stories that focus on the organization itself—its survival, inhabitants, and hardships—the players can step into direct control, treating the organization like a character of its own using the following rules.

Players can control the organization themselves, deciding what projects to pursue, what organization Focuses to develop, and how the organization reacts to threats. After the organization phase, play returns to their characters. If the players are already playing organization leaders, this change is natural. If an NPC serves as the organization leader instead, the players can still control the organization during Interludes, acting independently of their characters—perhaps even against their characters' interests.

If you already have *Beyond the Ring*, you'll find that much of the material here is the same as the rules for running colonies in **Chapter 4** of that book, but with some subtle differences.

### ORGANIZATION STATISTICS

Every organization has abilities representing its resources, knowledge, and the passion of its members. These abilities range from  $-2$  to  $6$  (or greater) much like the range of a character's abilities. Most organizations have abilities ranging from  $0$  to  $5$ , though an organization with an extraordinary resource or setback may fall above or below this range.

There are five core abilities for organizations: **Economy**, **Force**, **Infrastructure**, **Media**, and **Science**. In addition to these, every organization has three additional statistics: **Size**, **Stability** and **Resolve**, which help determine how resistant the organization is to disasters and setbacks.

Finally, organizations have Focuses, just like a character. In an organization, a Focus represents specialty installations (like factories), extraordinary knowledge (like pharmacology), special resources (like minerals), or members with a specific expertise (like a doctor or security forces). Disasters that destroy infrastructure or violence that kills significant NPCs run the risk of eliminating one or more of an organization's Focuses. If characters capture special resources or rescue NPCs with extraordinary skills, this can also translate to new Focuses for their organization.

### ECONOMY

Economy reflects an organization's ability to generate goods and resources, both for internal use and for trading with others. Economy represents buying power, clout, and stockpiles of valuables and emergency supplies, all of which are available for the organization to use to solve its problems. A freighter full of valuable ore that the organization can't move to market is essentially worthless. An organization's economy doesn't necessarily reflect its members' own wealth; an organization may be prosperous but pour all its resources back into facilities, leaving individual members impoverished, or an otherwise poor organization may be owned or run by a handful of wealthy leaders. Organizations that specialize in technology or manufacturing tend to have a higher Economy.

An organization's leaders can translate the community's wealth into personal wealth, deducting the organization's Economy rating from the Resources TN when using the organization's resources or cash to assist them with a purchase. A character's Rank within the organization (See **Membership** in **Chapter 14** of *The Expanse RPG*) caps the maximum ability score they can use to reduce a purchase TN. For example, a character with Rank 1 can reduce the difficulty by 1 so long as the organization has an Economy rating of 1 or higher. If a character with Rank 3 Membership leads an organization with Economy 2, they can only reduce the TN of a purchase by 2—the organization's limited resources cap how much of their influence they can benefit from. A character can only use this benefit when they can bring their organization's industry and supplies to their benefit, such as purchasing goods their organization produces or when escorting a large shipment of exports to market.

### FORCE

Force represents an organization's ability to bring brute strength to bear to solve their problems, from a militia or armed guards to sturdy miners who can solve problems with sweat and tenacity. It is most often used to defend the organization from outside threats, pirates, or criminals, but also comes into play when the organization must mobilize to respond quickly to a natural disaster. Organizations (some megacorps) backed by Inner militaries have a higher Force, but so do roughneck Belter organizations who survive by hard work and stubbornness.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure represents an organization's physical buildings, utilities, material resources, and, in some cases, the ability to produce things like food, water, and breathable air. This ability measures the organization's ability to bounce back from hardship and how quickly it grows. It also reflects an organization's ability to outlast a disaster through good planning or solid utilities. Well-designed organizations lead by experienced administrators generally possess a good Infrastructure, while haphazard organizations possess low scores.

### MEDIA

Media reflects an organization's ability to disseminate information quickly and shape opinions. This includes media within the organization, such as providing feed access or radio broadcasts, as well as external influence through a spokesperson, documentaries, or reputation. Media also includes an organization's ability to control the spread of information and cover up facts, should the need arise. Slick corporate organizations likely have a high Media score, but so do artist organizations or those with a technologically savvy population who can build their own networks.

### SCIENCE

Science reflects an organization's scientific and technological expertise and equipment. It is useful for helping the organization understand new phenomena and make use of alien technology, as well as its ability to solve problems by creating technical solutions. While other statistics may utilize advanced technology as part of their functions or Focuses, Science is





used to develop new technologies or refit technology to solve problems it wasn't intended to. Research organizations have high Science scores by necessity, while a social media, or industrial organization may have lower scores.

