



TWILIGHT IMPERIUM[®]

TWILIGHT CODEX

VOLUME IV: LIBERATION



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Volume IV: Liberation

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Twilight Codex Volume IV: Liberation.

Foreword From the Developer	4
"Fortress Ordinian" by Daniel Lovat Clark..	5-13

IXTHIAN ARTIFACTS

This section contains new components that are debuting in the Twilight Codex for the first time.

Relic Cards.....	14
♦ Circlet of the Void	
♦ Book of Latvinia	
♦ Neuraloop	
Galactic Event Cards.....	15-16
♦ Minor Factions	
♦ Total War	
♦ Age of Commerce	
♦ Age of Exploration	

PAX MAGNIFICA

This section contains scenarios, game modes, and setup variants that change how the game is played.

The Liberation of Ordinian.....	17-18
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THE MECATOL REPORT

This section contains an adventure for Edge Studio's *Embers of the Imperium* Genesys RPG supplement.

The Mecatol Report	19
Keleres Headquarters	20
Mecatol Rex Bestiary	25
The Mole	30

Foreword From the Developer

Hello everyone!

It has been a while, hasn't it? It has been a busy time for me, and for many of you to be sure, but I've been lucky enough to have the time to pop up and interact with the community here and there when I can (as I am sure some of you have noticed). But don't let the quiet fool you—there is a lot to be excited about coming up for *Twilight Imperium*, and I cannot wait to share it with you when the time is right.

Until then, a couple of quick notes about the content provided in this *Codex*:

- ◆ A separate file that contains high quality PDFs of all new components released in the *Codex* is available on our website alongside this document.
- ◆ To best utilize these components, I recommend that all components of a given type be sleeved, along with the other cards of that type, so that players cannot determine if they are from the *Codex* before drawing them.
- ◆ Components that do not need to be shuffled or hidden do not need to be sleeved in this way.
- ◆ Each new component is marked with the icon to the right to denote that it belongs to the *Codex*.

Thank you all for your unending love of this game and its universe. Being a part of helping it to grow has been an absolute pleasure.

Dane Beltrami
Twilight Imperium Fourth Edition Developer



FORTRESS ORDINIAN

BY DANIEL LOVAT CLARK

RECONNAISSANCE COMPANY ALPHA, AKA "WOLFHOUSES"

SOL 67TH MARINE DIVISION; SALIENT SUN TASK FORCE

ORDINIAN

SIX DAYS AFTER PLANETFALL.

Some planets had weather. Ordinian's sky was full of Nekro drones and the flak flechettes spat from autoturrets that shot them down.

Groc Yycho wondered what the Ordinian sky was supposed to look like, what it smelled like after a rain. Had it been as beautiful as Archon Ren? He could still see the bones of the planet, the mountains that formed the bowl-shaped valley where the Salient Sun task force had made their planetfall. He could imagine the trees that should be there, the flesh on the bones, the hidden streams splashing down to the crater lake in the center of the valley.

It should be beautiful, he decided. He thought of asking Prin, but if he recalled correctly, she had lived on the other side of the planet.

"Woolgathering?" Ducan's gruff voice had been Yycho's constant companion, as much as the distant bellow of the autoturrets and the spak-spak-spak of dronefall.

"A Jordian expression?" Yycho asked. "What is its meaning, please?"

"Staring off into space, thinking about some damn thing or another that's of not much use to the here and now." Captain Jael Ducan shrugged as he joined Yycho by the firebase's sandbag wall. He was tall, by Jordian standards. He came up to Yycho's shoulder. "And no, I don't have any better idea than you do where it comes from."

"Then, yes, woolgathering." Yycho pressed a button on his wrist and his oculars settled into place. He studied the mountain pass falling away below them. Searching, vainly, for a sign that Ordinian had survived the ravages of the Nekro Virus. Searching, with much more success, for signs that the enemy was approaching. "Movement."

Yycho gave no orders. Ducan was the captain of this company, his was the command. Yycho was technically an "advisor," embedded by the Xxcha Kingdom into this Federation of Sol unit to promote cross-training and closer diplomatic ties between the two polities. Sometime in the second year of their war against the Nekro Virus, those artificial divisions between Sol and Xxcha seemed to have melted away. The Salient Sun task force hadn't been shy about picking up strays, either.

"Scanners see them," called Prin from her perch by their comms tower. She was a perfectly average size for a Naaz, but that still made her literally knee-high to the taller members of the unit. She preferred to perch on top of something to avoid getting stepped on—equipment, Yycho's exocarapace, whatever was convenient. The tower was where all of their comms and sensor equipment was clustered, old-fashioned wires snaking up and down the scaffolding as hardening against Nekro wireless penetration. Prin was the company's tech expert, and most of her "advances" in the fight against the Nekro looked like steps backward, regressing to older, bulkier, dumber technology that couldn't be subverted by a malevolent, self-replicating software glitch.

"Esposito, van Sant, Chen, to the front," barked Ducan. Three of his best marines jogged forward, checking their rifles as they went, and took positions along the fortifications. "Groc, any armor?"

"Not this time, captain. Repurposed soil tillers, I think."

When they'd first encountered the Nekro all those years ago, the Xxcha had thought what most people thought: they were a machine race of malevolent robots, building endless waves of disposable drones as part of a grand strategy to destroy organic life. Everyone thought that, at first, when they first met the Nekro swarms. But it wasn't very accurate.

The hordes of efficient combat robots were actually a minority of Nekro units and a limited expression of what the Nekro were. In truth, the Nekro Virus was hardly a group of evil machines—it was aptly named. A bug in code. A self-replicating virus that hated all organic life, and could infect any sufficiently advanced computer system. The Naaz-Rokha settlers on Ordinian had made widespread use of advanced technology and a dizzying array of drones, servos, familiars, and all sorts of low-end AI throughout their society. All of it was compromised by the Nekro Virus within minutes of their invasion reaching orbit. Hundreds of thousands of Naaz and Rokha civilians died in hours, murdered by their own machines.

An entire civilization's worth of discarded drones and familiars was still wandering the planet, hating organic life and hurling themselves at the marines' guns with all the cunning and intelligence of a rockslide. But also like a rockslide, they put the marines in constant danger of being swept away and crushed.

The soil tillers rushed forward on skittering mechanical legs. Their spinning tool heads were caked in dirt and blood, their scanners and lights glowing with red malice. Like every other piece of evil farm equipment that had stormed their position, they came apart under the steady chatter of the marines' guns.

"You're the expert," Ducan said. "What do you think they're trying to accomplish here?"

"I imagine they wish to kill us, scavenge our equipment, and replace our fleshy bodies with more robot drones."

"Obviously. I mean, why are they sending outdated farm equipment out to die?"

"Hoping we run out of bullets before they run out of agri-familiars?"

"Hah, we might." Duncan frowned and studied the inert machines for a silent moment. Satisfied they were dead, he gestured his fireteam back to cover.

"They are intelligent," Yysho said. "Why might you use such a tactic?"

"To confirm our position for an airstrike, maybe? Prin! Specialist, any chatter?"

The Naaz looked up from her screens. Most of their equipment was human-scaled, and she'd surrounded herself with a nest of monitors. "Each of those Nekro familiars squawked as they died, captain. I can't tell you anything more than that because—"

"Yeah, yeah, passive listening only, risk of software contamination, I got it."

"It seems likely you were correct," observed Yysho.

"Gee, do I win a prize?" Duncan strode to the center of their little strongpoint, between the comms tower and the entrance to the subterranean barracks. "Listen up! Expect incoming aerial drones! Load for duck hunting!"

Just another day. There were about a hundred marines stationed at this base, a dozen or so bases just like it scattered across the mountains. Each one held a pass into the valley where "Fortress Ordinian" was being built. Autoturrets kept the worst of the flying drones off their backs; regular patrols kept the airspace above the valley clear for orbital access. They'd landed, swept their LZ clear, secured its perimeter—all a textbook operation.

The joint task force was operating as smoothly as any unit in Yysho's long and over-eventful career.

And they'd completely stalled out on their offensive after only six days. While marines rushed to secure positions around the base, bracing flak launchers or rifles with scattershot ammunition, Yysho had to wonder what he was doing here. Ordinian was a wasteland, completely fallen to the Nekro Virus. He understood why Prin was here—reclaiming her home, vengeance for her fallen Rokha partner whom she never discussed—but why was he? Why hadn't he returned home to Archon Ren a year ago?

He had no good answer, so he lifted a shell rifle and took position just as the first of the hunter swarm crested the ridge and fell on the camp. The Nekro drones were flying low to

avoid radar detection and autoturret flechettes, skimming just over the earth and juking left and right to avoid incoming fire.

"They've improved the design since Kal Haddar," grumbled Duncan. Indeed, the newest generation of Nekro attack drones was sleeker, more agile in the air, each one looking something like a stooping razorhawk.

"Fortunately, my friend, so have we." Yysho toggled his fire selector to wide-burst and launched the first shell at an incoming drone. The shell burst, turning into a tiny high-velocity hailstorm of molten metal, and tore through the drone's rightmost thruster. Duncan observed the kill through his scope, waiting for something to get close enough for his plasma rifle to be needed.

"Nice shot. Can you do that...oh, about seventy more times?"

"We shall see." Yysho fired again, a miss. All around the firebase, marines were doing the same, filling the air with shards of lethal metal. The drones maneuvered like a flock of birds, all abruptly twisting up and away as they dropped their first payload of anti-personnel flechettes.

"Cover!" Duncan shouted, unnecessarily. Marines dropped behind their fortifications as razor-sharp blades rattled off the ferrocrete around them, sliced into the sandbags, embedded into their armor.

"Code red!" shouted Private van Sant. She was dragging Chen back into cover, leaving a trail of red blood behind him. "Need antitoxin and sanitation now!" Specialist Prin scrambled out of her cover and leapt to the scaffold that ran over the camp, her four arms making easy work of the climb. She dropped down onto Chen's chest, two arms holding his wounded arm



in place while two more worked her medical kit. An injection of broad-spectrum antitoxin should neutralize the toxins the Nekro loved to lace their darts with. A carefully directed EMP would hopefully nullify the nanites that were already trying to colonize Chen's bloodstream.

The Nekro drones came about for another pass. They'd lost perhaps a quarter of their number, but there were still dozens of them, and each one lethal. "And somewhere there's a factory just building more," Ducan muttered, echoing Yysho's thoughts.

"Yet this attack will fail," Yysho assured him. "And we will stand. A bastion of hope on this benighted world."

"The last bastion," Ducan agreed. "Something about this smells wrong. This is penny-ante crap. Where are the heavy hitters?" He cursed, pulled out his comm unit with its chunky handset. "Higheye, this is Wolfhound Actual. We're being suppressed by Nekro drones, have to assume incoming major attack. Analyze my position; where is the goddamn Nekro armor?"

High above, the Salient Sun cruiser FSS *Durandal* turned its scopes planetward. After a moment, the shrieking, unmusical voice of the *Durandal*'s acting ground operations officer crackled in Ducan's ear. "Three Mordred-class mechs approaching from 47 east."

"Figures!" Ducan slammed the handset against the scaffold with a curse. "Three inbound mechs; I need sliver launchers all along the eastern approach. Who's available?"

"Code red!" came another shout—another marine down. And "Code black!"—a marine dead, probably took a hit through their helmet's faceplate.

"Yysho, you're with me!" Ducan barked, and they both jogged to the closest armory rack for sliver launchers. "Higheye, Wolfhound Actual. Some air support would be lovely right now."

"Air support inbound, captain."

"Oh, happy day." Ducan braced his sliver launcher while Yysho crouched at his side, pointing the targeting laser downrange. "Got any more words of optimism for me, Groc?"

"You heard Higheye, Jael. 'Air support inbound.' No sweeter words in any language for a pair of ground-pounders like us."

"Remind me to read you in on Murphy's Laws of Combat someday."

"Is this another foundational work of your people's culture, like the *Art of War*?"

"Yep, just like that. I see movement."

"I see it, too. But the mech, its weapons aren't pointed at us?"

"No." Ducan's eyes narrowed. "That's not a usual loadout for a Nekro mech. Goddammit, Groc, is that an anti-aircraft configuration?"

"I think—"

A shout came from the marines around them. "Captain!" cried Prin. "Look!" The waves of assaulting drones had pulled back, shooting up into the air and deploying shimmering clouds of radar-refractive chaff.

"They're blinding the—" Ducan pulled his handset out and screamed into it. "Higheye, Wolfhound Actual! Abort air support! It's a trap!"

The sound of Higheye's response was lost in the air-tearing scream of the approaching engines on the Hurricane-class fighters. Yysho announced target lock as he painted the closest mech with a laser. Ducan fired the sliver launcher. The rocket impacted cleanly on the underside of the Mordred mech's shell, a disabling shot that would immobilize the machine and block access up the pass—but its anti-air cannons fired anyway.

Both Hurricane fighters came apart in the air above the base, blooming into intense fireballs as they cratered against the mountains a few clicks away. The surviving Mordred mechs paused on their approach, dropping their spent AA ordnance and reconfiguring for ground assault.

"That was their goal all along," Ducan cursed. "They can make more drones. We can't replace those fighters."

Yysho frowned, running one finger along the scales beneath his chin. Then he turned and lined up the targeting laser as the next mech in line began climbing over its immobilized comrade.

FSS *DURANDAL*

RED CHIVALRY FLEET; SALIENT SUN TASK FORCE

ORDINIAN ORBIT

In orbit, provisional Lieutenant Phagrun Aun Vidae's shriek sent several of the human and Xxcha officers in ops wincing. The Shikrai tore off her headset and spun at her station, beak clacking. "Fortress Ordinian's combat air patrol is terminated," she reported in her clipped, squawky voice. "Ordinian flight control estimates five minutes before reinforcements are scrambled."

Phagrun took a moment to smooth her feathers as the commodore made her ponderous way across the deck. The ship was Sol-made, squat and cramped and ugly compared to a proper Argent Flight vessel like her late, lamented *Coatl*. Serving on her was an adjustment...but at least she got to keep bringing the fight to the Nekro Virus, rather than retreating, preening feathers, and hoping that the problem would go away, as it seemed governments around the galaxy preferred.

"Commodore, I'm sure the ground teams would love to hear something about reinforcements. Can we truly expect nothing?"



“Nothing,” agreed Commodore Ttalak. She tapped at the nearest holodisplay, calling up a tactical map of the planet. An inset showed the situation in Rondino Valley. The display was calibrated at average human height, leaving the Xxcha officer looking down at it. She made it look natural, like looking down at everything was her birthright. “Officially, the Salient Sun joint task force was to be disbanded over a year ago. The Galactic Council and our various home governments wanted to ‘re-assess,’ to ‘re-align priorities.’ We’re unauthorized out here. You knew that when we scraped you out of the wreck of the *Coatl*.”

