

Back in Black

**A Modern Era Sourcebook for
the Karma Roleplaying System™**

Written by Julie Ann Dawson

**This product requires
the *Karma Roleplaying System Core Rules
Book***

<http://www.bardsandsages.com/karma>

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The Interview

The silver and black sign read **General Technologies** in large bold letters. Just beneath in a paler white ran the company's slogan *Bringing a Universe of Opportunities to You*. Jarrod adjusted his tie before opening the door. After being unemployed for over six months, he was anxious to make a good impression. He had faxed, mailed, and e-mailed so many resumes that he had forgotten he even applied to this place. But when they called and asked him to come in for an interview that day, he immediately agreed.

The reception area was clean but surprisingly Spartan. Dark gray carpets. Light gray walls. Even the furniture was all shades of gray. Two motivational posters encased in simple black frames decorated the otherwise barren walls. Jarrod sighed as he began to worry this was another one of those fly-by-night direct sales scams. In his excitement to accept the interview, he hadn't given himself enough time to actually figure out whom he was interviewing with. He didn't even know what the "associate" position was. Now visions of selling vacuum cleaners door to door filled his head.

"Mr. White just stepped out for a moment," said the receptionist. "Please have a seat. He should be back shortly."

Yep, vacuum cleaner sales, thought Jarrod. Or Amway. The receptionist didn't have any personal items on her desk. No photos. No cutesy little knick-knacks. Not even a coffee mug. She was drinking coffee from a plain white Styrofoam cup. If it were her desk, she would have personal stuff on it. They must have rented a furnished office space to conduct interviews. *At least I can tell unemployment I am doing interviews,* he thought.

No sooner had Jarrod sat down a man in a black suit came in. He removed his sunglasses, nodded at the receptionist, and walked over to Jarrod. "Mr. Cartwaite? I'm John White. Sorry if I kept you waiting."

Jarrod forced a smile, and then hoped it didn't look forced. He followed Mr. White into the adjoining office, which featured similarly limited décor. Jarrod, following the advice of his so-called "career counselor" the unemployment office assigned him to, looked around for something—*anything*—interesting to use to spark a conversation. His eyes landed on the bookshelf, which featured dozens of thick binders with titles like *Project Janus*, *R75-X Initiative*, and *Project Titan*. There were also a lot of books, but all of the books had white book covers, and the only hint of the contents was a symbol and number stamped on the spine. STAR 5, TRIANGLE 3, CIRCLE 8.

Jarrod finally chuckled. "You know, this place reminds me of what an M.I.B. office would look like."

Mr. White paused before sitting down and looked at Jarrod oddly. "M.I.B.?"

Crap, thought Jarrod. This guy thinks *I'm a sci-fi geek or something now.* "Um, I mean, I was watching *Men In Black* on TV the other night, and—"

Mr. White looked around the office and shrugged. "I suppose it is a bit obvious. Have a seat, Mr. Cartwaite."

Jarrod cocked an eyebrow. *What's obvious?* He thought. But he needed to do the interview, so he sat.

Mr. White pulled a white folder from his desk drawer and opened it. Jarrod craned his neck to get a better look at the contents. A photo of Jarrod that looked like his driver's license photo was clipped to the inside of the folder. He couldn't make out the various papers in the folder, but knew it was a lot more than there should have been. His resume was only one page long, after all. He had only been out of college two years, and the whole of his work history consisted of an internship with a market research company while in school and his brief tenure as assistant manager at the computer store before it filed bankruptcy. Behavioral Science seemed like a great idea for a major when he started school, but after the economy bottomed out nobody was hiring. But at least his schooling had given him a boost in terms of identifying when something was just not quite right.

And something definitely wasn't right with Mr. White.

He sat too straight. His posture was too perfect. *Maybe he's an ex-Marine,* Jarrod thought. But he didn't have the built of a Marine. He was thin with narrow shoulders. His dark brown hair was starting to show signs of gray. *No, that isn't gray hair. That's blond.* Jarrod wondered if Mr. White was dyeing his blond hair

brown. That was weird behavior for a man. He knew women that dyed their hair at the drop of a hat (or in the case of his ex-girlfriend, at the sight of a new pair of shoes). Covering up gray hair was one thing, but covering up blond hair was something odd.