### SIZE

Many challenges become impossible or trivial not because of an organization's resources, but because of its size. A massive organization is more difficult to conquer than a tiny one, while a smaller organization is more intimate and able to scatter and reorganize quickly to respond to new dangers. This difference in capability is the organization's Size.

Size is divided into four categories: local, regional, system-wide, and interstellar. Local covers a station, settlement, or city or town on Earth or Mars; they might be a local business, gang, relief organization, church, or some organization that covers or serves the area—usually no more than a few dozen to a hundred or so members. A regional organization may range from upwards of a few hundred to a few thousand members within a large station (Ceres, Medina or Tycho stations), a province, or even an entire planet. System-wide organizations often have tens of thousands (or more) members and span the entire Sol system. And finally, interstellar organizations may have a million or more members and span from Earth to the many colonized worlds beyond the Ring. Larger organizations exist, but beyond this scale, they act as nation-states and no longer need to worry about the day-to-day challenges represented by Growth checks and plot actions.

### RESOLVE

Resolve represents an organization's resistance to failure, disaster, and outside influence. It may represent redundant systems or just tenacity in the face of adversity. Dangers that threaten an organization may be more effective if workers are careless, members distrust each other, or infrastructure isn't maintained. Consequently, Resolve is lower for organizations with little planning, poor equipment, no redundancies, and poor morale, while an otherwise small or fragile organization may have a deceptively high Resolve reflecting especially stubborn residents or readiness drills to prepare for emergencies.

Resolve acts as armor, reducing damage to an organization's Stability.

### STABILITY

Stability measures how robust an organization is, representing how much damage or stress its buildings, equipment, supply-chains, and members can suffer before finally collapsing. A high stability represents a healthy and happy organization.

Stability acts like an organization's Fortune. Organizations may spend points of Stability to improve the results of checks or reduce the damage from disasters or the actions of opposing organizations. Unlike Fortune, Stability is not bound by a maximum and can rise beyond its starting level. Stability does not recover on its own, either; it must be restored via Stunts or protagonist actions. If an organization's Stability is reduced to 0 and it can't buy off the damage from a disaster or other incident, it is destroyed. A destroyed organization's facilities are destroyed beyond repair and its members killed, captured, or scattered to the wind.

## ORGANIZATION CONDITIONS

Like a character, an organization may suffer various conditions to reflect specific hardships. The organization can accept a condition to reduce the damage it takes by 1d6. An organization can only accept a maximum of two conditions to reduce the damage from any given attack, and the GM is the final arbiter of whether or not a given condition reflects the effects of a given disaster or attack.

Organizations don't recover from conditions automatically. Instead, a condition can be removed only with the Innovation Growth Stunt or as a result of the protagonist's adventures.

### MALFUNCTIONS

The organization's facilities and technologies are universally failing in the face of strain. The organization loses the benefit of all its existing focuses.

### REELING

The organization is disorganized, and residents are losing faith in their leadership. The organization has a -1 penalty on all checks and must spend 1 Stability to initiate any plot actions.

### UNREST

The organization is scattered and desperate, with many residents in protesting or abandoning the organization. The organization has a -2 penalty on all checks and cannot initiate any plot actions. This replaces any of the penalties from the Reeling condition.

## BUILDING AN ORGANIZATION

Players should ideally build the organization that their adventures will focus on. There are three ways to do this.

### OPTION 1: FREE FORM

Using this method, the players work with the GM to assign abilities to their organization to reflect their vision of its background and purpose. Organizations should have strengths and weaknesses, so abilities should not all be assigned high scores; keeping some low creates more tension and means there will be problems the protagonists must actively resolve rather than allowing the organization to manage everything. Leaving some abilities weak also provides room for the organization to meaningfully grow. Stability should be around 25 to 45 and Resolve between 2 and 6 for most organizations. Select two focuses that make sense for the resources and specialists available to the organization.

### OPTION 2: ASSIGN POINTS

Using this method, players assign 7 points between Economy, Force, Infrastructure, Media, and Science (generally divided into scores of 3, 2, 1, 1, and 0). No ability can start higher than 4. The GM can vary the number of points allowed, reducing it to represent slapdash or poor organizations or increasing it for organizations with major corporate or government support. Starting Resolve is equal to the organization's Infrastructure+2 and Stability is 25+2d6+the organization's highest ability score. Select two focuses, one of which must be for the organization's highest ability score. An organization's default Size is settlement, but the GM can decide the campaign warrants a different starting size.

### OPTION 3: RANDOM GENERATION

This option can provide interesting results for a campaign, leading to immediate engagement from protagonists as they rush to shore up what they view as their organization's shortcomings. Players should roll for their abilities the same way they would for



character creation (see page 6 of *The Expanse* Roleplaying Game) and can swap any two abilities after rolling. Starting Resolve is 1d6-1 and starting Stability is 25+2d6+the organization's highest ability score. Select two focuses, one of which must be for the organization's highest ability score. Size is determined randomly by a d6 roll: 1 is outpost, 2-5 is settlement, and 6 is province.