Phagrun bristled. The *Coatl* had been the pride and joy of the Argent Flight navy. She’d been proud to serve on her. Heartbroken to see the ship torn apart by a Nekro swarm, systems crashing from within due to Nekro software incursion. Terrified to jettison her escape pod, hoping against hope she and the half-dozen technicians with her could survive. The *Durandal* was, by every measure, an inferior ship, her crew less expertly trained, her technology generations out of date. Inferior by every measure...except that she was still flying, still doing battle with the Nekro Virus, and the *Coatl* wasn’t.

Silence hung in the air as Ttalak studied the tactical display. Phagrun didn’t have to; she held it all in her head. In her heart. The courage and tactical acumen of the marines on the planet’s surface was the equal of anything Phagrun had ever seen serving in the Argent Flight. And it was, demonstrably, inevitably, insufficient.

“Higheye, Wolfhound Actual,” came the tinny voice from her headset. “I’m detecting more movement beyond my perimeter; can you confirm? What’s coming for us?”

Phagrun slipped her headset back on, spun again to face her workstation, fingers dancing over the controls.

“Stand by, Wolfhound. I’m detecting large-scale drone movement outside the operational zone. It looks like—they are assembling a colossal-scale attack drone.”

“Yeah, I wondered when those would come out to play. That must mean they think we’re done, right? This is the hammerblow.”

“I couldn’t speculate, captain.” Phagrun tried to keep her voice level. She knew that humans found her shrill and unpleasant in this awkward, unmusical language—she just hoped she didn’t sound scared.

“All right, Higheye, be advised that Alpha Company has less than a dozen sliver rockets remaining at this position. We’re fixed okay for ack-ack, but this ground offensive is going to break us.” There was an interruption on the line for a moment, then his voice came back. Voice only, of course. The clumsy, analog tech they were using, the only kind they’d found the Nekro couldn’t use to infiltrate their systems, didn’t allow for video. “By my estimation, if the enemy situates a gun emplacement here they can command the entire valley. Fortress Ordinian will be rubble in hours.”

"Understood, Wolfhound. Good hunting."

"You hear that, you bunch of lazy grubs? She said 'good hunting'! Let's bag us some goddamn trophies!"

Phagrun sighed and turned to the commodore again, finding her with one earpiece pressed to her head—the Xxcha had listened to every word. "Commodore," she began, but Ttalak cut her off.

"I'm conferring with Fortress Ordinian," she said. "There are similar offensives happening at three other chokepoints into the valley."

"Fortress can't reinforce all four," said Phagrun. "Can we drop more troops?"

"Everything we can spare is already on the ground." The Xxcha drummed her fingers. "Lt. Aun Vidae, draw me up an evacuation plan. Prioritize lives, then materiel."

Phagrun saluted and turned to comply. They already had an evacuation plan on file, of course; they'd drawn one up as soon as the strike force had made planetfall. The last revision was two days old. Phagrun called it up and began revising on the fly with current troop dispositions and casualty numbers. In minutes, she had the plan up to date and the estimates appropriately revised. They were not good.

"Two days," sighed Ttalak.

"Forty hours," clarified Phagrun, then clacked her beak shut. Pedantry directed at one's commanding officer wasn't appreciated in either Sol or Xxcha command structures.

"Candidly, Phagrun," said Ttalak, using her given name to indicate they were speaking off the record. "How long can our marines hold out?"

"If they survive until they receive air support, they may endure this assault. But the last flight of Hurricanes was shot down; we don't have total air superiority in-theater. We barely have orbital superiority."

It was a stark, mechanistic rule of war: heroism and valor meant nothing compared to the cold, impossible weight of logistics. Salient Sun had a handful of starships and a few thousand ground troops. The Nekro Virus had an entire planet's worth of raw materials and repurposed industrial capacity.

"Begin the evacuation," Ttalak said. "Abandon all materiel—personnel only. Marines to withdraw for dustoff in..."

Phagrun revised her calculations appropriately. "Twelve hours, commodore."

Ttalak nodded. "It's not a total loss, you know. Losing the materiel hurts, but we have thousands of personnel with experience fighting the Nekro Virus down there, with techniques that work and the confidence to use them. We retreat, we resupply, we can try again."

"As you say, commodore." It still felt like a loss.

Ttalak turned to give the order fleet-wide. Phagrun focused her attention on the fireteams of Alpha Company, desperate to find a solution, something to buy those marines just another few minutes.

The contact alarm was a single, blaring tone, tearing through the tension and Phagrun's concentration like it had been tissue paper. "Contact. Sensor contact! FTL drive signature inbound from vector three-one-eight dash eight-nine."

"Nekro?" Ttalak asked. The return of the Nekro swarm that had once haunted this region was a constant fear—it would mean an immediate retreat of their understrength fleet.

"Not a swarm, commodore, single drive signature, cruiser-scale. Consistent with a Sol ship." Sensors were being run by a young human man named Vidal. He pushed his feed to the central holodisplay.

"The Nekro Virus has been known to assimilate Sol ships before," Ttalak commented mildly. "Continue the evacuation, please. Passive sensors and lightspeed comms only. Raise that ship as soon as possible."

Long minutes passed. The orbital lighters reported status green and dropped planetward. One of the marine emplacements reported it had engaged the enemy. Phagrun kept her thoughts focused on her task, doing her best to ignore the ever-growing promise—or threat—of the incoming sensor contact.

"IFF broadcast indicates the new contact is a friendly, FSS *Orlando* of the Salient Sun task force; Green Longbow fleet," said Vidal, shattering the silence and Phagrun's vain attempt to focus.

Ttalak's XO stepped forward, a human woman rubbing a hand over the stubble on her shaved head. "Green Longbow fought and lost against the Nekro swarm over a month ago," she said. "*Orlando* was one of two ships unaccounted for. The rest self-scuttled rather than be assimilated."

A beat of silence as Ttalak studied the feed, her reptilian face inscrutable. "Begin plotting firing solutions," she said. "Passive only. Navigation, plot us a course to intercept and shield the evacuation fleet."

"*Orlando* has translated out of FTL," reported Vidal. "Now incoming in realspace...six hours seven minutes to orbital intercept."

"Six hours? That can't be right," objected the XO. "They're coming in too fast."

"Hostile approach?" suggested the commodore.

"At that speed they'll get one exchange before they're out of range again—or splattered on the planet, depending on their heading."

Ttalak stared at the plotting holo. Ops hummed with all the things no one was saying. "Comms, raise the *Orlando*."

Long seconds passed as light traveled the vast distances. "Incoming transmission from *Orlando*," reported the communications officer, a diminutive Xxcha man. At a nod

from Ttalak, he pressed a key and flooded the operations center with a strained human voice.

"This is acting captain Nichols of the FSS *Orlando*. We have an Apollo-priority relief payload for Ordinian. Be advised we will be aerobraking; please clear our flight path."

"Aerobraking?" The XO scowled. "The damn fool's going to hit the atmosphere? On purpose?"

"They're certainly in a terrible hurry," Ttalak observed.

"I've got a revised plot," reported Vidal. "Aerobraking helps explain their speed, sirs."

"Does anyone know Nichols?"

"Young," said the XO. "Jordian. A lieutenant, if memory serves, but a good one."

"In your judgment, would she scuttle her ship before allowing Nekro assimilation?"

"I said she was a good one, didn't I?" The XO shrugged.

Ttalak considered. The assembled officers waited, watching the numbers on the display slowly creep toward zero. "Clear that flight path, as requested. Otherwise, continue evacuation and revising firing solution. If *Orlando* performs any maneuvers not consistent with an aerobraking orbital insertion or landing on Ordinian, open fire immediately."

"Shall we reply, madam?" asked the comms officer.

"Please inform acting captain Nichols of everything I've just said, including my standing orders to the gun crews."

"Well, that's a fine welcome home, isn't it?" muttered the XO. She studied the displays as the commodore's orders were followed. "Shift change in two hours. Get some rest, commodore. I'll mind the store."

RECONNAISSANCE COMPANY ALPHA, AKA "WOLFHOUNDS"
SOL 67TH MARINE DIVISION; SALIENT SUN TASK FORCE
ORDINIAN
SEVEN DAYS AFTER PLANETFALL.

Night had fallen a few hours ago, and the cold grabbed at everything with sharp fingers. Yysho's shell rifle was overheating from constant use, but the weapon's warmth was welcome in his hands—he hated the cold almost worse than the Nekro.

Ordinian's night sky was awash with the faint light of the nebula, tendrils of purple and blue that snaked across the blackness. Only a double handful of stars shone through the gas and luminance of the nebula, but the sky was alight with flashes of deadly fire from the autoturrets, Nekro drones and repurposed familiars exploding in regular blossoms of red and yellow. The firebase's own lights shone bright and white, stabbing down the eastern pass to reveal an endless tide of

agri-familiars, industrial robots, and the occasional purpose-built murder drone. While the civilian robots were easily dispatched by the marines, they provided cover for the lethal drones with their own long-ranged flechette attacks. More and more marines had been downed with cries of "code red!" or "code black!" over the preceding hours, and three times Nekro armor had stormed their position and nearly overrun it, only held off by sliver rockets aimed carefully by their best shots—a precious resource now all but gone.

Yysho studied the chaotic boil of Nekro machines and waited for the distinctive skittering lurch of the combat drone, the whiplike tentacles that trailed behind it. His shell rifle barked, the explosive payload tearing the target apart. It was all numb, automatic, as mechanistic as the Nekro themselves. A part of himself panicked, flailing in the back of his mind. *Have we already lost? Has war made us as much machines of murder as the Nekro?* He longed once again for home, comfort, an escape from war.

"Amazing," rasped Ducan. "Now you're woolgathering while shooting." He sighted down the scope of his plasma rifle, surveying the damage Yysho's shell rifle had just inflicted. "Damn fine shooting, too."

Yysho glanced over his shoulder, spotting Prin on her perch, marines clustered behind their cover, orderlies at work on the wounded. They were as private as they ever were in the firebase. "I am tired," he admitted. "I begin to worry we will not hold."

"Course we won't," said Ducan. "We die here, or we fall back and die in the valley."

"Don't be so pessimistic," chided Yysho. "We could survive long enough to have our transport shot down and die in flight."

Ducan barked a short, painful-sounding laugh. "Hah! We'll make a Jordian out of you, yet!" The captain drummed his fingers on the casing of his plasma rifle, then sighted and let fly with a ragged burst. A low-slung prospecting drone that had skittered ahead of the others fell apart, holes burned through it by the incandescent plasma.

"Groc," Ducan said. "You should go. You're way outside your duties as an advisor here. Get down to the fortress, get on a transport, live to advise the next unit. Take a training post on your homeworld and make lots of little scaly babies."

For a moment, Yysho considered it. There'd be no shame in it. A training position would certainly be the best he could hope for in the Xxcha military after so flagrantly defying orders in the task force for so long, but he had friends who owed him favors. The dream wasn't beyond imagination.

But he couldn't bear the thought of Ducan, Prin, all the others dying behind him while he simply walked away.

"And leave all my fleshy mammal babies here to die?" he protested. "Besides, Jael. Captain. You know what it would do to morale for me to go."

“Sure, the unit would hate to lose our backup mascot.”

“Backup mascot!? Have I been demoted?”

Ducan’s response was not quite a smile, somewhere between a grimace and a grin. The best that could be managed, under the circumstances, Yysho decided, shooting down another Nekro drone. But whatever his reply was going to be, it was interrupted by the earth shaking beneath them.

“Well, that feels ominous,” said Ducan. “Nekro arty finally score a hit?” The autoturrets and combat air patrol had, thus far, kept the threat of Nekro artillery and their drone equivalent to long-range missiles at bay.

The ground shook again, and a light glimmered at the far end of the eastern approach. A red light, a warning, the red of the Nekro’s hatred. The light rose up into the air as the earth shook one more time, a dull thump reverberating through the entire company. A loud, buzzing sort of roar resounded from the approaching Nekro, and a light flashed, artificial thunder revealing the colossal form of a Nekro construct. An instant later, a bolt of plasma tore through the scaffold above the camp, shattering overhead lighting and sending their comms tower listing alarmingly to the south.

“Kraken,” muttered Ducan. “Just one sliver rocket left, eh?”

The monstrosity was a conglomeration of several Nekro abominations, latching themselves together to form a single impossible colossus. The power plants of seven Mordred-class mechs fed the plasma weaponry of a single Villain-class gunship, all supplemented by lashing tendrils made of scores of lesser drones chained end-to-end, propelled by numerous sets of metal legs. Each moment it crawled closer, its plasma cannon loosing another volley and claiming more and more organic lives.

Yysho emptied his magazine, trying desperately to fend off the titan for another moment. Around him, he heard marines firing, crying for help, barking orders. He stooped to reload, and found Ducan pressing a targeting laser array into his hands.

“Captain, it won’t do any good—”

“If I can take out that damn plasma cannon it’ll at least have to walk all the way over here to kill us.”

“It will be shielded.”

“The laser will go right through the shield. And I’ll be inside it when I fire.”

Yysho held the array, looked downrange at their approaching doom. “I should go.”

“You’re too damn slow, you overgrown turtle. I have a chance, at least.”

“A chance,” Yysho agreed.

“It’s been a pleasure,” Ducan said, shouldering his sliver launcher.

“An honor.”