The interview started like any other. Mr. White briefly reviewed Jarrod's educational accomplishments and work history. They engaged in some brief chitchat regarding Jarrod's hobbies. And then things got really strange.

"So tell me about the *Is Your Neighbor an Alien?* app you designed for Facebook," said Mr. White as he rested his hands on top of his desk.

Jarrod's jaw dropped. He knew some employers were now trolling the internet on potential new hires, which was why he had spend the last few months cleaning up his online profile (particularly those old party pictures posted on MySpace.) But the app was hardly anything controversial. It was just one of those stupid quizzes where you answer a bunch of random questions.

"Um, I like sci-fi movies and stuff, and I thought it would be funny to sort of take some of the aliens from different movies and plug them into an app. It was no big deal."

"It seems to be popular."

"People like testing to see if their neighbors or friends are aliens, I guess."

"I suppose being able to identify whether or not a potential neighbor was a Kandorian in disguise would be important while house hunting."

Jarrod searched his memory for the reference, but couldn't place the alien race to a movie. Mr. White started to blink quickly. His left eye became slightly irritated. "Contacts?" asked Jarrod.

"Yes, sorry. One moment." Mr. White pulled a bottle of drops from the desk and put a drop in the offending eye. "Still adjusting to them. New prescription."

"Yeah, you get use to them though," said Jarrod. He suddenly realized the contacts were colored. He's got blue eyes? Why is he wearing brown contacts?

"Is there something wrong, Mr. Cartwaite?"

"Um, no. Nothing."

"Are you sure? You're staring."

"Oh, it's just—"

"Spit it out, Cartwaite." The abrupt change in tone caught Jarrod off guard.

"You're wearing colored contacts. And you dye your hair."

"You are very observant. That's one of the reasons why we selected you in the first place. Tell me, Mr. Cartwaite, why would those facts strike you as odd?"

"I didn't mean offense or anything."

"No, and none was taken. I just want to understand the thought process."

"Just that in this country there tends to be a cultural preference toward the blond, blue-eyed appearance. It's strange that a man would make a decision to make those kinds of cosmetic changes."

"Well, people tend not to remember dark haired individuals as easily as they do blond-haired ones," said Mr. White.

"Exactly, there's—wait—what did you just say?"

"In certain lines of work, the ability to not attract attention has its merits."

OK, *enough of this Twilight Zone crap.* "You know, I don't think I'm a good fit for your company," said Jarrod as he stood and turned toward the door.

"Sit down, Mr. Cartwaite," said Mr. White with the sudden authority of a Marine sergeant.

"No, I'm leaving. Thank you for your time." As Jarrod reached for the door handle, he heard the door lock. He tried the door, but it wouldn't budge.

"Sit down, Mr. Cartwaite," said Mr. White in a more soothing tone. "You're hired."

Jarrod stopped protesting to digest what Mr. White had just said. "Who are you people?"

"Sit down, Associate. You're about to find out."

Supplemental Character Creation Rules

Back in Black requires the *Karma Roleplaying System Core Rules Book*. This section provides supplemental rules to help Storytellers adapt the core rules to a modern campaign environment.

Adrenalin

If you are running a no-magic game, your players may question the role of Mana. You can, of course, simply ignore the Mana stat entirely. If you are not using magic in your game, it is not a required stat.

But you may hate to waste a perfectly good stat. Fortunately, there is another potential uses for this stat: adrenaline. We have all heard stories of the mother that lifts a car off of her child or the man who swims through a raging river to save a drowning friend. These almost superhuman displays of power are often attributed to adrenaline, the powerful hormone that kicks in under “fight or flight” situations. Adrenaline is triggered by the same attributes as Mana: Endurance (the body’s ability to sustain physical activity), Willpower (the mind’s desire to overcome adversity) and Faith (the human spirit’s power to transcend mundane restrictions). And therefore you can replace the Mana stat with Adrenaline.