## ORGANIZATION FOCUSES

This section gives examples of organization focuses for each of the five abilities. Each can be used as-is, but GMs and players can also use these as examples. Organization focuses represent a mix of outstanding technology and specialist NPCs, but lacking a focus doesn't mean an organization lacks that technology entirely. An organization without the Infrastructure (spaceport) focus may still have access to spaceports; they simply don't possess top tier ports, priority access, experienced technicians, and repair facilities.

### ECONOMY FOCUSES

**Armory:** The organization's stockpile of defenses, including weapons and ammunition.

**Credit Networks:** The organization maintains a web of bank accounts and investments that it can turn to for extra income.

**Inventory:** An organization's access to basic supplies and equipment including, food, water, and raw materials (but not weapons or armor).

**Manufacturing:** The organization includes a strong manufacturing base and produces finished goods for the local market and export.

**Pharmaceuticals:** The organization's access to medical supplies and drugs (both legal and illegal).

**Properties:** The organization's distribution via properties owned and mapped. These properties should be specified.

**Rare Resources:** The organization has access to a rare commodity, such a lithium, a native creature, or unique alien goods.

**Reputation:** The organization or some of its residents have strong reputations and connections with powerful figures in Sol or another important system.

**Scrip:** The organization issues its own currency, which it can manipulate to head off local economic problems.

**Services:** These are the skills and services an organization provides customers or associates, including but not restricted to security services, weapons, engineering, inventory, loans, and R&D. This focus can be taken multiple times and with a different service for each focus.

**Spaceport:** The organization supports steady off world trade, providing access to a variety of goods and foreign wealth.

**Stolen Goods:** The organization has access to a wide variety of stolen goods.

### FORCE FOCUSES

**Assassins:** Used for swift elimination of specific targets.

**Counterintelligence:** Used to protect an organization from spies and assassins.

**Demolitions:** The organization has a well-stocked supply of explosives or enough skill to apply what they do have with maximum effectiveness.

**Industrial Mechs:** Salvage and loading mechs provide plenty of muscle power in a high-maintenance package.

**Military Mechs:** Mechs outfitted with armor and weapons help the organization defend itself from local predators, rogue automatons, and hostile human forces.

**Militia:** People trained with military weapons and tactics help to defend in a crisis.

**Protomolecule Defenses:** The organization has access to advanced weaponry created by protomolecule experimentation (i.e., Project Caliban).

**Security Teams:** Dedicated investigators and police help maintain order.

**Spies:** Used for surveillance, sabotage, and conducting covert operations.

**Warships:** The organization has one or more gunships—perhaps even a cruiser—that it can use to defend itself or its assets.

### INFRASTRUCTURE FOCUSES

**Camouflage:** Buildings or other infrastructure are designed to avoid attention.

**Clinic:** Trained doctors or qualified medical facilities to treat injury and disease as well as augmentation surgery.

**Farming/Hydroponics:** Sophisticated botany techniques allow the organization to produce food and clean water.

**Fusion Power:** The organization has one or more fusion reactors and the expertise to use them.

**Housing:** The organization maintains housing for its members.

**House of Worship:** A generally well-built structure to cater to members spiritual beliefs but may also serve as a community center and/or shelter.

**Manufacturing:** Large-scale manufacturing facilities.

**Recyclers:** Ubiquitous appliances that recycle food and garbage into usable raw materials.

**Redundancy:** Capability to back up systems, bring backups online, and maintain stockpiles.

**Schools/Training Centers:** Used to educate and train members and their children.

**Shipping Network:** A transportation network (cargo ships or shuttles) for the distribution of goods.

**Transit Network:** A well-developed system of shuttles and ship transport for the organizations members.

### MEDIA FOCUSES

**Belter:** Ability to sway or educate people from the Belt.

**Blue Collar:** Used to appeal to workers who work on-site in physical industries.

**Earthier:** Capability to sway or educate people from Earth and Luna.

**Extrasolar Feeds:** Used to access, learn from, or interact with the feeds from offworld.

**Faith:** Resources to instill beliefs or use existing beliefs to stir members to action or help weather troubles.

**Local Network:** Used to store and access data locally, make it readily available for others, or conceal local computer networks.

**Martian:** Used to sway or educate people from Mars.

**Propaganda:** Used to control a message, change or conceal the truth, or smear others.

**Satellites:** Capacity to relay messages around the world and observe or survey the planet from above.

**Underworld:** Used when organizations deal with criminal gangs and enterprises.

**White Collar:** Ability to appeal to workers who work from a desk.

### SCIENCE FOCUSES

**Epidemiology:** Used to observe and predict the spread of contagious parasites, diseases, and other threats as well as contain and cure them.