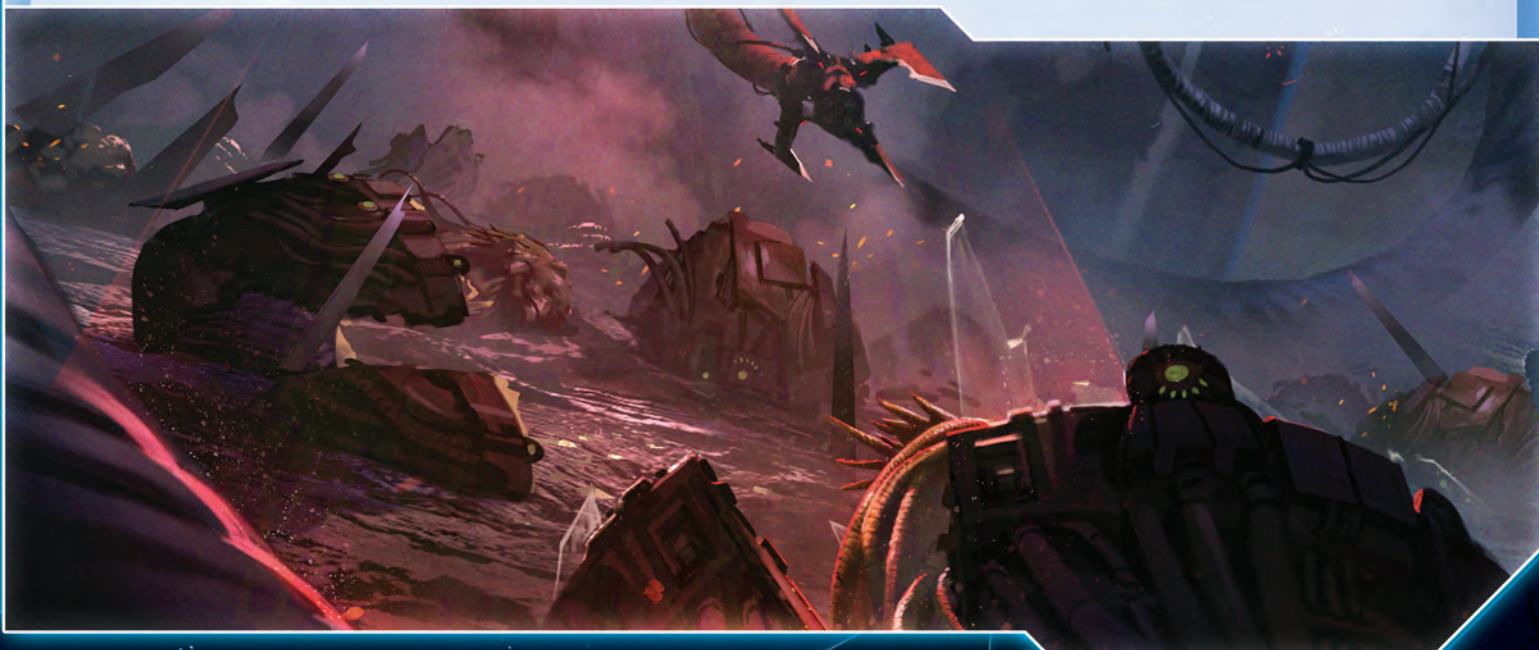
Ducan began advancing at a jog, running down the valley toward the monster. “Cover me, Wolfhounds!” he barked.

The surviving marines rallied, pouring fire into the Nekro horde, sending rounds sparking into the shields of the enormous mech. Yysho deployed his oculars and studied the approaching menace, analyzing the structure of its plasma gun and selecting the target for their remaining sliver rocket. He refused to contemplate that Ducan could do any less than reach his destination, refused to accept the possibility that the rocket would be wasted. He painted the target with the laser and waited.

“Y’know, it occurs to me,” came Ducan’s voice in his ear, “that these rockets were never really designed to have the launcher and the spotter this far apart.”

“Now? It occurs to you now?”

“Eh, it’s good old Jordian engineering. I’m sure it’ll work just fine.” Ducan staggered, a volley of toxic flechettes rattling off his armor. He turned his shoulders into the attack, sheltering the sliver rocket casing with his own body.



"Five meters from the shield, Captain," came Prin's voice over their connection. She had, evidently, worked out their plan. Smart girl, that Naaz.

"Five meters is nothing, I could do that on my knees." Ducan's voice was coming ragged as he sprinted and slid into cover behind a rock outcropping. An agri-mech that looked something like a centipede climbed over the rock, raised up to strike, and fell apart in a pile of molten shards as a plasma rifle burned right through it.

"Got you covered, Captain," said Chen through the comms.

"Hold there," said Prin. "The kraken's advance should bring you inside the shield in about thirty seconds."

"You got me a target yet, Groc?"

"Painting the target," said Yysho. "I suggest you fire immediately upon passing through the shield."

"Hey, that's an idea! I'd planned on buying this thing dinner first, but why not skip the foreplay?"

Irregular fire from the marines kept the shield shimmering, the lethal force of the projectiles dissipated as harmless blue light. Every second, the arc of the shield drew closer to Ducan's hiding place. And then it washed over him like a tingling wave.

"You are inside the shield," Prin announced.

"Target is good," said Yysho.

"*Dosvidanya*, you damn metal freak!" Ducan stood, pointed his sliver the right way, and fired. The rocket flashed, streaked to the target, and blew a hole right through the kraken's plasma cannon housing. Secondary explosions triggered throughout the kraken's central chassis, the Villain-class gunship that formed its core coming apart. Then: "Oh, hell."

The kraken's arms lashed at him. Ducan rolled away as the tendril slammed into the rocky soil at his side. The tendril broke apart, becoming several lethal drones, each leaping forward with scuttling legs like daggers.

"Covering fire!" barked Chen, and a fusillade of plasma, lasers, and munitions tore down the valley—and lit up the kraken's shields, barely a meter shy of Ducan's position.

Ducan had his sidearm out. He fired, blew one Nekro drone apart, scrambled back and shot another just as it landed on him. He wrestled its twitching ruin off his chest just in time for the third drone to spear through his leg armor and pin him in position.

"Keep holding, damn you!" he shouted into their comms. "Keep that last bastion standing just a little longer!"

His sidearm was gone. He held the third drone away from his face with his empty hands, until his head was torn apart by an anti-armor round from the kraken.

What followed wasn't, strictly speaking, silence—guns fired, Nekro drones chattered, the kraken made an awful grinding noise as it paused to eject the broken Villain and reconfigured

its remaining parts. But it felt like silence in Yysho's heart as he numbly took up his shell rifle and checked its magazine. He felt something pluck at his shoulder and thought he'd been hit, but it was only Prin, climbing up for a better vantage and offering him a fresh shell magazine.

"I know," she said. "It felt like a hole had gone right through me when Vi died." Vi must have been Prin's Rokha partner. Yysho couldn't remember if he'd learned her name before now.

"We weren't—our relationship wasn't—" He retracted his oculars, reloaded his shell rifle, lined up, and fired as a fresh wave of Nekro drones came out from within the kraken's shield array.

The next moment, Sergeant Chen rattled into position behind the barricade at his side. The Jordian's armor was still red with his own blood, his eyes wild from the stims keeping him upright. "Orders, sir?"

"I don't give orders for this company," said Yysho. "But Captain Ducan did. You all heard him!" His voice rose, taking in the whole company. "We hold! Until the evacuation is complete or a miracle occurs!"

A cheer went up from the assembled marines, and two more waves of incoming Nekro drones were torn apart as they charged. But the kraken, reassembled, continued its inexorable advance, bringing the guns of its Mordred-class components online.

"What's the status of the evacuation?" Yysho asked Prin, falling back to the comms station. Miraculously, despite the damage to the entire base, it seemed to still be working. Prin scrambled from his shoulder and slipped into her comms headset.

"Higheye, Wolfhound Seven. Wolfhound Actual is KIA. We have an incoming Nekro heavy mech and no remaining sliver rockets. Please advise."

"Wolfhound, Higheye. Standby." The voice crackled over the comms. It sounded strained, Yysho decided. *It's hard watching people die.*

"What the hell is that?" One of the marines—van Sant—was pointing at the dark sky above. Yysho turned, puzzled, to see a streak of angry red fire across the watercolor depths of the nebula above.

"It looks like a reentry burn," said Prin. "Higheye, we see reentry burn from our position, please advise."

"Wolfhound, what you're seeing is the FSS *Orlando* using aerobraking as part of its flight plan. Support is incoming from *Orlando*. Seek shelter."

Yysho turned and bellowed. "Higheye reports danger close! Incoming ordnance! Seek shelter! Anyone who can make it, to the bunker!" He reached out and scooped Prin up, boosting her to his exocarapace, and lumbered into the underground bunker at top speed. Most of the company beat him inside, with a few others slipping in behind while those at the furthest edges of the base took shelter at other hardened positions.

The first impacts struck as van Sant and Chen were slamming the door shut. A bright light, a wave of dust, and then the door was closed. But the thunder of an angry god continued above their heads, each explosion shaking dust from the ceiling above. The electric lights shook and flickered in their housings, and the assembled marines were silent but for their breathing and the moans of the wounded.

Within minutes, the cadence of the cacophony shifted. From sharp percussive shocks it began a crescendo of light and heat, an angry red glow sneaking through the grit-streaked slits that passed for windows in the underground barracks. The world resonated with a hum, then a pulse, then a scream of deadly intensity.

"What is that?" asked Chen after a few minutes. "Has the bombardment stopped? What is that sound?"

"Metal on metal," said van Sant. "Sounds like...demons dying in droves." Only a few piercing shrieks made it through the layers of ferrocrete and steel between them and the outside world, but Yysho had to admit that van Sant had described it well. Whatever was happening outside, sheltering in place seemed their only chance of living through it.

Specialist Prin had found a new nest of clustered monitors and instruments, which she played like an organ with her four arms flashing. "Seismic indicator shows the impacts have stopped. EM interference is spiking—if that's a weapon out there, it's a weird one."

"Maybe someone is killing all the Nekro Virus with the power of music," suggested van Sant, to riotous laughter.

"Yeah, the music of hot plasma at thirty meters!"

The marines swapped boasts, jokes, increasingly improbable guesses about what was happening outside. Yysho crossed to where Prin roosted and crouched down beside her. "Can you raise Higheye?"

She shook her head. "The long-range comms gear is outside and probably scragged by now."

"Any guesses what *Orlando* is doing out there?"

"Not a one. Those were kinetic impacts from a mass driver, the first volley; could have come from *Orlando* or *Durandal* or any of the other ships in orbit." Bombs were unnecessary when one side had orbital dominance—a simple metal slug dropped from orbit had all the explosive power any commander could want. "But they stopped after only a few minutes."

"Did *Orlando* fail? Are we hearing the Nekro Virus tear them apart right now?"

"If so, we'll find out when they blast that door off its hinges."

They both glanced at the door. It did not explode into a thousand white-hot shards, revealing a Nekro death machine intent on their destruction.

"Cheerful thought," Yysho said, and leaned back against the bunker wall.

They remained in the bunker for thirty minutes while the sounds of death and destruction faded away. Eventually, Yysho opened the door himself and stepped outside, Prin on his shoulder. He climbed up the steps to survey what remained of Wolfhound Base and was unsurprised to find it mostly rubble. The comms tower had fallen over completely, the base lights all destroyed—only the flickering of a few fires and the beginnings of a rosy dawn lit their scene at all. But down the eastern edge of their valley were the shattered remains of more Nekro mechs than he could count, and to the west the lights of Fortress Ordinian still shone.

"So our bastion stands," said Yysho.

Prin's comm crackled. "Wolfhound, this is Fortress with a relay from Higheye, how copy?" With the firebase's comms tower destroyed, direct transmission to and from orbit would no longer be an option. But apparently they could still raise Fortress, and Fortress was still alive.

"Fortress, Wolfhound Seven, solid copy."

"Wolfhound, Higheye reports all quiet. Stand by for extraction."

Prin looked up at Yysho. He nodded. "Wolfhound standing by," she said into her comm.

One by one, marines emerged from their shelter, staring with wide eyes at the transformed world around them—or the remnants of one. The same disbelieving relief that Yysho had seen on battlefields all over the galaxy.

"What was that, chief?" Chen asked, sitting on a broken barricade. "Until a miracle happens?"

"So it seems."

"Higheye reports all quiet," said Prin. "*All quiet?* The whole planet? Is that possible?"

Yysho shrugged. "We'll find out more when our ride gets here." A wave of exhaustion and euphoria coursed through him and Yysho sagged, propping himself up next to Chen. "But...yes. I believe we can now list Ordinian as the first world reclaimed from the Nekro Virus."

"I'm home," breathed Prin.

"Yes," said Yysho. He thought of Archon Ren, of the horde of scaly babies Ducan had insisted he go have. Of what "home" meant. "So am I."



IXTHIAN ARTIFACTS

The Ixthian Artifacts section is a regular feature that contains entirely new components. This section provides an opportunity for us to spice up the game with new options. They do not replace anything and are combined with existing components from the base game and *Prophecy of Kings*.

RELICS

Several new relics are included in this edition of the codex. The first, an Empyrean **Circlet of the Void** gives a player unprecedented freedom when interacting with anomalies, and also allows them to explore frontier tokens from afar—and without researching **Dark Energy Tap** to do so.

CIRCLET OF THE VOID ?

Your units do not roll for gravity rifts, and you ignore the movement effects of other anomalies.

ACTION: Exhaust this card to explore a frontier token in a system that does not contain any other players' ships.

Xuange touched the jeweled circlet that sat upon their temple. The pride of the Archive. Knowledge of the stars, passed down from the First, fated for the Last.

The next two relics each arrive explosively into the realm of victory points. The first, the **Book of Latvinia**, does so by introducing a control-based side quest of sorts, granting its owner a victory point if they can collect every type of technology specialty. The second relic, the enigmatic **Neuraloop**, allows unprecedented (and likely chaotic) manipulation of public objectives, even allowing secret objectives to become public.

BOOK OF LATVINIA ?

When you gain this card, research up to 2 technologies that have no prerequisites.

ACTION: Purge this card; if you control planets that have all 4 types of technology specialties, gain 1 victory point. Otherwise, gain the speaker token.

A collector's item of incalculable value, none have been able to unlock its secrets—assuming its contents aren't just the ravings of a madwoman.

NEURALOOP ?

When a public objective is revealed, you may purge one of your relics to discard that objective and replace it with a random objective from any objective deck; that objective is a public objective, even if it is a secret objective.

Knowledge. Creation. Control. Have a wonderful day.



GALACTIC EVENTS

Next up, we have a first for the *Codex*: an entirely new component type. In the past, *Codex* components have been largely focused on replacing, supplementing, or referencing other components, but that ends today with the introduction of Galactic Events! Galactic Events change the fundamental rules of the game by warping the expected way that things work, or by adding entirely new game systems. Only four Galactic Events are included in this volume of the *Codex*, but many more may be waiting just over the horizon...

USING GALACTIC EVENTS

Galactic Events are picked during setup and are entirely optional. One event can be selected randomly from the deck, or one can be selected ahead of time—advanced players can even try playing with multiple galactic events at once.

Minor Factions

During setup, players are dealt 1 fewer blue tile. Before creating the galaxy, shuffle the reference cards for factions not being played and deal 1 to each player. In speaker order, each player places that faction's home system in the second ring, equidistant from players' home systems. Then, that player places 3 neutral infantry on that system's planets, split as evenly as possible. These systems are minor faction systems and do not count as home systems.

When a player controls each planet in a minor faction system, they take that faction's alliance card from the deck or from the player that owned it previously.

Planets in minor faction systems gain all three planet traits (cultural, industrial, and hazardous).



Our first event, **Minor Factions**, brings a splash of flavor in from factions that aren't present in a given game. Players can fight over the home system of non-player factions and gain their abilities—and powerful planets—as rewards. This event requires *Prophecy of Kings* to play, though players without *Prophecy of Kings* may use this event by ignoring the paragraph that grants a faction's alliance card. A diagram that further illustrates how to set up this Galactic event has been included below.