Using Adrenaline:

Burst of Speed: When faced with a life-threatening situation, a player may decide the best course of action is to run like hell. They may in fact be right. This flight mode pushes the body into overdrive, pumping adrenaline to the muscles to increase speed. Spending a point of adrenaline allows a player to increase his base speed by 20% for one minute. Each additional point increases the amount of time he can maintain this speed by one minute. This can only be used in cases where the player is fleeing a dangerous situation, not running headlong into one. See the caution regarding exhaustion for more information.

Soaking Damage: Every point of Constitution allows a player to soak, or ignore, one point of subdual damage. Every two points of Constitution allows a player to soak one point of lethal damage. But when a person’s adrenaline starts to pump, he finds himself better capable of rolling with punches and ignoring damage. A player can burn two points of adrenaline to soak one point of subdual damage, or four points of adrenaline to soak one point of lethal damage. In order to use adrenaline in this manner, the player must already be aware and engaged in combat. Surprise attacks or attacks one unaware characters cannot be soaked in this manner. Only one point of damage can be soaked per round.

Strength Boost: Under certain stressful circumstances, adrenaline allows a player to perform feats of strength she might not otherwise be able to do. Pushing a car out of a ditch would not justify a feat of strength, but pushing a car off of someone being crushed to death under its weight would. For every five points of adrenaline spent, the player can temporarily increase her strength score by 1. This boost lasts long enough to make ONE feat of strength check (such as an athletics check to swim against a raging tide to save a drowning person). The player can boost her strength by as many points as her adrenaline allows, but see the cautions regarding exhaustion.

Exhaustion: Pushing the limits of the human body comes at a price. Whenever a player spends adrenaline, she risks collapsing with exhaustion. At the end of the scene when the player used the adrenaline, she must make a Resilience Check. The DC is 12 + the number of points of adrenaline spent in the scene. If the check fails, the play is exhausted for ten minutes plus one minute for every point of adrenaline spent. An exhausted character cannot walk, but can crawl at one-third his normal movement. Such players have effective Dexterity and Strength scores of zero for purpose of determining ability checks while exhausted.

Example: An explosion causes a huge boulder to collapse into the tunnel, blocking Nick's path. Worse, the collapsing tunnel is rapidly filling up with water from an underground stream. The boulder weighs close to 700 pounds. Nick's character weighs 200 lbs, and has a Strength Score of 2 and an Endurance Score of 2, which means he can push or pull a maximum of 500 lbs. Nick's heart is racing, and he spends 10 adrenaline to boost his strength to 4. This is enough to push or pull a maximum to 750 lbs. He is able to push the boulder out of his way and crawl out of the tunnel just before it floods.

As soon as he crawls out of the tunnel, he makes a Resilience check DC 22. If successful, he can pull himself up and continue on his way. If he fails, he collapses on the ground in exhaustion, unable to do anything more than lay there and catch his breath while his aching body tries to rejuvenate itself.

Specialization Suggestions

Alien Cultures (Social Sciences): This specialization allows the player to understand and interact with alien species without making a complete idiot of himself. This specialization allows the player to interpret cultural cues and respond accordingly. Characters without this specialization suffer a -4 penalty to social rolls involving aliens.

Alien Physiology (Natural Sciences): This specialization allows the player to identify aliens based on their physiological differences to humans, and to better understand how to combat them. Because aliens often have very different organs and body structures from humans, this specialization can be particularly useful when making called shots or determining a course of action for capturing an alien.

A player with this specialization may make a Natural Sciences ability check before designating a Called Shot to determine the most vulnerable spot on an alien species. The ST may set the difficulty depending on the prevalence of certain alien species in the campaign. If the check is successful, the Called Shot can proceed normally. Note that making Called Shots against aliens without this check means that the result may not have the intended consequences. For example, making a Called Shot to the head on an alien with a brain stored in the chest cavity would not have the normal impact of such an attack.

Alien Technologies (Mechanical Aptitude): This specialization allows the player to activate, reverse engineer, and otherwise make heads or tails out of alien technology. Players without this specialization cannot use or manipulate alien technology effectively (treat any attempt as an untrained check, even if the player has ranks in Mechanical Aptitude).