**Dedicated Computer Networks:** The organization maintains separate data facilities for science and technology, letting them crunch numbers faster and more securely.

**Hacking:** Computer specialists who can access secure networks.

**Jury-Rigging:** Out-of-the-box thinking and adapting technology to things it was never meant for.

**Meta-Materials:** Used to understand new or alien materials and reproduce them for industrial use.

**Pharmacology:** Access to cutting edge drugs and advanced research.

**Ring Builder Technology:** The organization has access to functioning ruins or technology left over from the aliens who built the Ring network, and the organization's ability to control or at least use it.

**Terraforming:** Adapting the atmospheric and biological conditions on alien worlds to better suit Earth life.

**Xenobiology:** Used to study and understand lifeforms from outside Earth's ecosystem.

## ORGANIZATION OPERATIONS

These same rules represent the various projects and threats (collectively called operations) that occupy an organization's attention. GMs can create rival organizations and similar organizations such as hostile ships, either specifically designing them or using random generation. Other, more abstract operations may only possess one or two of the usual abilities; a military skirmish in the region the organization occupies may only have a rating in Force while studying the mysteries of an alien ruin may have ratings in Infrastructure and Science to represent its practical value and the potential to learn from it. Many operations remain in effect until the organization or the player characters deal with them somehow, while some are immediate dangers or short-term opportunities that an organization must endure only once or only has a limited time to exploit. All operations should have at least one Ability and one Focus, as well as Size, Resolve, and Stability. While rival organizations have Stability in a similar range to player organizations, threats and projects are much shorter-term prospects, with Stability equal to 2d6+their highest ability score.

The operations that surround an organization help color the tone of the campaign, so the GM should carefully consider what to include and what to omit. High-risk operations like a dangerous mining opportunity generally have higher abilities, while lower-risk but persistent troubles—a street war or a pirate radio station undermining consumer confidence—have lower abilities





but high Stability. A challenging, short-term project or threat may have a high Resolve but low Stability. Overcoming a threat or rival organization removes that as an existential threat, while projects are an opportunity for organizations to improve abilities, develop new Focuses, earn rewards for the protagonists, provide PC bonuses to certain tasks, or provide new opportunities; GMs should carefully consider what rewards a project may provide, and players might suggest what they hope to achieve. Likewise, GMs should think carefully about what rival organizations or organizations may oppose and what their motivations, tactics, and resources might include. Operations should challenge an organization but avoid the temptation to create opponents so competent that they can easily destroy the PCs' organization.

## USING ORGANIZATIONS

The rules for running an organization exist to provide new opportunities for adventure, provide a sense of investment in the protagonist's community, and help players feel like an important part of the dynamic and ever-growing *Expanse* universe. The organization rules interact with the rest of a campaign in two ways: growth checks and plot actions.

### GROWTH CHECKS

For an organization to survive, it must endure any number of hardships and trials. The daily labor of keeping the members of an organization safe and relatively happy fall under growth checks. A growth check is performed once every three months and is a simple test (TN 10) using the organization's highest ability. A campaign focused solely around the organization may benefit from more frequent growth checks—perhaps once a month—to introduce more frequent complications.

Successful projects can reduce the growth check TN as the organization adapts, but they can never lower it below 10. An organization can spend Stability on its growth check.

### ORGANIZATION MISHAPS

| 2D6 | MISHAP                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2   | <b>Attacked:</b> Some strange aspect of the organization falls under attack; hackers access sensitive information, a successful smear campaign causes members to leave, or infrastructure is damaged.  |
| 3-4 | <b>New Competition:</b> A new group occupying a similar trade to the protagonists' organization arrives from elsewhere and draws resources and recruits away.                                          |
| 5-6 | <b>Discontent:</b> A sect of the organization have become discontent and have formed a criminal group, protest group, or saboteur group to undermine the organization and turn events to their liking. |
| 7-8 | <b>Rival Maneuvering:</b> A rival organization undercuts the group's power with their own actions.                                                                                                     |
| 9   | <b>Outside Hostiles:</b> Pirates, a rival organization, or an aggressive political faction, cause problems for the organization.                                                                       |
| 10  | <b>Out of Our Hands:</b> Something occurs far away, maybe a war, economic crisis, public tragedy, or meteor strike somehow negatively affects the organization.                                        |
| 11  | <b>Political Upheaval:</b> A shift or breakdown in the organization's leadership creates strife.                                                                                                       |
| 12  | <b>Beyond the Gate:</b> Blowback from something outside the organization's own system—perhaps a breakdown at medina station or war in the Sol system—is creating supply or moral problems.             |