NOTE: Use proxy components or figures for neutral infantry; they have a combat value of 8.

GAME BOARD SETUP



MINOR FACTIONS SETUP
(SIX-PLAYER EXAMPLE)

	MECATOL REX		RING 1
	HOME SYSTEM		RING 2
	MINOR FACTION HOME SYSTEM		RING 3



Total War

As a child she had visited a museum back on Jord and seen a physical newspaper preserved behind glass, "WAR" printed in oppressive black ink across its header. Claire shuddered. Dark times lay ahead.

When a player destroys or produces hits that destroy another player's units, they place commodities from the supply equal to the combined cost of the units they destroyed on a planet they control in their own home system (infantry and fighters are worth 1 each).

When a player gains control of a home planet that has commodities, they move those commodities to a planet they control in their own home system.

All players can perform the following action:

ACTION: Discard 10 commodities from planets in your home system to gain 1 victory point.



COMPLEXITY 

Our next event, **Total War**, favors combat-heavy factions and rewards the destruction of units with victory points. Have you ever wanted to forego diplomatic relations and send your fleets full-bore into your neighbor's home system? Now you may have a reason to do so—or not, as is your prerogative, but be warned: your neighbors may be coming for you whether you favor diplomacy or not.

Age of Commerce adds a new dimension to negotiations between players. Uncapped commodities and the ability to trade technology drastically shifts the economic landscape. With this event, it is more important than ever to keep your allies close, as falling behind could mean your entire empire collapsing into obscurity.

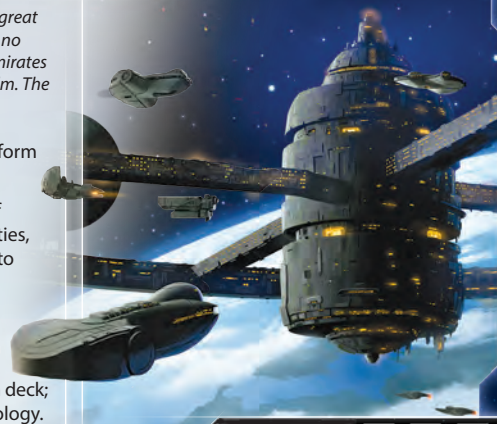
Age of Commerce

Ashalla and Carth arrived at Tsion Station to no great fanfare. No welcome party awaited their arrival, no feast held in their honor. But the coffers of the Emirates opened every locked door and greased every palm. The network would grow. And grow. And grow.

Players do not have to be neighbors to perform transactions with each other.

Players do not have a maximum number of commodities; when they refresh commodities, they gain a number of commodities equal to their commodity value instead.

Players can share non-faction technology with other players as part of a transaction. When sharing technology, the receiving player gains that technology from their own deck; the sharing player does not lose the technology.



COMPLEXITY 

Age of Exploration

"Almost got it. Just a little higher..."

Relics require only 2 matching fragments be purged instead of 3.

The Naaz-Rokha Alliance's **FABRICATION** faction ability and **BLACK MARKET FORGERY** promissory note do not require purged fragments to match.

All players can perform the following action:

ACTION: Exhaust **DARK ENERGY TAP** and choose a non-home edge system that contains your ships to roll 1 die. On a result of 1-4, draw a random unused red tile; on a result of 5-10, draw a random unused blue tile. Place that tile adjacent to the chosen system so that it is touching at least 2 non-home systems. Place a frontier token in the system if it does not contain any planets.



COMPLEXITY 

Finally, **Age of Exploration** allows players to explore off the game board by utilizing system tiles that were unused during the game's setup. Additionally, relics will become more commonplace—expect to see the entire relic deck come into play when using this Galactic Event. This event requires *Prophecy of Kings* to play.

PAX MAGNIFICA

The Pax Magnifica section is a regular feature that contains unique scenarios and game variants that change how the game is played.

LIBERATION OF ORDINIAN

During this scenario, players fight over the Nekro-devoured world of Ordinian. The remnants of the Salient Sun joint task force hope to win the hearts and minds of the people of the galactic rim by liberating Ordinian. Meanwhile, suspicious opportunists seek to learn the source of the upstart faction's rising power...

SETUP

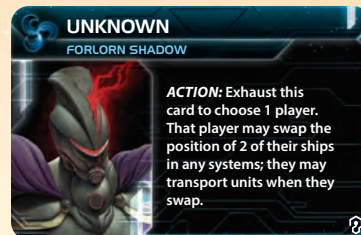
This scenario requires six players and the *Prophecy of Kings* expansion. The rules for setup are modified as follows:

1. **DETERMINE SPEAKER:** The player who chooses the Nekro Virus in the next step is the speaker.
2. **ASSIGN FACTIONS:** Each player chooses from among the following factions.

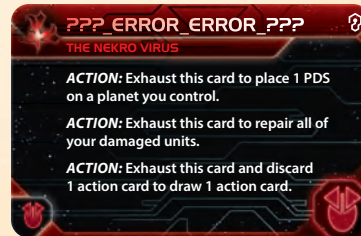
 Xxcha Kingdom	 Federation of Sol
 Ghosts of Creuss	 Naaz-Rokha Alliance
 Nekro Virus (Speaker)	 Nomad
3. **GATHER FACTION SPECIFIC COMPONENTS:** In addition to the standard faction setup:
 - ✦ The Xxcha Kingdom and Federation of Sol players are allied; they resolve the setup step 3 from the Alliance game variant in *Codex II*. They also gain the FSS *Orlando* hero card.



- ✦ The Ghosts of Creuss player replaces their leaders with the three Unknown leaders.



- ✦ The Nekro Virus player does not take the "Valefar Assimilator X" or "Y" faction technologies. Instead, that player uses the "??_NULL_REFERENCE_??" and "??_ERROR_ERROR_??" technologies that it has assimilated from stragglers of another titanic struggle...



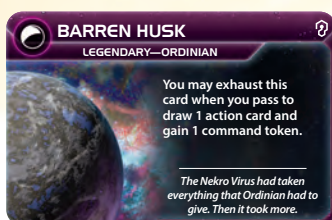
4. **CHOOSE COLOR:** The Ghosts of Creuss must choose Red.

6. **CREATE GAME BOARD:** Players create the game board using the diagram on the right. Place the Ordinian system tile in the center. **NOTE:** Mecatol Rex is not used.

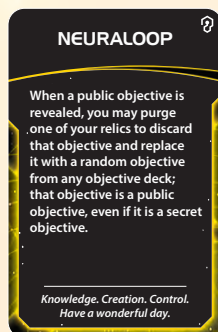
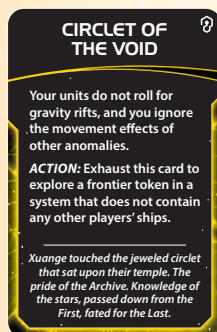
7. **PLACE CUSTODIANS TOKEN:** Do not place the custodians token.

11. **GATHER STARTING COMPONENTS:** In addition to the standard starting components:

- ✧ The Nekro Virus player starts with the Ordinian planet card and its legendary planet card. They gain 1 additional command token in their fleet pool and place the following units in the Ordinian (nebula) system: 2 dreadnoughts, 2 carriers, 4 fighters, and 4 infantry.

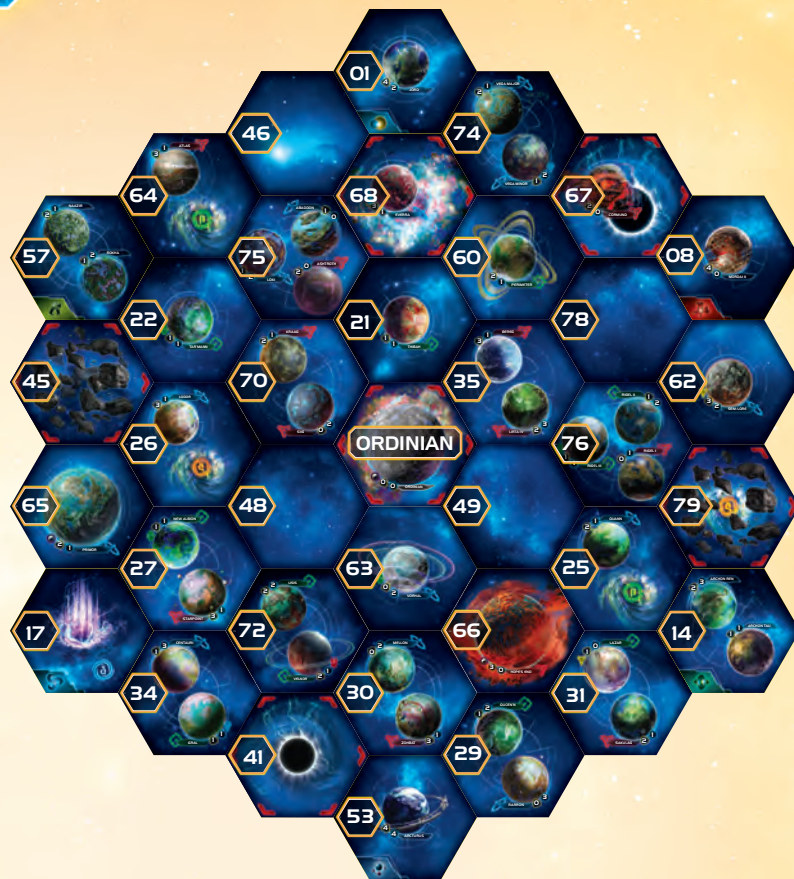
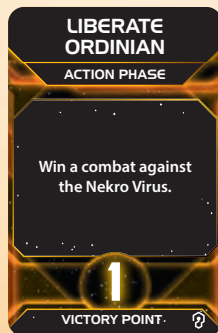


- ✧ The Ghosts of Creuss player places 1 cruiser, 1 carrier, and 2 infantry in the Creuss Gate.
- ✧ The Naaz-Rokha Alliance player gains the Circllet of the Void relic.



- ✧ The Nomad player gains the Neuraloop relic.

12. **PREPARE OBJECTIVES:** Place the Liberate Ordinian objective card faceup next to the other Stage I objectives.



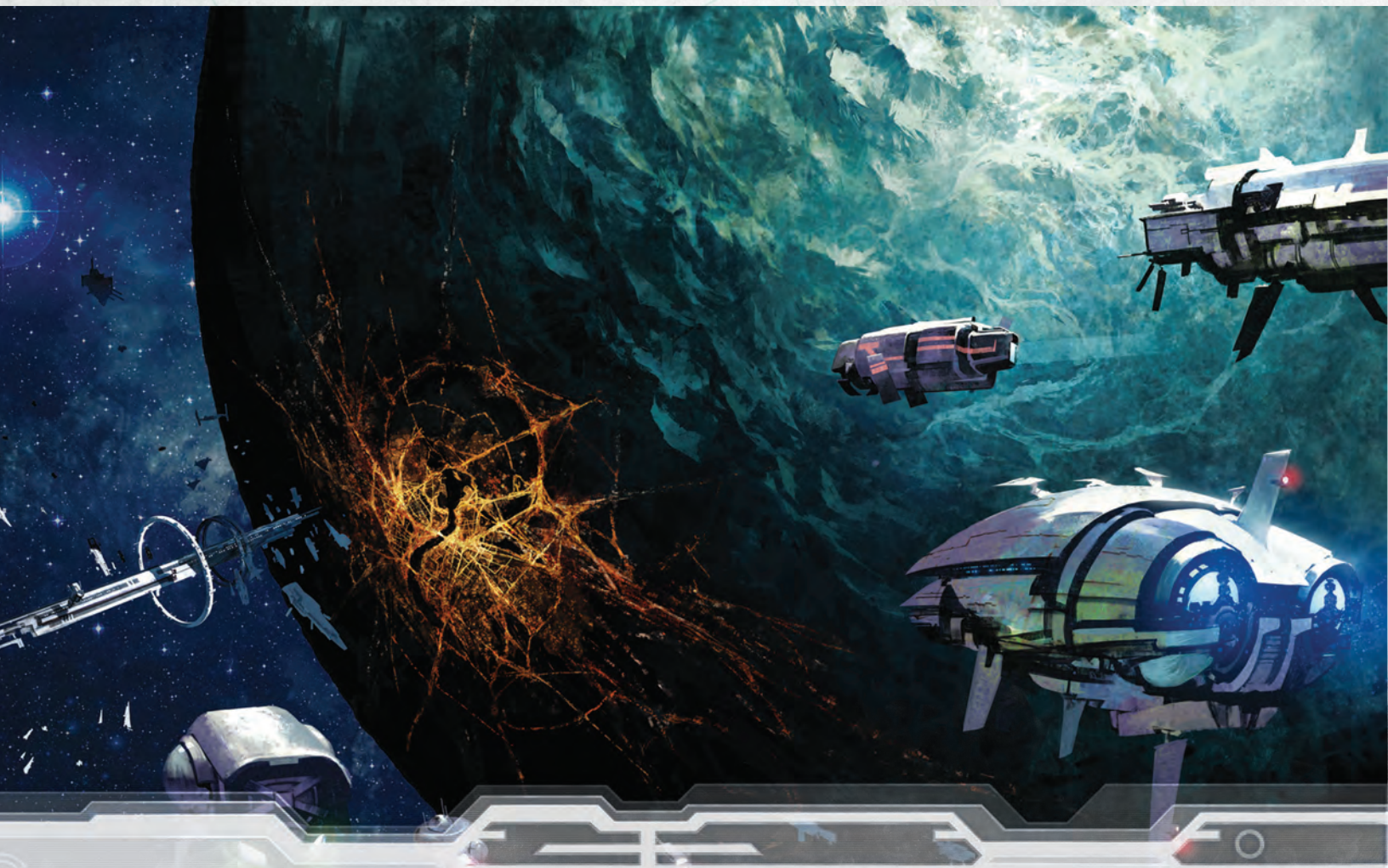
SPECIAL RULES

- ✧ The Federation of Sol and Xxcha Kingdom players represent the Salient Sun joint task force; they are allied using the rules from the Alliance game variant in *Codex II*. However, the number of victory points they need is different as described the next section.
- ✧ Both the Xxcha and Sol player must agree in order to use the FSS *Orlando*.
- ✧ Game effects that refer to Mecatol Rex or its system instead refer to Ordinian and its system.
- ✧ After the first Stage II objective is revealed, flip the Liberate Ordinian objective card to its Stage II side (Control Ordinian) and remove all tokens from it; victory points scored from its Stage I side are kept, but the Stage I objective can no longer be scored.