Bureaucracy (Social Sciences): This specialization allows a player to better navigate the complex, often cumbersome and redundant processes in corporate and government institutions. Individuals with this specialization know which employees to sweet talk, which ones to avoid, and which respond best to idle threats. Ranks in this specialization can be added to Diplomacy checks when dealing with government officials or employees of large corporations.

Conspiracy Theory (Popular Culture): Players involved in identifying potential aliens or UFO witnesses will rely on Conspiracy Theory to help sort fact from fiction. This specialization allows the player to understand the sub-culture of various conspiracy theories and to infiltrate and blend in with such sub-cultures.

Equipment

Reading the listings:

Item Name: Description of item. Its appearance and what benefits it grants to the user.

Ability Check: In some cases, an item requires only knowing where the “on” button is located, and therefore a person shown how to use the item would require no check to operate. Unless otherwise noted, once a character has succeeded at a check to use an item, subsequent checks are not required to use the same item again. Checks listed as “Civilian” indicate checks made by individuals that happen upon the item by accident, on the blackmarket, etc.

Critical Failure: Potential issues arising from a critical failure attempt.

Retail Price: The price for the item on the closed markets, those private sector and government organizations aware of the products. Items found on the black market may be much higher, assuming the seller is even aware of what he has.

General Technologies Contract Products

The following items are sold under special contracts to the Federal government, Zero Corps, and a few large security contractors. The ability check to activate the item is separated between agents, those authorized individuals who are trained in the proper use of the item, and civilians, who may stumble across an item by accident and attempt to activate blindly.

#PE7X475U “The Suit”: “The Suit” resembles a normal business suit commonly worn by CIA, FBI, and other government agents. The PE7X475U, however, is designed out of a unique polyethylene weave to absorb damage, particularly from blunt objects such as clubs or even standard bullets. “The Suit” reduces damage from blunt impact attacks and normal bullets by 2.

Though it looks like a normal wool suit, close inspection reveals a faint oily appearance to the weave. The Suit also feels slightly oily to the touch. Though the most popular color is indeed black, it also comes in dark brown, gray, and navy blue.

Ability Check: None required.

Critical Failure: None

Retail Price: \$3,000

#UVX90023 Optical Spectrum Enhancement Device (OSED): This item resembles a normal pair of sunglasses. The glasses, however, are specially treated to allow the wearer to see into the infrared spectrum, allowing nightvision and the ability to see heat signatures. The glasses also allow the wearer to see even small items at twice the normal distance. Most such glasses are opaque black, but they also come in other colors and styles at a higher price. The special magnification and infrared qualities are turned on and off by small buttons on the frames that resemble normal screws to the untrained eye. OSEDs also negate the effectiveness of the Optical Reflector Devices by making corrections to the way the ORD bends light.

Ability Check: Agents (None Required), Civilian (Mechanical Engineering DC)

Critical Failure: Temporary blindness. A critical failure activating the glasses while worn causes the infrared processors in the glasses to produce a blinding flash of light. Blindness lasts for ten minutes, and returns slowly over the course of twenty minutes. If the critical failure occurs while the glasses are not worn but instead in hand, the blindness only lasts one minute, and sight is restored immediately at the end of that time.

Retail Price (basic black): \$1,500

Retail Price (“designer” frames): \$3,000

#UVX90024 Auditory Frequency Enhancement Device (AFED): This hearing aid doubles the range at which the wearer can hear sounds, and also allows the wearer to hear pitches normally outside the human spectrum.

Ability Check: Agents (None Required), Civilian (Mechanical Engineering EC)

Critical Failure: Temporary deafness. A critical failure causes the device to magnify sound to an extent that even the slightest sound is deafening. If the device is worn at the time of the failure, deafness lasts for thirty minutes, and then slowly returns over the course of an hour. If the item is not worn at the time of the failure, there is no deafness, but the aid may appear to emit a high-pitched squealing sound that is distracting and painful (-2 penalty to skill checks to everyone within ten feet of the item while the noise is being emitted.)

Retail Price: \$800

#0GRM4V Portable Communication System (PCS): The 0GRM4V resembles any one of the dozens of smartphones found in the possession of busy executives and other overly self-important people. While it looks like a normal smartphone, its programming and functions are much more complex and require special training. Like most smartphones, the PCS can be synched or plugged in to a compute to transfer data or enable printing. The PCS has a 200 hour battery life before it needs recharging.