### ORGANIZATION GROWTH STUNTS

| SP | STUNT                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1+ | <b>Rebuild/Expand:</b> Add Stability at the cost of 1 per SP spent.                                                                                                                                                    |
| 1  | <b>Kit:</b> Supply one character with an important or significant piece of equipment or 1d3 minor items.                                                                                                               |
| 2  | <b>Discovery:</b> The organization learns something scientific or rival groups. Learn 2 exact ability scores or focuses of any threat or project.                                                                      |
| 2  | <b>High Morale:</b> Gain a +2 bonus on the next plot action the organization undertakes.                                                                                                                               |
| 2  | <b>Repairs:</b> Remove a single organization condition.                                                                                                                                                                |
| 3  | <b>Contacts:</b> The organization forms a connection that will provide useful information from time to time.                                                                                                           |
| 3  | <b>New Hire:</b> A skilled or influential NPC joins the organization. Select one Growth or Plot Stunt and reduce its cost by 1 SP. If this character dies or leaves, the organization loses this benefit.              |
| 3  | <b>Redundancies:</b> Increase Resolve by 1.                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 3  | <b>Trade Network:</b> The organization attracts the attention of a trading ship or group, which makes new or better equipment available from time to time.                                                             |
| 4  | <b>New Assets:</b> Increase an ability rated 5 or less by 1.                                                                                                                                                           |
| 4  | <b>Significant Growth:</b> Increase the Size of the organization from local to regional.                                                                                                                               |
| 4  | <b>New Focus:</b> Add a Focus.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 5  | <b>New Talent:</b> A skilled <i>and</i> influential NPC joins the organization. Select two Growth or Plot Stunts and reduce their cost by 1 SP. If this character dies or leaves, the organization loses this benefit. |
| 5  | <b>Organization Effort:</b> Increase the organization's size from regional to system wide.                                                                                                                             |
| 6  | <b>Major Industry:</b> Increase an ability rated 6 or more by 1.                                                                                                                                                       |
| 6  | <b>Rampant Growth:</b> Increase the organization's size from system wide to interstellar.                                                                                                                              |

If a growth check is successful, the organization maintains itself with no major setbacks. If it fails, the organization loses 2d6 Stability, or it reduces one of its ability scores, Size, or Resolve by 1 rank—members leave or die in an accident, critical equipment begins to break down, dissent spreads, or other calamities cost the organization important resources. The only way to prevent this loss is for protagonists to become directly involved as part of an adventure, such as a crew going the extra mile to secure a pirate ship's supplies or equipment to shore up their organization's suffering systems. Abilities cannot be reduced below -2, Resilience can't fall below 0, and Size cannot be smaller than outpost. GMs looking for inspiration to explain what misfortune befell the organization can roll on the **Organization Mishap** table or create a pre-planned disaster.



Try to keep the organization's successes and setbacks relevant to the players and their characters; a disaster may make a vital part or luxury unavailable or injure an NPC they've befriended.

If doubles are rolled on the growth check and it is a success, the organization grows in some way. Players can spend the Stunt Points generated by their growth check on any of the Stunts listed in the **Organization Growth Stunts** table. GMs can add new Stunts—particularly as a reward for successful projects or as major rewards for protagonist adventures. Players can opt to save their organization's SP to spend on a future growth check. Players and GMs should work together to explain what Growth Stunts represent in the organization itself. Does the organization build a new facility? Have they invented a new product? Do members hone their skills? Or does a new specialist arrive to join the organization?

## PLOT ACTIONS

While growth checks represent the everyday ebb and flow of life in a community, plot actions represent deliberate efforts by the organization leadership toward specific goals. Often plot actions are made in response to a threat or rival organization, but organizations may also be proactive, attempting to undermine rivals or build new projects to improve conditions. Successful plot actions can hurt rivals, disarm threats, and make headway on projects, while failed plot actions do the opposite.

To begin a plot action, the players must decide on an operation in which they want to engage and decide what strategy they plan to use. Different operations require different abilities. Trying to lull a rival organization into complacency with propaganda is a Media test, while trying to manage a supply failure would use Infrastructure to outlast it or Science to come up with an alternative. Targeted operations use the most appropriate ability to resist; opposing a propaganda campaign through their own counterintelligence would use Media, but responding with police crackdowns or a military attack on the PCs' organization would use Force. Many threats and projects have only a single ability score and can only use that to resist plot actions.