WINNING THE GAME

The game ends when either:

- ✧ Within the alliance of The Federation of Sol and the Xxcha Kingdom, one of those players has 12 victory points and the other has 10 victory points.
- ✧ Any other player has 10 victory points.



The Mecatol Report

This material is written and designed for the **GENESYS** Roleplaying Game and specifically to complement the **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM** sourcebook. It provides additional information about the Keleres Headquarters, the environment of Mecatol Rex (both inside and outside of Mecatol City), and a short adventure summary that can be fleshed out into a full adventure. It is also useful for anyone who wants to know more about Mecatol Rex and the Keleres.

What is Genesys?

GENESYS is a universal roleplaying game, or a narrative game system that allows collaborative storytelling between a group of players and an arbitrator known as a game master. What makes **GENESYS** “universal” is that instead of being designed for one setting, it works for any setting. The Core Rulebook provides the basic rules, which are used in every setting and version of the game. Then, if you want to play in a specific setting, you can pick up one of our setting sourcebooks.

EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM is the sourcebook that allows players to use **GENESYS** rules to play in the **TWILIGHT IMPERIUM** setting. In this book, players will take on the role of the Keleres,

elite operatives of the Galactic Council who have to deal with monumental threats while struggling with factional infighting, Council politics, and betrayal. **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM** is available from your local game store and online from DriveThruRPG.

If you want to continue your missions as a team of Keleres operatives, **ASHES OF POWER** and **INSPECTION TOUR** are free one-shot adventures available as PDFs from the Edge Studio website, and **WAR FOR THE THRONE** is an epic, full-length campaign available for purchase wherever fine games are sold.



Keleres Headquarters (Formerly Imperial Intelligence Headquarters)

The headquarters for the Keleres is actually the repurposed sub-basement levels of the ruined Imperial Intelligence headquarters building on Mecatol Rex. Destroyed during the Sol bombing at the onset of the Twilight Wars, the Imperial Intelligence HQ building was never rebuilt by the Winnaran Custodians (probably because they had no need for facilities built to house a galaxy-spanning spy agency). Instead, the ruins were left as they were. The only thing the Winnarans did was confirm that the sublevel bunkers and basement facilities were not breached by the bombing, then seal them up to ensure that none of Imperial Intelligence's dirty secrets would ever see the light of day.

And that's how it stayed, for three thousand years.

Eventually, Mecatol Rex would be reconnected with the wider galaxy and the Galactic Council would be reformed. Soon after that, the emergence of the so-called Great Threats would drive the Council to form the Keleres.

The Council's new agency would need facilities to operate from, and the Winnarans offered them the land that once held the Imperial Intelligence headquarters. The Custodians claimed it was a symbol of restoration, with the new intelligence apparatus inheriting the mantle of the old. The first Tribunii noted sourly that the ruins were also the least valuable and desirable land in Mecatol City.

The Custodians dedicated funding and work crews to clean up the old ruins and build a brand-new headquarters building on the land. Both were hilariously unequal to the task, with current estimates placing the completion date sometime in the next four decades. But in the meantime, the Keleres unsealed the old sublevel complex and moved into the underground facilities. And for the last five years, they've been making themselves at home.

Installation Overview

The Keleres headquarters is entirely underground. The only parts that are visible from the surface are the massive hatches that lead to the main facility and its subterranean starship hangar. The rest of the dozen square kilometers is covered in wind-blasted ruins and the occasional twisted clid tree. The site is surrounded by dust shields and the tenement towers of the Keldive Slums, and near the edge of Mecatol City and the Sea of Desolation.

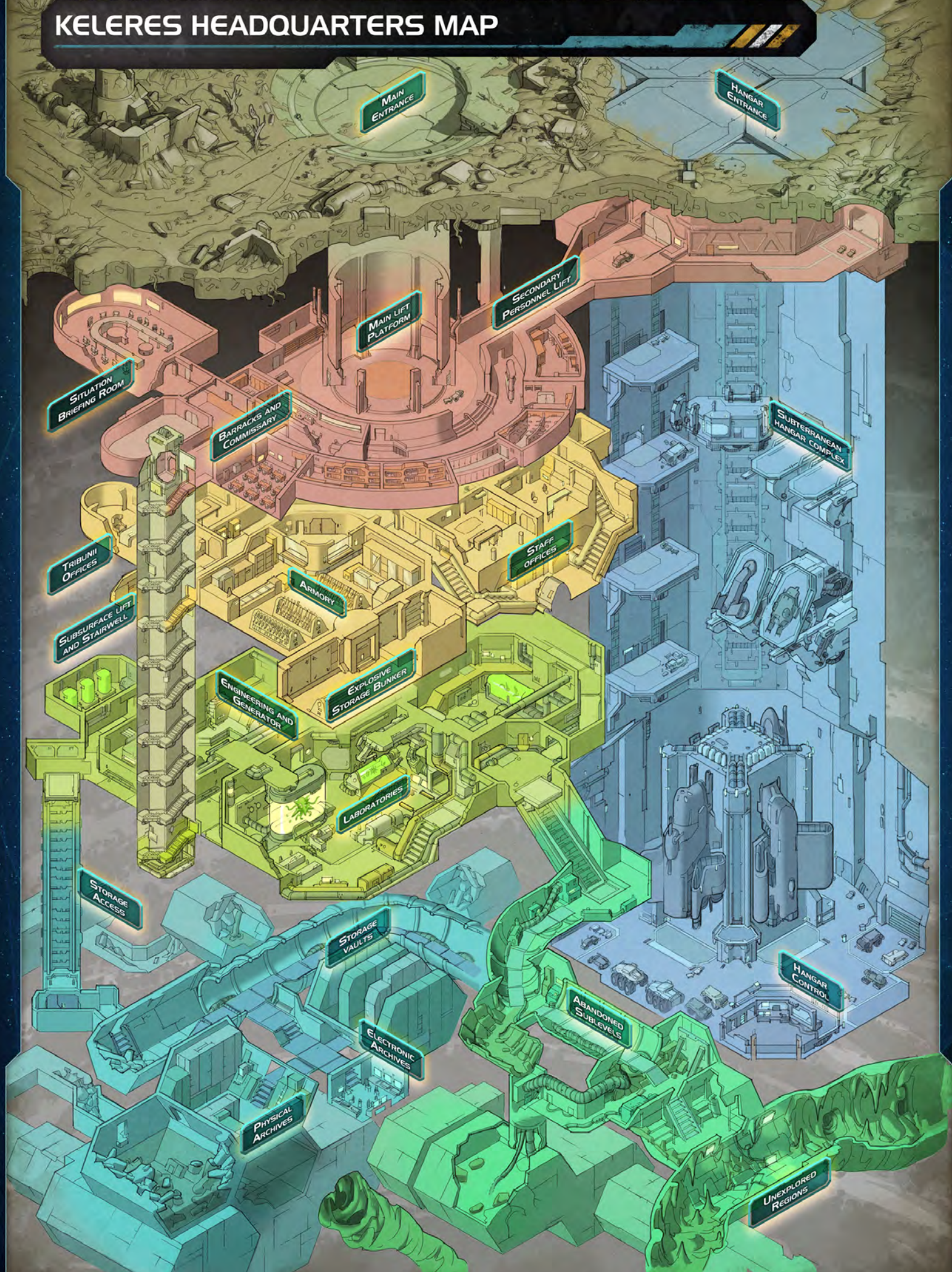
Beneath the surface, the headquarters facilities stretch down for hundreds of meters, deep into the bedrock of Mecatol Rex. Nearly all of the facilities are repurposed from the existing sublevel complex of the Imperial Intelligence headquarters.

However, the Keleres have expanded some areas and sealed up others to try and adapt the space to their needs.

The facilities can be divided into six main sections. Beyond these lie the abandoned sublevels that the Keleres have kept sealed off and unoccupied. And beyond that? Any records were lost long ago, but Mecatol Rex's depths are a warren honeycombed with forgotten sewers, transitways, underground arcologies, and natural caverns. Who knows where some of the tunnels may lead?



KELERES HEADQUARTERS MAP



Above Ground

The only elements of the Keleres HQ visible on the surface are the three entrances to the underground facilities. The largest of these is the four-panel “cloverleaf” hatchway that leads to the underground hangar facilities. When fully open, these reveal a shaft large enough to admit a star bomber or interstellar scout craft.

The next largest entrance is the large circular hatchway of the main entrance, set into the ground and accessible by an ill-maintained roadway. The hatch is eight meters across (large enough for a small vehicle) and made of solid duranium. It's actually part of the reinforced foundation of the old Imperial Intelligence building, which is the reason the sublevels survived the Sol bombing so long ago. The hatchway leads to a horizontal lift platform that's large enough for dozens of people or several mid-sized vehicles. Nearby is a small bunker with access to the smaller secondary personnel lift. This is only large enough for ten people, but is faster to use than the larger main lift.

These three entrances are the only official ways into the Keleres HQ.

There are no guard posts or other facilities on the surface, but the Keleres do maintain a watch on the area using surveillance familiars. Nobody can access the entrances without the proper credentials, and any unauthorized access attempts alert the Keleres staff on standby below, and any Custodian Guard in the nearby city sectors.

Living Quarters and Receiving (Red Level)

The main entrance lift and the secondary personnel lift both drop down to the living quarters and receiving section of the facility. The Keleres call this “red level” due to the color-coded signs.

The most prominent part of Red Level is **Receiving**, a large, circular space built around the bottom of the main entrance lift shaft. The shaft is surrounded by an open staging area, which is in turn surrounded by a series of storage rooms, security checkpoints, and the facility's main control center. The storage rooms hold supplies brought into the facility from Mecatol City, while the security checkpoints ensure no unauthorized personnel enter the facility proper. The control center is the largest room surrounding Receiving, with large windows overlooking the whole circular space. Here several Keleres staff and Winnaran Custodians remain on duty at all hours, overseeing all of the facilities' day-to-day functions.

A corridor large enough to drive a rambler through stretches off from one side of Receiving. This is the **Main Transfer Corridor**, and it runs between Receiving and the subterranean hangar complex. This is the means by which anything unloaded in the hangars can be moved into the facility, and vice versa.

Beyond Receiving, the **main barracks and commissary facilities** wrap around in ever-widening concentric circles. There are several sets of sleeping quarters, bathing facilities, and food halls, with each “set” separate from the others and adapted to a certain type of general species physiology. The largest set is reserved for oxy/nitrogen breathers and has

multiple 12-person bunk rooms, lockers, cleaning/hygiene facilities, and a communal mess and kitchen. The next largest has replaced the bunk rooms and cleaning facilities with spaces flooded with fresh and salt water. These are reserved for aquatic species; mostly the Hylar (although some Druaa and Yssaril choose to stay here because it's the closest thing to their own water-rich homes).

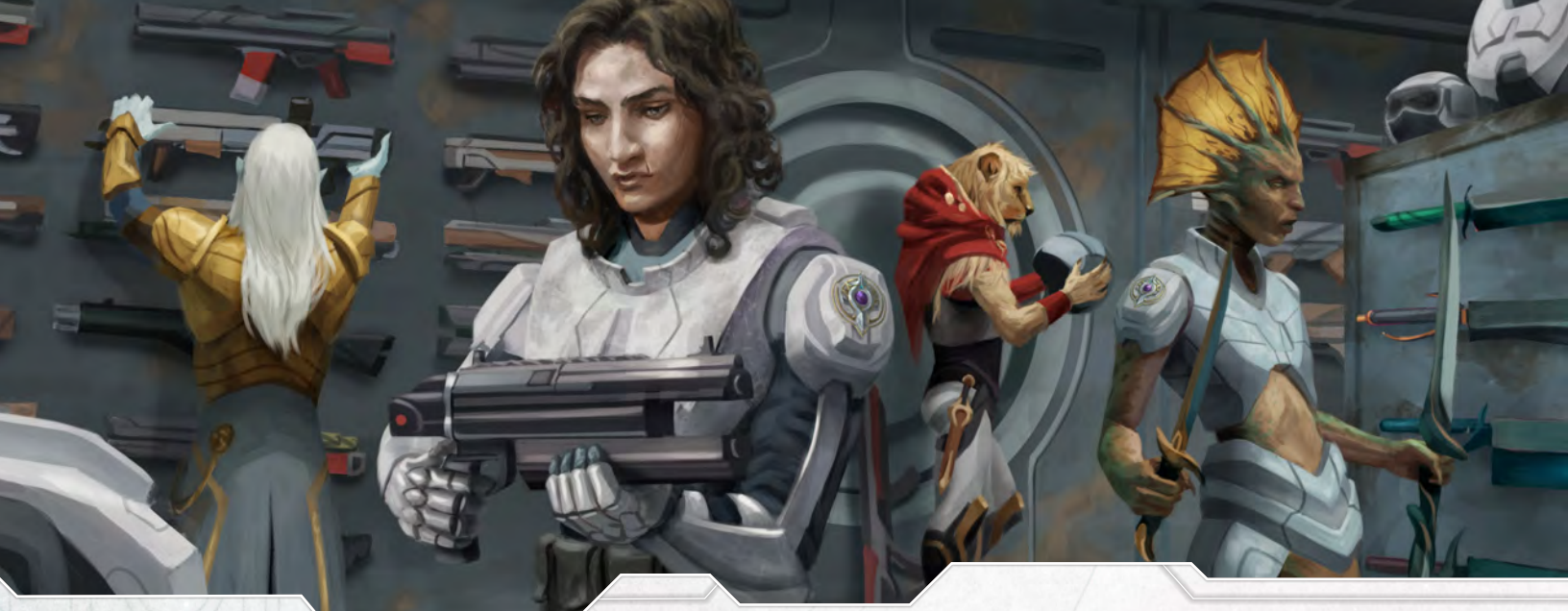
There are three other living facilities of roughly the same size. The first is a barracks with a cooled ammonia atmosphere that is currently uninhabited, while the second is a hyper-hot barracks space specifically developed for the Gashlai and isolated from the rest of the facility. It even includes heat-locks where the Gashlai can don their Ember Suits before leaving. The final set of living facilities have been gauss-shielded and filled with an energized plasma that mimics the natural environment of the Creuss. However, this was created before the Creuss informed their colleagues that they have no problem remaining in their suits indefinitely. Creuss members still use the barracks spaces, but infrequently.

Most of the rank-and-file Keleres agents stay in these barracks spaces, while senior agents and support staff have smaller personal quarters on the lower levels. There is no requirement that an agent live within the headquarters, but given the prices of housing in Mecatol City and the modest living stipends provided to Keleres personnel, the cramped communal barracks often seem preferable to a tenement in the Keldive Slums or Cratered Quarter. Those who can afford to live in one of Mecatol City's nicer neighborhoods are either independently wealthy or making money through other, more...questionable means. In either case, they often think twice before advertising their status.