The PCS has the following functionality:

Phone: The model works like a normal cell phone, and no check is required to answer or place calls or send and receive text messages. However, the PCS has a Security Frequency that can be activated when calling other 0GRM4V users that prevents call interception. Activating Security Frequency requires an ability check. The PCS also permits video calling (either unsecured or secured) with an ability check.

Web Functionality: The model allows all the normal web functionality common to smartphones, but requires an ability check to activate because the browsing is automatically routed through the Security Frequency. Depending on the company the PCS was issued by, the PCS will also be able to automatically log in to the company's secure web service to access remote files and data.

Audio and Video Functionality: The PCS has a 96 GB memory, allowing it to store enormous amounts of video, audio, and digital photos. Using these functions does not require an ability check.

The PCS has Enhanced Detection Functionality that does require an ability check, allowing it to record both ultrasonic and infrasonic frequencies normally missed by humans. This functionality can also detect the infrared and ultraviolet portions of the electromagnetic spectrum, allowing the user to capture on video objects not normally seen by human eyes. It can only perform one special detection function at a time.

Use of this enhanced functionality can drain the battery quickly (each minute of recording drains one hour of battery life), so it is not generally used unless the agent suspects something. Also, this functionality dampens the ability to detect normal video or audio, so recording the infrared aura of an alien, for example, will record the aura, but cause the alien itself to appear blurred.

Scanner: The PCS can be used as a high resolution hand scanner, allowing the user to copy documents and convert them to data files. This function requires an ability check.

Audio Translator: The PCS comes programmed to automatically translate seven human languages and up to five alien languages, depending on the company that programmed the PCS. Using this function always requires an ability check. The user can put in the ear plugs, turn on the translator, and get an automatic, real-time translation of conversations. Unfortunately, strong dialects and thick accents can cause mistranslations, so the accuracy of the translation is dependent on how successful the ability check is. The translator does not allow the user to respond in the foreign language. Additional languages can be programmed in the PCS, for a maximum of thirty languages total, at a cost of \$500 per language program.

Security and Self-Destruct Function: The phone has a biometric security system that allows the owner to use fingerprint or retinal scans for securing the device. The item can also be programmed to self-destruct.

Generally, these measures are not activated by any activity that does not require an ability check. The self-destruct mechanism has a twenty second countdown. In that period, any pre-assigned files are automatically transferred to a remote server. At the end of the countdown, the PCS explodes (see Critical Failure for damage information). Hacking pass the security functions requires a specialization in Computer Hacking and a Mechanical Aptitude check EC.

Ability Check: Agents (Mechanical Aptitude BC/per use), Civilian (Mechanical Aptitude DC/per use)

Critical Failure: Failing to activate the PCS overloads the battery, causing it to overload and explode. The explosion deals 4 DT to the user (no check to avoid), and 1 DT to anyone within ten feet (Reflexes BC to avoid).

Retail Price: \$6,000

#P49 Personal Defense Device: The P49 resembles a normal revolver, and can fire normal revolver rounds. The handle, however, stores a battery that powers high velocity electro-static charges. A shot from the electro-static charge deactivates any normal electronic devices, rendering it useless. Certain high-tech or resilient devices, such as the PCS, may be entitled to a Resilience check BC to avoid being shorted out.

Against living targets, the P49 deals an electrical shock like a taser that can subdue an opponent. On a successful ranged attack, the target suffers 1 DT of electrical damage and must succeed at a Resilience check CC or be knocked unconscious for five rounds. Beings immune to electrical damage are unaffected by this attack.

The P49 can fire ten bolts before the battery is spent and must be replaced. Replacing the battery takes three rounds.

Ability Check: Weapons Group (Ranged) as normal when used as revolver. Agents can use the secondary ability with a normal Weapons Group check. Civilians first need to be aware of the ability. Identifying the secondary ability requires a Mechanical Aptitude check CC. Once identified, the weapon can be used normally. For purposes of specializations, the secondary ability does not benefit from a specialization in normal firearms. The user can however specialize specifically in the P49.