## PLOT STUNTS

| SP | EFFECT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1+ | <b>Reinforce:</b> Add extra Stability equal to the number of SP spent.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 1  | <b>Create an Opening:</b> Gain a +2 bonus on your next plot action against this same operation.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 2  | <b>Analysts:</b> You uncover valuable insight or intelligence about the target operation. Select one ability. The target suffers a -1 penalty to tests with that ability until they roll doubles on a growth check.                                                                               |
| 2  | <b>Countermeasures:</b> Pick a focus. The operation cannot use that Focus in their next plot action.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 2  | <b>Preparations:</b> You reinforce this against this danger's usual avenues of attack. This threat or rival receives a -2 penalty to their next plot action against your organization.                                                                                                            |
| 3  | <b>Exploit an Opportunity:</b> Add +1d6 Stability loss to an operation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 3  | <b>Precise Efforts:</b> Ignore the operation's Resolve when determining their Stability loss.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 3  | <b>Uncover Assets:</b> You gain some valuables as part of your plot action, stealing supplies from another organization or returning from the mines with a strange artifact.                                                                                                                      |
| 4  | <b>Domino Effect:</b> Use the results from your plot action to immediately target a second operation. The two operations affected should be linked in some way. Each operation rolls and resists separately.                                                                                      |
| 4  | <b>Policy Shift:</b> Pick a focus. Your target operation permanently loses that Focus.                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 4  | <b>Second Team:</b> Immediately roll a second plot action against the same operation. This must use a different ability than the current plot action.                                                                                                                                             |
| 5  | <b>Double Shifts:</b> Immediately roll a second plot action against the same operation. This test uses the same ability that the current plot action.                                                                                                                                             |
| 5  | <b>Make the Most:</b> Add +2d6 Stability loss to an operation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 5  | <b>Unexpected Insights:</b> You learn from your struggles. Your organization gains a new Focus, determined by the GM. This Focus must be for the same ability the target operation used to roll its plot check.                                                                                   |
| 6  | <b>Power Shift:</b> Reduce one of the target operation's abilities by 1, and raise the same ability for your organization by 1.                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 6  | <b>Turn the Tables:</b> The target operation loses one focus, while your organization gains a new Focus determined by the GM (the same, if possible). This may be an important NPC defecting from a rival organization or learning the harness the deadly lightning strikes from seasonal storms. |

The organization then makes an opposed test with its target. Appropriate Focuses gives a party a +2 bonus to their respective rolls. The organization that succeeds deals 2d6+the ability used damage to their opponent's Stability, with resolve acting as armor against this loss. If the winner rolls doubles, they also gain SP equal to the result of their Stunt Die result to spend on the Stunts listed in the **Plot Stunts** table.

### PLOT FREQUENCY

GMs should decide how frequently they want organization operations to come up in their game. If the players enjoy managing their organization and leading large-scale operations, multiple plot actions per game session may be appropriate. If not, limit plot actions to one per session to keep the focus on individual protagonist actions. It's easiest for organizations to roll for a plot action immediately after their growth check each month.

### LONG-TERM OPERATIONS

Most operations will require multiple successful plot checks to complete entirely, and rival organizations may be long-lived, with plot actions representing rivalries and one-upmanship rather than a serious attempt to wipe them out entirely. If the players' organization engages in a long-lasting feud or complex project, GMs may opt to break it up into a series of smaller operations. Failure on these smaller operations may require direct involvement of the protagonists before progress can resume.

Rival organizations and threats also gain a plot action as frequently as the players' organization does. Rival organizations may do nothing when the opportunity arises, as they are assumed to sometimes focus on their own projects and threats. Threats will affect the players' organization at every opportunity unless the GM decides otherwise.

### SIZE AND OPERATIONS

Building a water refinery is trivial for a large, established city with thousands of trained environment engineers, but it can be an overwhelming struggle for a desperate community of Belters who arrived with little more than the bulkheads on their ship. An organization's size can greatly influence how challenging tasks are.

For every difference in Size (local to regional, regional to system wide, system wide to interstellar) between an organization and its operation or rival organization, the larger organization adds a +2 bonus to its opposed plot action test, as it is harder for







small organizations to affect major threats. However, all Plot Stunts increase in cost by +2 SP per difference in size, as a larger force doesn't have the fine-level control and flexibility to easily exploit opportunities.

If a smaller organization gets the better of a large operation, it stands to learn and gain far more from the experience. For every difference in scope between a smaller organization and an operation, the successful organization receives a bonus to their next growth check: for every step difference in size, the smaller organization gains a +2 bonus to the test itself and 2 free SP to spend on Stunts even if they didn't roll doubles. This makes operations against very difficult projects, large rivals, and powerful threats into high-risk, high reward scenarios.

## OTHER ACTIONS

Players might want their organization to pursue other goals beyond the sorts of rivalries, survival, and projects listed here. Establishing an artist organization means the members will want to establish distinct styles and techniques, while an organization experimenting with new family or social structures would need to study how these changes impact society. GMs can always stat up niche ideas as projects for an organization to pursue via plot actions, but they may also be reserved as pure story elements that the GM and players can roleplay. GMs can simply narrate difficulties or dangers that arise and allow protagonists to address them directly rather than relying on a dice roll.