The final noteworthy facility on Red Level is the **Situation Briefing Room**. This large, semi-circular chamber is dominated by a U-shaped conference table wrapping around holo-projectors, with additional vid-screens located along the walls capable of showing everything from a masterful illusion of being in a mountaintop meeting space or underwater tropical utopia to the status of military forces across the Gul system. This space is reserved for meetings between Tribunii, members of the Galactic Council, senior agents, and high-level Winnaran Custodian liaisons. Regular field agents almost never enter it.

Administration and Support (Yellow Level)

Below the living facilities and the receiving levels, corridors and tunnels lead off into a winding labyrinth of administration offices, support facilities, and the personal quarters of senior staff. The **staff offices** are a hodgepodge of differently sized and furnished rooms that were refurbished from the original Intelligence basement facilities (some of which had to be completely rebuilt after thousands of years of disuse). Likewise, the Custodians equipped the facilities with whatever furnishings they happened to have in storage. This means some of the offices may be bare walls surrounding pressed carbon-plate furniture, while others may be lit by Gashlai plasma-sculptures sitting atop hand-carved Q'waar wood desks.



Needless to say, who gets what office is a matter of constant squabbling, favor-trading, threats, and the occasional murder attempt among the Keleres' desk agents.

The best offices go to the **Tribunii** (who would also get the best personal quarters if all three weren't well-off enough to own private residences in Mecatol City). Each of the **Tribunii offices** is a multi-room affair with an antechamber, main office, private refresher facility, and genelocked micro-vault. The Tribunii are also able to get their offices decorated to their tastes. Kuuasi Aun Jalatai's space is deliberately minimalist, with furniture constructed from the wood of zero-gee trees and an inconspicuous cabinet to store his decanter of firespice liqueur. However, the walls are covered with holoscreens of the highest quality, which Kuuasi uses to project views of his home in the Atharal Gas Torus. Harka Leeds, on the other hand, outfitted her office with a battered duranium desk and captain's chair from the old flagship of the Leeds and Victoria Corp. The walls are dotted with shelves covered with masterful models of famous ships from the Mentak Navy. Finally, Odlynn Myrr's office has been completely paneled in Q'waar wood and the walls lined with jungle plants. With the constant aroma of smoldering nirskki leaves drifting through the rooms, one could be mistaken for thinking they were on Archon Ren.

The headquarters' **armory** is isolated from the rest of the staff offices by heavy permacore bulkheads, and takes up nearly a fifth of the level. Inside are maintenance workspaces, shelves of gear, ammunition cabinets, and racks for weapons ranging from personal shudder knives to heavy plasma rifles. In theory, Keleres are supposed to store their weapons in the armory while at headquarters. In practice, most agents either mistrust their fellow Keleres, the armory quartermasters, or both, and keep their favorite personal weapons on their person or tucked away in their quarters.

At the heart of the armory one can find the **explosive storage bunker** behind blast walls built from dreadnought hull plating. This duranium armor should be able to protect the rest of the headquarters in case of a catastrophic accident, but nobody wants to find out if that's true. Within the bunker are the Keleres' heavy weapons: grenades, demolition charges, sliver rocket launchers, and some truly terrible weapons like graviton explosives, thorite decay charges, and micro-atomics.

Subterranean Hangar Complex (Blue Level)

The base's hangar facility is a massive vertical silo, dropping from its heavy four-panel hatch down over two hundred and fifty meters to the floor of the hangar bay far below. Along the walls are a series of landing platforms for atmospheric fliers, shuttlecraft, and starfighters, all accessible by lifter carriages crawling up and down tracks on the wall. Some of these landing platforms can even be retracted into sub-hangars, allowing the complex to house even more craft.

The bottom of the hangar is dominated by vertical launch rails for the facility's largest starships: light freighters, courier vessels, and long-range scout ships. The base of the facility also has multiple silos for storing vessels when not in use and garages for the Keleres' collection of ramblers and other ground vehicles (the lifter carriages can bring these up to the main transfer corridor and allow them to reach the main lift platform if the Keleres need to get them into Mecatol City proper).

Tucked into one corner is a small, nondescript enclosure mounted onto additional vertical rails. This is **hangar control**, and it can be elevated to oversee the entire hangar facility or lowered to the hangar floor for easy access. Since this oversees the operations of every ship and vehicle in the hangar, access is restricted to authorized agents and Custodian liaisons.

Research and Engineering (Green Level)

Below the administration and support levels, Keleres headquarters starts to grow smaller. The layout of these levels deviates less and less from the original floor plans of the Imperial Intelligence subbasements, with the Custodians simply doing the minimum work to refit old facilities to fit new needs.

These levels are dominated by the **engineering and generator facilities**. These facilities used to house the Imperial Intelligence HQ's primary generator. To restore them, all the Custodians had to do was replace the decaying machinery. Small workshops and assembly facilities have been set up in adjoining rooms so that the maintenance staff can keep the systems running. These facilities are kept entirely separate from the various laboratories on this level, except for an extensive plasma ducting system that runs from the main generator.

The **laboratories** on this level were originally installed by Imperial Intelligence. After three thousand years of being sealed up, they were reopened and (after being thoroughly cleaned down to a molecular level) retrofitted for the Keleres to use. The dozen refurbished laboratory spaces include equipment to conduct all sorts of research, including high-energy physics, chemical analysis, and biological study in a quarantined environment. Here the Keleres can bring back what they find in the field to determine whether it is a threat.

The original Imperial Intelligence labs had a similar purpose and, given the cautiously paranoid nature of Lazax intelligence agents, the labs were designed to be isolated from the rest of the facility. This means all labs have substantial security mechanisms built in, including ducting from the main generator. In an emergency, a lab can be flooded with star-hot plasma, destroying everything (and everyone) inside. Even a Gashlai wouldn't be able to withstand a full generator vent for long.

Vaults (Teal Level)

As one travels beneath the research and engineering levels, the passageways grow colder and damper. Signs of decay and ill-repair such as cracked walls, moldy panels, and broken light fixtures become more and more common. In some places, the hallways are choked with rubble. In others, they are completely impassable.

This level is colloquially known as the Vaults. It began as a place for Imperial Intelligence to store all sorts of dirty little secrets accrued after thousands of years of operations. After the bombing, much of it was either sealed behind collapsed passageways or simply forgotten. The Vaults are so deep that they have been built beneath Mecatol Rex's water table, and even as the surface was reduced to a dust-lashed desert some of the vault passages began to slowly flood.

When the Custodians began to renovate the Vault levels, they found a maze of cold, dark water, half-collapsed passages, and locked vaults containing who knew what. For the most part, the Custodians and later the Keleres left those vaults sealed up and forgotten. But in a few cases, the Keleres have reactivated some of the vaults to use for their own purposes.

The **electronic archives** are the most important of these renovated spaces. Within several interconnected storerooms the Keleres have constructed a secure data archive. There are no connections to the rest of the facility; even power is provided by a miniature entropic field tap donated by the Naaz-Rokha Alliance. This means the Keleres archives cannot be hacked or altered by any outside agency, and the Tribunii and Custodian liaisons take the archives' physical security very seriously as well. However, it also means that anyone who wants to access these records must walk all the way to the archives to do so.

Near the electronic archives are the Keleres' **physical archives**. Originally, these were simply unused and dry storage rooms that the first agents began cramming with physical records; plas-sheet printouts, non-alterable data crystals, and even the occasional books gathered in the field. In the last year, however, Tribunii Myrr has begun to push for the Keleres to make physical backups of all the organization's important

records; especially mission after-action reports. These are all micro-etched into sheets of thin-pressed duranium and stored in massive binders.

Since this archiving program began, Myrr has restricted access to the physical archives to a handful of senior agents and a single Winnaran Custodian, Tsoi Iq Matriona. Dour and completely lacking a sense of humor, Tsoi is responsible for transcribing and binding the records. Most Keleres realize that the physical archives give them the chance to access information without using their login credentials in the electronic archives. So Tsoi has had to turn away dozens of would-be fact-finders. However, it's rumored that she has a particular love for Lokian salt-shrimp, a delicacy that is incredibly difficult to get on Mecatol Rex. Whether she'd compromise her ethics for a sublime gastronomic experience is an open question.

And beyond the Keleres' archives are the rest of the vaults: kilometers of flooded spaces, collapsed passageways, and storage rooms that haven't been opened in millennia. The Keleres have no idea what sits in most of the vaults, and no particular enthusiasm for conducting an assessment. After all, who knows what horrors Imperial Intelligence locked away, just waiting to be unearthed?

And lurking secrets of past civilizations are just one of the many dangers facing would-be explorers. Beyond the risk of drowning or being crushed in a surprise cave-in, those exploring the vaults also run the risk of encountering some of Mecatol Rex's remaining wildlife.

Abandoned Sublevels (Green Level)

Eventually, the vaults blend into the fully abandoned sublevels. These spaces drive home just how old Mecatol Rex really is. The planet has been occupied for tens of thousands of years, and the Lazax were only the most recent empire to claim it as their own. Many of the catacombs predate the construction of the Imperial Intelligence HQ, and some date back to the days when Mecatol Rex was a fortress world of the Mahact. Here some of the lifeforms that make up the remnants of Mecatol Rex's ecosystem—namely eremes, arborlids, and caliga mold—manage to eke out some semblance of an existence.

For the most part, the Keleres have sealed off every entrance to these abandoned places. However, truly making the vaults secure against intrusion is impossible. Instead, they just set up electronic sensors and creature traps around the vault spaces in use, and hope that anyone foolish enough to try to infiltrate Keleres HQ from below ends up being hopelessly lost.

There is one entry into these depths that the Keleres have deliberately left open. Behind a mag-locked entryway on the research and engineering levels, a heavy lift platform descends over fifty meters to a badly maintained substation. From here, Custodian teams have cleared an ancient access passageway, laying down ferroplate planking and hanging up strings of long-lasting lights. The passageway ends in a series of disused storage vaults whose walls have partially collapsed, revealing natural and artificial caverns beyond. From here, brave souls can enter the unexplored regions where the Intelligence HQ ends and the rest of Mecatol Rex's undercity begins.

Mecatol Rex Bestiary

The biome of the Imperial capital had long ago ceased to be natural in any sense. Although the Lazax loved their lush gardens and green spaces—some of which were hundreds of square kilometers across—any semblance of wilderness was a carefully maintained façade. Trees were carefully planted and pruned, meadows were trimmed, and animals chosen for their docile natures and herbivorous diets.

This crafted facsimile of an ecosystem was shattered when the Sol fleet first began its bombardment. Forests burned along with buildings, animals died alongside the inhabitants, and all the survivors choked equally under clouds of ash and dust. By the time the shelling stopped, most of the planet was a desolate wasteland.

Desolate, but not entirely dead. In the thousands of years since the Twilight Wars, life has continued on Mecatol Rex. However, any semblance of domestication has long since vanished; anything that wants to survive on this barren planet has to fight and kill to do so.

Triple Biomes

After the catastrophic war, Mecatol Rex was reduced to three biomes. The first is the land within the bounds of Mecatol City. Here, massive storm barriers keep the worst of the dust cyclones at bay, and massive aquifers and pumps provide water to a thirsty populace. The animals and plants that grow here tend to be lean, skittish, and resourceful. However, they survive on the margins of city life, scavenging refuse and stealing water from leaking civic pipes. They avoid the city's population, rather than competing with it directly.

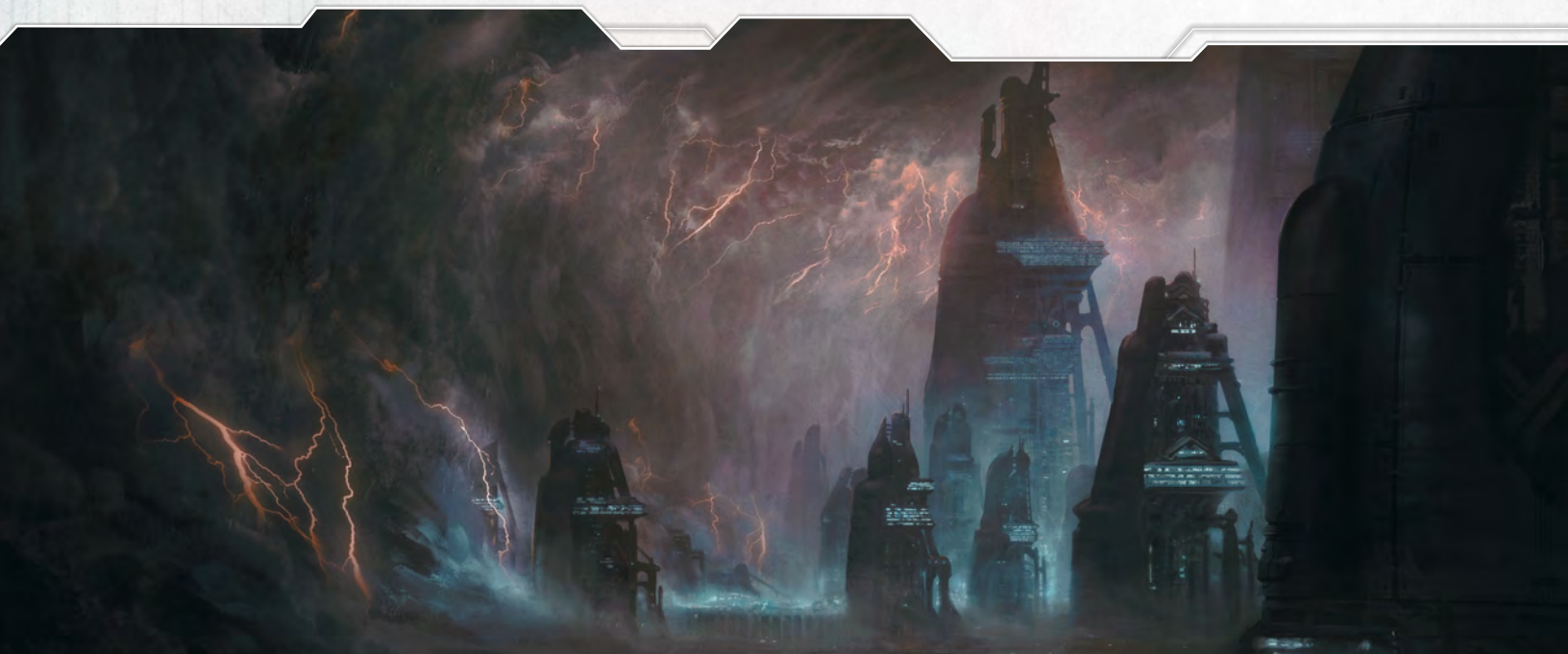
This all changes beyond the city's boundaries. The rest of Mecatol Rex is a vast wasteland called the Sea of Desolation,

with dust dunes hundreds of meters high marching between shallow lakes of toxic sludge and the skeletal remains of long-destroyed hab-towers. When precipitation falls from the bruise-colored clouds (which isn't often; the surface of Mecatol Rex is exceedingly dry), it comes as acid rain or filthy yellow snow near the poles.