Critical Failure: None.

Retail Price: \$2,000

#P50 Crowd Control Device: The P50 resembles a normal but small stun baton, and can be used as such on an individual. A living target struck with a direct strike from the P50 must make a Resilience check CC to avoid being knocked unconscious. The unconscious state lasts for five rounds. The P50 can also short out low quality electrical devices, but has no impact on higher end devices.

The P50 can also emit a wave of energy that fans out thirty feet from the user in a cone formation. Any living individual caught in the wave must make a Resilience check CC or be confused for five rounds. While confused, the target can defend normally, but cannot make attack actions. During this time, the target is susceptible to subliminal messages, and a skilled user can take this time to slightly alter the target's memory of the incident. A witness to an alien attack, for example, can be informed that the alien was a man in a costume. Or a person who saw a man leap five stories in the air can be made to believe the man used a climbing cable. The alterations must be subtle and within the realm of plausibility, however. The user must make a Manipulation check versus the target's Discern. The target suffers a -8 penalty to the Discern check. The user need make only a single roll versus all targets affected. The user must communicate to the target in a language the target can understand.

The P50 runs on a battery. It can be used as a normal stun baton up to twenty times between charges. The secondary ability can only be used three times before the battery requires charging.

Ability Check: The P50 can be used with a normal Martial Arts attack to stun a single opponent. Activating the crowd control ability requires a Mechanical Aptitude check (Agents BC, Civilians EC).

Critical Failure: The power unit overloads, causing the internal circuits to be damaged. The device cannot be used until it is repaired (Mechanical Aptitude DC).

Retail Price: \$10,000

#PZR2687MD Medical Treatment Kit: To the untrained eye, this resembles a high-end first aid kit, and includes all of the normal items one would find in such a kit. However, the kit also has a hidden compartment that includes several vials and pre-filled syringes of experimental drugs. While all of these drugs are powerful, they are also highly addictive. Using any of these drugs requires the user to make a Resilience check to avoid becoming addicted. The check per drug starts at BC for the first use, and increases to DC with the second, CC with the third, and finally EC with the fourth. Once reaching EC, the check never goes down regardless of the amount of time between uses.

The kit includes two each of the following:

XR19—Increases Strength by 2 for one hour. (Syringe)

XR20—Increases Dexterity by 2 for one hour. (Syringe)

XR21—Allows the user to go without sleep for 24 hours and increases speed by 20%. When using a full round attack action, can make one extra attack per round. However any check involving mental attributes suffers a -1 penalty. (Pill)

XR22—Helps alleviate the effects of stress, fatigue, and even psionic manipulation. Grants a +5 bonus to Resolve and Mental Health checks for four hours. If taken after a failed check, entitles the consumer to a second check with a -2 penalty to shake off any ill effects. (Pill).

XR23—Speeds up the metabolism, purging poisons and toxins from the body and speeding the natural rate of healing. Neutralizes the over time effects of poisons and toxins. Heals one health level per hour over a period of 4 hours. (Syringe)

XR24—Causes the blood to clot faster, effectively reducing the amount of damage taken from each lethal attack by 1 for two hours. (Syringe)

The Kit also includes:

Surgical Glue—Seals open wounds, healing one health level and preventing further loss of health due to blood loss.

Adrenaline Shot—adds a +5 bonus to Heroic Healing checks to revive a dying character.

Ability Check: None required to use.

Critical Failure: None

Retail Price: \$1,000

General Technologies VIP Club Products

The following items are sold through GT's VIP Club. The VIP Club is an invitation only retail website designed to service the peculiar needs of aliens living on Earth. Generally, invitations are obtained through Starpoint Immigrations or GT's own alien employees. The retail site offers a host of mundane items, such as specialty foods and imported music and other entertainment. It also offers a variety of prosthetic devices to help aliens disguise certain features. A few items require special explanation.

Environmental Adaptors (EAs): Environmental Adaptors are chemical mixtures that allow aliens to survive on Earth. EAs come in hundreds of types. Some require surgical implants that must be monitored by a physician. Others are single dose injections that the client can do themselves. The exact nature of the EA is dependent on the alien species. The more like humans the species, the less invasive the EA needs to be.