GMs should also bear in mind that some tasks are impossible. Players who want projects like "achieve immortality" or "build a new Ring gate" are limited by the technology available to humans, though you might be able to offer smaller-scale versions of these same goals, such as "build a dome" or "engine improvements."

## ORGANIZATION DESTRUCTION

An organization that loses all its Stability, or whose abilities are all reduced to 0 or less, collapses. Its members aren't necessarily all dead, but its facilities and resources have been wiped out and any survivors have fled to other organizations or to try to survive alone. Protagonists may undergo a desperate adventure to pull off a last-moment rescue. If this final attempt to save the organization succeeds, the organization immediately gains 2d6 Stability and 1 rank in two abilities of the players' choice.

If the operation is a rival organization, another organization can attempt to absorb it before it fails entirely. If an organization reaches 1 or 2 Stability and has at least 2 of its abilities reduced to 0 or less, another organization can announce they are absorbing its remaining resources and survivors. This is handled narratively. The larger organization gains 1d6 Stability and 1 rank in up to three abilities the smaller organization still held above 0.

## SAMPLE ORGANIZATIONS

The following organizations represent typical groups, organizations, or societies that crews are likely to encounter in *The Expanse*. They can be used as templates for protagonist or GM organizations. If the organization manages to negate one of an operation's Focuses with a Stunt or other means, future appearances of the same operation lose the same focus.

### CULT

This group represents a small cult dedicated to an esoteric form of belief. Neither rich nor powerful, they focus mostly on appealing to those on the fringe of society.

#### CULT

|                       |                  |             |                |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|----------------|
| <b>ECONOMY</b>        |                  |             | 0              |
| <b>FORCE</b>          |                  |             | 1              |
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> |                  |             | 1              |
| <b>MEDIA</b>          |                  |             | 2 (Propaganda) |
| <b>SCIENCE</b>        |                  |             | 0              |
| <b>RESOLVE</b>        | <b>STABILITY</b> | <b>SIZE</b> |                |
| 2                     | 30               | Local       |                |

### CRIME SYNDICATE

A system-wide group that may one day even become interstellar. Comprising different crime families with a variety of areas of expertise.

#### CRIME SYNDICATE

|                       |                  |             |                                   |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>ECONOMY</b>        |                  |             | 5 (Credit Networks, Stolen Goods) |
| <b>FORCE</b>          |                  |             | 4 (Assassins, Security Teams)     |
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> |                  |             | 1                                 |
| <b>MEDIA</b>          |                  |             | 3 (Underworld, Earth)             |
| <b>SCIENCE</b>        |                  |             | 0                                 |
| <b>RESOLVE</b>        | <b>STABILITY</b> | <b>SIZE</b> |                                   |
| 5                     | 35               | System Wide |                                   |

### OPA FACTION

An OPA faction or possibly an extended polycule who cling together for a particular purpose, belief, or just self-preservation.

#### OPA FACTION

|                       |                  |             |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|
| <b>ECONOMY</b>        |                  |             | 0                |
| <b>FORCE</b>          |                  |             | 2 (Warships)     |
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> |                  |             | 1 (Redundancies) |
| <b>MEDIA</b>          |                  |             | 2 (Belter)       |
| <b>SCIENCE</b>        |                  |             | 1                |
| <b>RESOLVE</b>        | <b>STABILITY</b> | <b>SIZE</b> |                  |
| 4                     | 30               | Regional    |                  |

### PIRATE STRONGHOLD

A secret outpost for maintaining a ragtag fleet, a pirate outpost might be little more than makeshift landing pads

and a dozen or so cargo containers refitting into housing and storage. Despite its lack of sophistication, its fiercely loyal occupants can become a thorn in the side of far larger forces.

#### PIRATE STRONGHOLD

|                       |                  |             |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|
| <b>ECONOMY</b>        |                  |             | 1 (Stolen Goods) |
| <b>FORCE</b>          |                  |             | 3                |
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> |                  |             | 0 (Camouflage)   |
| <b>MEDIA</b>          |                  |             | 2                |
| <b>SCIENCE</b>        |                  |             | 1                |
| <b>RESOLVE</b>        | <b>STABILITY</b> | <b>SIZE</b> |                  |
| 5                     | 25               | System Wide |                  |

### STREET GANG

A group that consists of pretty criminals working together for common security and mutual gain.