Anything that lives in the Sea of Desolation must be an omnivore. Food is too scarce to ignore any source of nourishment. This holds true for the plants as well as animals, and makes traveling across the Sea of Desolation even more dangerous than the dust storms and lack of potable water would suggest.

The third biome is a blend of the first two; the caverns, basements, sewers, and catacombs that run beneath the planet's surface. In the Sea of Desolation, much of the artificial underground structures collapsed during the bombardment, or later after thousands of years of incredibly harsh weather. Only a few caves remain, serving as welcome shelter for the animals living in the wastes.

Beneath Mecatol City is another matter, however. Here the buildings were protected by defense grids or antiship batteries, and thus the catacombs beneath them remained largely intact. In the thousands of years since, life has infiltrated these subterranean spaces from the Sea of Desolation and Mecatol City, blending into a unique amalgamation. This is the one place on Mecatol Rex where relatively clean water isn't scarce, as the water table has dropped and the rock above filters out most surface pollutants. Food—either detritus from Mecatol City above or the odd surface dweller who stumbles into this underground world—is more common than in the Sea of Desolation as well. Finally, with no sapient beings to threaten them, the animal life is more aggressive and vicious. Those who descend into the catacombs had better watch their backs and travel armed.



Ruvar Bird Flock (Rival)

3 1 2

Ruvar birds once soared across Mecatol Rex, their vast flocks forming beautiful patterns in dawn sky while their gentle cooing lulled the citizenry into peaceful sleep. Originally introduced to add animal life to Mecatol City, they adapted well to an urban existence by scavenging food and nesting on the sides of soaring buildings. Ruvar birds were small, weighing less than half a kilogram, and able to fit comfortably into the literal and metaphorical cracks of the city.

However, after the bombing they became feral and savage things, fighting with the survivors for every scrap of food. Today's ruvar birds are much leaner and more skittish than their ancestors, and much more aggressively omnivorous. Small flocks of the birds roam Mecatol City, roosting on buildings and swarming over fruiting clid trees, garbage piles, and unattended meals. The ones that live on the outskirts of the city or in the Sea of Desolation are more vicious, and tales abound of unwary persons set upon and stripped down to bones by a ravenous flock.

1	3	1	2	1	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
1		20		1/1	

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Coordination 3, Perception 3, Vigilance 3.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Ambush Predator (when attacking a target that has not acted yet during the current encounter, this creature adds   to its combat checks), Flyer (can fly; see the **Flying** sidebar on page 100 of the GENESYS CORE RULEBOOK), Swarm (halve the damage done to this creature before applying soak, unless the weapon has the Blast or Burn item quality [regardless of whether the quality is activated]).

Equipment: Many claws and beaks (Brawl; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Accurate 1, Vicious 1, each additional ✨ deals +2 damage instead of +1).

Ereme (Rival)

4 1 3

Very little can live within the Sea of Desolation, but some creatures have survived. Eremes are thought to be descended from the large and docile lizards that sunned themselves in the Imperial water gardens. However, to handle the extremities of their new home, their adaptations are equally extreme.

Eremes are roughly a meter long, with segmented armored scales that grow particularly thick on their backs. This allows them to roll up into a ball while they sink into a particularly deep torpor. Eremes can remain comatose for months at a time, barely even breathing, until their acute senses of smell and heat

register a nearby food source. Then they explode into a frenzy of action; exhausting their caloric reserves to consume whatever may be in range; plant, animal, or sapient being.

2	2	1	2	1	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE		WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE	
5		12		0/0	

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Perception 3, Survival 1, Vigilance 5.

Talents: Berserk (may spend a maneuver to use this talent; until the end of the encounter or until incapacitated, this creature adds ✨ △ △ to all melee combat checks they make; and opponents add ✨ to all combat checks targeting this creature).

Abilities: Hyperactive State (during the first two rounds of an encounter, this creature gains one additional maneuver during its turn), Silhouette 0.

Equipment: Strong, blunt jaws (Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Ensnare 1, during the first two rounds of an encounter, this weapon deals +2 damage).

Clid Trees

Once, the gardens of the Imperial Palace and noble manses were filled with the perfume of flowering clid trees, towering deciduous plants with thick, woody trunks and small, sharp leaves. The trees produced beautiful flowers in seasonal cycles, with each season resulting in a different, brilliant hue to the petals. Flowers gave way to small fruit, with a sweet and sour flesh beneath a thick rind.

Clid trees survived the bombardment in shielded areas, and in the years since they slowly spread across the city wherever they could take root. They grew small and stunted, twisted by the poisons in the air and ground, but they also grew deep, penetrating roots that could reach the new, lower water table. Although they cannot survive in the Sea of Desolation, they have become an important part of the new Mecatol City ecosystem. Their fruit is still edible and provides sustenance for animals and homeless citizens, even if their leaves have further sharpened into deadly barbs.

Harvesting fruit from a clid tree requires a successful **Average (◆ ◆) Survival check**. Each  generated causes the character making the check to suffer 2 wounds from the sharp leaves. If the check generates , the character suffers a Critical Injury from a particularly unlucky stab.

Arborlid (Rival)

4 1 3

Imported from a world now long-forgotten, these six-limbed felids with a propensity for climbing were once a popular animal companion among the citizenry of Mecatol Rex. Unfortunately, the bombardment resulted in packs of panicked and often injured pets roaming the ruins. But unlike most domesticated species, the arborlid made an impressive adaptation from civilized cityscape to urban warzone.

Today feral arborlids still stalk the inhabited portions of the city. They are not large, only a couple lanky kilograms of tawny spotted fur, sharp claws and fangs, flicking tail, and bright green eyes. But they are smarter than a Jordian canid and twice as cunning. Arborlids often live in clid trees, weaving among the thorn leaves and eating the fruit, along with rodents, garbage, and stolen food. They can be friendly, albeit a bit standoffish, but anyone who threatens them finds out what it's like to deal with six razor-sharp claws.

1	4	1	4	1	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE		
1	6		2/3		

Skills: Brawl 2, Stealth 2, Survival 3, and Vigilance 3.

Talents: Finesse (when making a Brawl or Melee combat check, may use Agility instead of Brawn), Swift (does not suffer penalties for moving through difficult terrain).

Abilities: Pounce (once per turn, while at short range this creature may perform a move maneuver to engage a target as an incidental), Silhouette 0.

Equipment: Six razor-sharp claws (Brawl; Damage 2; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Linked 5, may trigger Linked by spending A).

Gangliapode (Minion)

2 1 1

Gangliapodes were once a species of Jordian avians. Renowned for their pink feathers and long, thin legs, a breeding flock was given to the Lazax emperor as a gift when the Federation of Sol was inducted into the empire. Somehow, the species managed to survive the fall of Mecatol Rex, though at a steep cost.

No longer feathered, gangliapode skin is leathery and twisted, as if covered in years of burn scars. Their beaks are thinner and needle-pointed, and the skin on their legs and feet has thickened tremendously. Gangliapodes live primarily around patches of caliga mold, where their tough legs allow them to stalk through the slime mold without being dissolved or devoured. They pick through the patches of dead and dying creatures and plants to eat. In doing so, they ingest plenty of toxins. Those are channeled to barbs that have evolved on the spurs of their legs, so the gangliapode has a lethal poisoned attack.

2	2	1	1	1	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE		
2	8		0/0		

Skills (group only): Brawl, Coordination, Resilience, Survival, Vigilance.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Multitoxin (if this creature inflicts wounds with a combat check, the target must make a **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) Resilience check**; upon failure, the target suffers 5 wounds; the target is also immobilized for one round per ☹ generated and staggered for one round per ☹ generated), Toxic Immunity (this creature is immune to any toxins or poisons).

Equipment: Poisoned barbs (Brawl; Damage 4; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Pierce 2).

Caliga Mold

The Sea of Desolation is far too dead to support ordinary plants. Instead, the most common non-animal life is a type of photosynthesizing slime mold that produces food both through sunlight and by dissolving and digesting otherwise toxic detritus. Certain insects in turn eat the mold, which in turn are eaten by larger animals.

Normally, patches of caliga mold are so small as to be unnoticeable. However, occasionally spores happen on a nutrient-rich patch of detritus or debris. When this happens, the mold can rapidly expand, eating down through the debris before gathering on solid, inedible ground below. What's left is a deceptively fragile spiderweb of debris that crumbles underfoot, plunging the unwary traveler into

a pit full of slime mold. And of course, the mold is perfectly willing to digest injured or trapped animals.

A character about to step onto a hidden caliga mold pit should make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Vigilance check**. If they fail, they step on the top of the debris which gives way, dropping them into the pit. This follows the rules for a short-ranged fall (as described on page 112 of the GENESYS CORE RULEBOOK). If they generate ☹ ☹ ☹ or ☹ on the check (whether or not they succeed) one companion chosen at random falls into the pit as well.

Once in the pit, the environment counts as a rating 4 acid (see page 111 of the GENESYS CORE RULEBOOK). In addition, any checks to climb out of the pit suffer ■ due to the partially dissolved walls.

Lacertacleptor (Minion)

1 1 1

The Lacertacleptor is not native to Mecatol Rex, nor has it adapted to the deadly environment of the Sea of Desolation. Instead, it is a recent import from the jungle moon of Ceti Omega IV. These small (less than 30 centimeters long) carnivorous reptiles were brought to Mecatol Rex by the Keleres quartermaster Galeena the Sustainer. The Titan's original plan was to populate their subterranean garden with the creatures as part of their plan to make the garden space self-sustaining. However, it turns out that although they are innocuous scavengers when alone, when in a pack 'cleptors become small but vicious hunters.

Galeena is completely safe from the creatures, but they realize that most of their comrades don't have metallic-silicon flesh. So at the moment, they are keeping the 'cleptors in an isolated holding pen until they can figure out if it's possible to use psycho-surgery or genetic modification to get rid of the pack instinct.

1	2	1	2	1	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD		M/R DEFENSE		
1	3		0/1		

Skills (group only): Brawl, Coordination, Stealth, Survival, Vigilance.

Talents: None.

Abilities: Pack Tactics (when this creature's minion group consists of at least two minions and is engaged with a target, they can spend a maneuver to prevent the target from disengaging from the minion group until the end of their next turn and to add A A to their next combat check against that target), Silhouette 0.

Equipment: Bite (Brawl; Damage 1; Critical 3; Range [Engaged]; Vicious 1, when this creature's minion group consists of at least two minions each additional ★ deals +2 damage instead of +1).



Primal (Nemesis)

10 2 2

Nobody knows what the primals are. In fact, nobody knows if they really exist, or if they are a bedtime fable created to frighten children. The legend of the primals goes back to the earliest days of the Lazax occupation of Mecatol Rex; stories of large, pale, bipedal creatures with two pairs of arms that haunted the lowest levels of the subterranean vaults beneath Mecatol City. Some said they could blend into walls or heal grievous wounds in moments. Any inhabitant of Mecatol City could claim to know a friend of an acquaintance of a relative who had seen a primal, or knew of an imperial experiment to create, tame, or communicate with the things. Regions beneath the city were said to be their domain; the Catacombs of the Primal and Pale Hand Chasm were particularly famous.

In the millennia since the fall of the Lazax Empire, the tales have only grown. Some say the primals didn't exist before, but do now; monstrous devolved descendants of the ancient Lazax blindly hunting for any species responsible for their people's downfall. Others say they are the original inhabitants of Mecatol Rex, long before it became first an ecumenopolis and then a wasteland. Some even say that the primals are twisted genetic experiments left over from when the gene-sorcerers ruled Mecatol Rex, just waiting for their masters to return.

GM's Note: The profile given here is strictly mechanical and does not exclude any of the potential theories as to the Primals' origins. You get to decide what exactly the Primals are if you want to include them in your campaign.

4	3	2	4	2	1
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
5	20	12	0/0		

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Coordination 3, Stealth 3, Survival 4, Vigilance 3.

Talents: Adversary 2 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this creature twice).

Abilities: Regeneration (at the beginning of their turn, this creature heals 5 wounds), Retaliatory Strike (may spend ☠ ☠ ☠ or ☠ from an opponent's combat check targeting this creature to throw the opponent to any location within short range; the opponent lands prone and suffers 4 strain), Terrifying (at the start of the encounter, all of this creature's opponents must make a **Hard** [◆◆◆] **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental, as per page 243 of the GENESYS Core Rulebook. If there are multiple sources of fear in the encounter, the opponents only make one fear check against the most terrifying enemy).

Equipment: Massive, clawed hands (Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Vicious 3).

Dangers of the Sea of Desolation

The Sea of Desolation is a barren wasteland, utterly lethal for anyone unprepared to deal with it. Though it is not particularly hot (Mecatol Rex's orbit and the shroud of lingering dust storms keep the planetary temperatures ranging from cool to lethally cold at the poles), dehydration is still the biggest danger. After that, the lingering toxins are a constant concern.

All of the creatures in this bestiary are immune to these rules.

Dehydration

Characters traveling through the Sea of Desolation cannot heal strain at the end of encounters or through resting unless they are able to have a drink of water each time they heal strain.

You do not have to keep track of your party's water supply as long as each character makes a point of carrying water. However, whenever a character's check generates ☠ ☠ ☠ or ☠, you can spend it to have the character run out of water the next time they have a drink.

Toxic Atmosphere

At the end of each full day spent in the Sea of Desolation without an environmental suit or wearing some other form of sealed armor, a character must perform an **Average** (◆◆) **Resilience check**. If they fail, they must reduce their strain and wound threshold by 1, or by 2 if they also generated ☠ ☠ ☠ or ☠.

If their strain and wound threshold is ever reduced to 0, a character dies. However, a week spent outside of the Sea of Desolation or a successful **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Medicine check** restores a character's strain and wound threshold to normal.

Mole Hunt

This is a short adventure seed. It contains all the basic information you need to flesh out into a single-session adventure of 3-5 hours.

Setting the Scene

Mole Hunt takes place on Mecatol Rex in the Keleres headquarters during Beacon Day, which memorializes the day when the Galactic Council was reconvened and the beacon atop the Council Chambers was relit. The player characters' cohort has been assigned as the duty squad while the rest of the Keleres cohorts on Mecatol Rex are out enjoying the festivities or serving as security. That means their job is to remain in HQ in case of an emergency in a facility being operated by a skeleton staff.

The adventure begins when Galeena the Sustainer approaches the PCs and asks them for a favor. The small pack of lacertacleptors (cleptors for short) that they imported to use as pest control has gotten free. Galeena wants them rounded up before the creatures hurt anyone, or before word gets back to one of the Tribunii that they were keeping potentially dangerous animals in their garden.

Notable NPCs

Galeena the Sustainer: A young Titan, they joined the Keleres at its founding because they believed in the organization's purpose. However, they are also a pacifist, and quickly learned they did not enjoy field work. They have served as a quartermaster for the Keleres for the past three years, and in their spare time are constructing a subterranean garden in the Vault levels. They use the **Young Titan** profile found on page 243 of **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**.

Tersgi Hurgn: A young and ambitious air-breathing Hylar from the Universities of Jol-Nar, Tersgi was sent to the Keleres because of his overly-enthusiastic efforts to research proscribed technologies. He has been helping Galeena research the biology of the species they are bringing into their vault garden. He is also eager for something that can form the core of a thesis paper when he returns to his academic studies.

Tosh of the Seventy-Sixth Creche of the Fourteenth Generation: The dour and taciturn Brother of Yin was sent to the Keleres as part of the Brotherhood's tithe. His unscarred features mark him out as one of the lesser brothers of his religion. Since arriving, he has spent most of his time serving as a desk agent, researching bioweapons and their effects. He has also been reprimanded for attempting to gather restricted bioengineering research data and send it back to Darien to help the Brotherhood's ongoing genetic research.

Gresh: A Saar field agent and pilot, Gresh got sent to the Keleres after a fight with her captain that turned physical. She is militantly pro-Saar, to the point where she harbors resentments

against most of the other Great Civilizations. Although this attitude is what started the argument with her captain in the first place, reassignment hasn't dampened her ardor towards her people.

Finding the 'Cleptors

Finding the 'cleptors and recapturing them can be run as a skill challenge. If the PCs fail to capture a group of the animals, you can shift it to a combat encounter. Minion groups of four 'cleptors are hiding in the rest of the Garden Vault, the hangar complex, and the engineering section. The PCs must make **Perception** or **Survival** checks to track them, then **Coordination** or **Survival** checks to trap the animals in carrying crates.

Discovering the Break-In

When the PCs gather up the 'cleptors and return them to their enclosure, they find that the lock was cut open. Someone released the tiny lizards on purpose. Further investigation reveals the vault was originally used to store electronic records. Someone accessed those records, then smashed the data-crystals so they couldn't be accessed.

The PCs can speak to Galeena, who mentions that three Keleres have been spending a lot of time in their garden lately. All of them are currently present in the headquarters and are potential suspects (see **Notable NPCs**). However, the PCs also need to figure out what was so valuable about the data in the first place.

A good place to start is the physical archives. A lot of old records got dumped in those archives when the Keleres were founded, so there may be some records of what was in this particular vault. The Keleres will have to convince the head of the archives, Tsoi Iq Matriona (use the **Winnaran Custodian Scholar** profile on page 237 of **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**), to give them access, then make **Knowledge (Lore)** checks to find the information. Success reveals that the vaults held locations of an experimental bacterial bioweapon called X-66, a much more virulent and unstable predecessor to the current bacterial weapon X-89.

Interrogating the Suspects

If the PCs report these developments to a senior agent or a Tribunii, they are told to begin the investigation themselves. This leaves them in charge of finding and interrogating each of the three suspects. It is up to you as to which of the three is the culprit; each has their own motivation for trying to obtain the X-66.

Interrogations can take the form of social encounters, with the PCs inflicting strain until they are satisfied the target is telling the truth or they break and reveal they are the thief. However, when they discover the thief's identity, the rogue Keleres attempts to escape. They lock down the main and personnel lifts

leading to the surface and flee into the abandoned sublevels, killing anyone who gets in their way.

The only choice the PCs have is to pursue the culprit into the unexplored sublevels and beyond, into the unknown regions.

Unknown Encounters

If the PCs follow the culprit into the subterranean maze beneath Mecatol City, they can make a **Knowledge (Lore)** check to realize they're headed toward a region called the Catacombs of the Primal. They may also deduce that this is the location of the bioweapon stockpile.

You can have your PCs make Survival checks to track the culprit. At some point, the PCs pass through a large underground dome. Unfortunately, here the floor has been eaten away by **caliga mold** (see page 27), and some of the PCs must work quickly to avoid falling into pits of the stuff. In addition, a pair of **eremes** (see page 26) have made their home in the pit. If the PCs make too much noise either falling into the pits or getting back out, they wake from their torpor and attack.

Catacombs of the Primal

Eventually, the PCs arrive in a series of large caverns where the stone seems exceptionally old. Parts are natural, and parts are carved, but with primitive tools or by hand. They also can perform a **Vigilance** check to discover the remains of a Lazax presence in the caverns. This may include some broken and discarded weapons, and a suit of armor (the Immortal Cuirass of the Imperial Guard, see page 132 of **EMBERS OF THE IMPERIUM**) with the remains of its wearer still inside. Clearly, the Lazax were down here. Just as clearly, they were not welcome.

Eventually, the PCs find the culprit in a cavern next to a sealed biohazard container. This is a large shipping container with an internal atomic-decay power supply that can keep the stasis systems within running for tens of thousands of years or more. The PCs have a chance to confront and even stop the culprit, but during the climax, they are attacked!

One of the quasi-mythical **primals** (see page 29) attacks the PCs. The culprit may use this opportunity to try to steal a sample of the bioweapon and escape, and the PCs must deal with both problems. (However, if the PCs are in danger of losing to the culprit, you can have the primal attack the culprit first and give the PCs a quick chance to recover.)

The primal is a hard fight, and clever thinking on the part of the PCs should be encouraged. Perhaps a cave-in could trap it, or they could lead it to the edge of one of the chasms scattered around the chamber. In a worst-case scenario, the PCs could attempt to rupture the biohazard container and escape, leaving the primal to die in a toxic cloud.

Denouement

At the end of the adventure, the PCs must decide what to do with the X-66 cache. Do they turn it over to their superiors, keep it for their own agendas, or simply destroy it to keep one more superweapon from ruining the galaxy? If they managed to catch the culprit, they also must decide what to do with them.

If the PCs plan to do anything but turn the X-66 over to their superiors, the culprit may have become a dangerous loose end.

Keleres Agent (Nemesis)

7 3 4

This profile can be used to represent all three of the Keleres agents described in the Notable NPC section of the adventure summary.

2	3	3	3	3	2
BRAWN	AGILITY	INTELLECT	CUNNING	WILLPOWER	PRESENCE
SOAK VALUE	WOUND THRESHOLD	STRAIN	M/R DEFENSE		
4	14	12	0/0		

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Cool 3, Coordination 2, Ranged (Light) 3, Discipline 2, Skullduggery 3, Vigilance 1.

Talents: Adversary 1 (upgrade difficulty of all combat checks against this character once).

Abilities: Counterintelligence Training (when an opponent targets this character with a social skill check, they add ♣ to the result. If the check generates ♣ ♣ ♣ or ☒, this character learns one of the opponent's motivations), One Step Ahead (once per round, after an opponent performs an action or maneuver, may spend one Story Point to perform an action or a maneuver as an out-of-turn incidental).

Equipment: Grazer (Ranged [Light]; Damage 3; Critical 2; Range [Medium]; Pierce 5), fists and feet (Brawl; Damage 4; Critical 4; Range [Engaged]; Knockdown, Stun 5, Stun Damage), echo jacket (+1 soak), concealed shock-pulse detonator (once per session may detonate as an action; all other characters within short range are knocked prone and must make a successful **Hard (◆◆◆) Resilience check** or be stunned until the start of this character's next turn).



VOICE OF ONE

READ AN EXCERPT
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THE NEW *TWILIGHT*
IMPERIUM NOVEL BY
TRISTAN PALMGREN



THERE WAS A POPULAR MISCONCEPTION, sometimes even among starship crews who should know better, that nothing can be heard in a vacuum. There was no sound in a vacuum. But, when I was out there, I heard plenty.

Noise transmitted through my body, up my bones and across the back of my ears, just fine. It was like being in a sensory isolation chamber, where every little sound my body made was enough to drive me mad. Blood pounded against my ears. The scrape of cartilage in my joints as I kicked. Soft pops in my mouth as my saliva bubbled, boiling into the vacuum. More than anything else, though, I heard pain. My eardrums ruptured.

I had at least managed to keep myself from spinning. I saw Port Vel Syd's naked hull across a too-clear hundred-meter expanse, stretching outward into a metal horizon. I was headed toward a smooth wall. Or at least it looked smooth. My vision had blurred, either from ice forming or my eyes distending, or both.

The airlock was dozens of meters away from where I'd soon make impact. I was not going to reach it.

Maybe if I'd had the time and forethought to aim as I'd been catapulted out of the starbridge, I might have stood the slenderest of chances of reaching the airlock. However, I'd been swept out too quickly.

Amidst all this hopelessness, I had to ask myself: why did I want so badly to live?

The obvious answer was that it was not my life to want or give away. It was Ours. But the Mindnet wouldn't have cared if this were the end of my story. My cover was blown, my ship had been destroyed, and I was plainly being outplayed at whatever game I'd stumbled into.

This was the first time I considered the thought that there was something else.

It was always possible that I was a coward, taking my vestigial, individualistic fear of death and wrapping higher-minded explanations around it.

Cowardice wasn't a satisfactory explanation for what I did next, though.

There was one last way to get myself to the airlock.

My air mask was tugging at its head strap so hard that, when I reached back to undo it, it popped off. My last breath vanished in a burst of fog.

I grasped the hose. Air jetted out of the mouthpiece. It was amazing that the air canister hadn't burst, but the starbridge and everything in it seemed to have been built to better standards than the rest of the latter-day additions to Port Vel Syd. I aimed the jet along the station's

"horizon," which was laterally opposite the direction of the airlock.

My senses were conducting a discordant symphony to express, in more creative ways than I imagined possible, that I was about to die. It was a sign of my mental state that I continued to hear my pain, like the heat running along my muscles like a spreading fire.

Another misconception about the vacuum was that the cold of space is an immediately lethal danger. The cold that frosted over the starbridge's walls had come from laws of gas expansion. In a given volume of air, there was only so much heat. When that air had blown out into the vacuum, it kept the same amount of energy, only spread much thinner. Hence the flash-cooling, and the ice everywhere. Frankly, after the explosion in my shuttle, I probably would have been cooked to death if the air hadn't been able to escape and cool.

Out here, though, it was different. Full vacuum seemed to act as a perfect insulator. I was flushed, panicked, and exerting myself. This was like being wrapped in ten layers of thermal blankets during a workout. When I'd been part of the Mindnet, I'd experienced memories of other Mindnet members who'd died in a vacuum. None of their recorded senses had seemed so vivid.

The starbridge's distant lights looked bleached, like they'd drained color. Or my eyes were losing their ability to perceive that. But the lines of the station's hull had never seemed sharper. I didn't think I had ever seen anything so sharp.

In that state of anoxia-drunk annoyance and euphoria, I crashed into the airlock. I wanted to live.

Everything I did was for the good of the Mindnet.

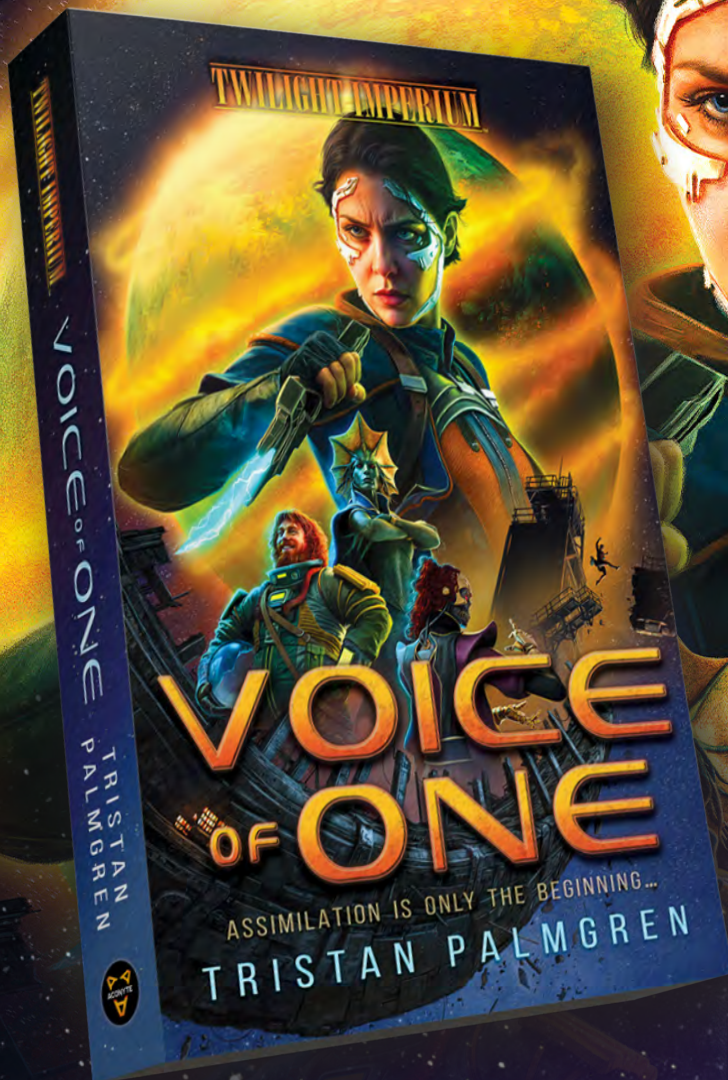
I kept my grip on the airlock's handhold. The hatch controls still functioned. I "heard" the door grind open through my hand, which was a muted and deep, liquid-like noise, like gurgling syrup.

It was one of the last things I remember with even a shadow of lucidity. My vision became fringed by black, and the last of my color perception vanished. I was sure that my hands were supposed to be something other than gray. Same with the indicator lights on the far side of the airlock chamber.

I don't remember getting that far.

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ONCE SHE WAS LEGION, NOW SHE STANDS ALONE AGAINST THE UNIVERSE.



Sil has a mind full of memories that aren't hers. Forced into servitude by the conquering powers of the L121X Mindnet and given cybernetic upgrades to condition her, Sil is only a cog in a super-conscious machine bent on galactic conquest. Until her ship crash lands and her body gives out.

When Sil is found by a mutated fungus from the Arborec, a collective consciousness who resurrect the dead to serve as envoys, Sil is caught between two very different worlds. The Mindnet want her brain, the Arborec want her body, and it's only a matter of time before one wins. But Sil is developing a mind of her own, and freedom has never looked sweeter, no matter the cost.

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