#### STREET GANG

|                       |                  |             |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|------------------|
| <b>ECONOMY</b>        |                  |             | 2 (Stolen Goods) |
| <b>FORCE</b>          |                  |             | 2                |
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> |                  |             | 0                |
| <b>MEDIA</b>          |                  |             | 2 (Underworld)   |
| <b>SCIENCE</b>        |                  |             | 0                |
| <b>RESOLVE</b>        | <b>STABILITY</b> | <b>SIZE</b> |                  |
| 4                     | 25               | Local       |                  |

### RESEARCH EXPEDITION

With considerable backing from corporations hoping to exploit the resources of the new worlds beyond the Ring, the scientific research expedition is theoretically a temporary mission well-outfitted to survive up to five years before returning to the Sol system.

The UN has poured considerable resources into supporting certain organizations to re-home refugees from Earth, creating cities and farms that might look familiar to other terrains.

#### RESEARCH EXPEDITION

|                       |                  |             |                     |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------|---------------------|
| <b>ECONOMY</b>        |                  |             | 3 (Corporate Ties)  |
| <b>FORCE</b>          |                  |             | 1 (Security Teams)  |
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> |                  |             | 3 (Orbital Shuttle) |
| <b>MEDIA</b>          |                  |             | 2                   |
| <b>SCIENCE</b>        |                  |             | 5 (Xenobiology)     |
| <b>RESOLVE</b>        | <b>STABILITY</b> | <b>SIZE</b> |                     |
| 2                     | 40               | Settlement  |                     |



## SAMPLE PROJECTS

Projects offer things for an organization to engage with when not under threat. Each possesses only a single ability, with one or more Focuses that make working conditions more difficult. Reducing a project's Stability to 0 completes it, and each entry lists a potential reward for completion. The GM makes the final determination of what reward the organization gains.

### CONSTRUCTION

Investing the time and materials to build a permanent, large-scale structure that benefits the entire organization, such as a school, civic center, or environment dome.

#### CONSTRUCTION

| <b>FORCE</b>                                                                                                                                                                                      |           | 2 (Sandy Foundation) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------|
| RESOLVE                                                                                                                                                                                           | STABILITY | SIZE                 |
| 2                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 12        | Settlement           |
| <b>POTENTIAL REWARDS</b> +1 Infrastructure, +1 Resolve, gain the Technology (Dedicated Computer Networks) or Infrastructure (House of Worship or School) Focus, build a ship for the protagonists |           |                      |

### MINING EFFORTS

Locating and extracting deposits of valuable and beneficial minerals such as lithium, phosphorous, zinc, gold, tin, and cobalt for profit or for use by the organization.

## SAMPLE THREATS

Like projects, threats only have one or two abilities and Focuses that make them more dangerous.

### BLIGHT OR DISEASE

A crop blight or plague threatens the entire organization and causes panic. A blight or disease only lasts 1d6 months before burning itself out or locals developing enough immunity to mitigate it.

#### BLIGHT OR DISEASE

| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> |           | 2 (Highly Infectious) |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <b>MEDIA</b>          |           | 1 (Create Panic)      |
| RESOLVE               | STABILITY | SIZE                  |
| 2                     | 10        | Settlement            |

#### MINING EFFORTS

##### INFRASTRUCTURE

3 (Backbreaking Labor, Poor Ventilation)

| RESOLVE                                                                                                                                                       | STABILITY | SIZE    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| 5                                                                                                                                                             | 10        | Outpost |
| <b>POTENTIAL REWARDS</b> +1 Economy, gain the Economy (Rare Resources), or Technology (Meta-Materials) Focus, find a fuel source, create an emergency shelter |           |         |

### SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH

Exploring the medical, military, and industrial applications of existing scientific research and funding additional research in promising new discoveries.

#### SCIENTIFIC BREAKTHROUGH

| <b>SCIENCE</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |           | 4 (Alien Chemistry, Network Lag) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|
| RESOLVE                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | STABILITY | SIZE                             |
| 2                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 12        | Province                         |
| <b>POTENTIAL REWARDS</b> +1 Media or Technology, +2d6 Stability, gain the Infrastructure (Clinic or Fusion Power) Focus, gain a Technology Focus, unlock a secret of Ring Builder ruins, find a weakness in an enemy's defenses |           |                                  |

### PIRATES

Pirates are harassing the protagonists' organization. During plot actions, roll a 1d6; on a roll of 3-6, the pirates don't threaten the organization this phase.

#### PIRATES

| <b>FORCE</b>          |           | 5 (Ambush)      |
|-----------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| <b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> |           | 2 (Hidden Base) |
| RESOLVE               | STABILITY | SIZE            |
| 4                     | 12        | Regional        |

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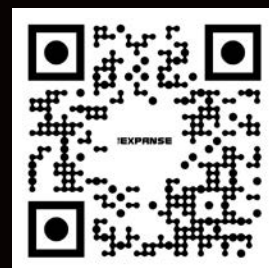
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