Ability Check: None. For aliens, using EAs is no different than humans taking vitamins or supplements. In many cases, civilians attempting to use an EA would suffer from poisoning, as the chemical compounds are meant to work with alien physiologies.

Critical Failure: None, but EAs can be fatal to humans. Storytellers should determine the effects of consuming a specific EA on humans as suits the game.

Retail Price: Single dose EAs can cost as little as a few dollars, but need to be taken a couple of times a week. Highly invasive implants can cost thousands of dollars, but once they are implanted they automatically regulate the alien's physiology for months or years.

Optical Reflector Device (ORD): ORDs are small electronic devices that bend and warp light around the user, altering the way human eyes perceive the user. ORDs are specifically designed to work with the way the human eye collects visual data. Using an ORD grants a +10 bonus to Performance checks to disguise the user as a human. The ORD cannot be used to make an alien look like a specific individual. Rather, it merely alters how the human sees the alien. It can make a large head appear smaller, change how the eye perceives the user's skin color, create the illusion of smaller or larger eyes, and other cosmetic changes. It can't hide extra limbs on its own, though it can be used along with other devices to achieve this effect (such as a cast to bind one arm to another to give the appearance of a single arm). An ORD is commonly used with other items, such as wigs and cosmetics, to give a completely human appearance.

ORDs are pre-programmed for different alien races, and come in a variety of styles and shapes. They often appear as belt buckles, brooches, or rings. About ten different intergalactic companies manufacture and market ORDs through General Technologies. ORD configurations are fixed, meaning that they will always create the same general appearance in the user. Generally, users purchase ORDs that help them blend in with the greater population. An alien living in Japan would purchase an ORD to help give them a more Asian appearance, for example.

Not all ORDs are effective versus cameras and digital recording devices. Low-end ORDs produce blurry image results, as if the camera was defective. High-end ORDs, however, can fool even digital cameras and are preferred for those that work extensively in the public.

Ability Check: ORDs are preprogrammed for their user, and as such merely require being turned on. An ORD programmed for a Darcellian will work slightly different than one programmed for a Nexi, however using the ORD is as natural for most aliens as using a telephone is for a human. Civilians attempting to activate an ORD must succeed at a Mechanical Aptitude check DC, and even if they get the item working it will only blur their appearance.

Critical Failure: The power unit overloads, causing the internal circuits to be damaged. The device cannot be used until it is repaired (Mechanical Aptitude DC).

Retail Price: Range from \$500 to \$10,000 depending on brand, design, and add on features such as digital camera manipulation. High quality camera manipulation can normally be purchased at around \$3,000. The most expensive models tend to be the designer ORDs featuring rare gems or precious metals.

Xalorcan: Xalorcan is an additive used in perfumes, soaps, and colognes designed to mask the smell of aliens. While humans rarely notice such things, many mundane animals such as dogs and cats can detect the scent of aliens. This can lead to unpleasant situations, particularly if the animal perceives the alien as a threat. Xalorcan covers up the alien's natural odor and gives him a more "human" smell. Creatures with the Scent power suffer a -4 penalty to detect that the user is not human, or to track the user by scent.

Ability Check: None.

Critical Failure: None

Retail Price: None. As an additive, it is not sold in bulk. It is found in toiletries sold on the site.

How the Good Christians of Aurora, TX Prevented an Alien Invasion

On April 17, 1897, a strange spacecraft crashed into a windmill, killing the pilot on impact. The citizens of Aurora felt terrible about this, considering that maybe if the windmill hadn't been in the way the pilot might have had a chance to maneuver to a safer landing. Not to mention that many of the mothers were quick to point out he (they had assumed the pilot was male) was probably someone's son. And there wasn't a mother in town that couldn't empathize with some poor woman, probably light years away, worrying over her baby flying off over strange planets.

So, as was suitable by their reckoning, they afforded the pilot a proper Christian burial in their own cemetery.

The pilot, Xanthen Gu Klag, was a Darcellian Scout, sent to Earth to collect data regarding the planet's suitability to settlement. Now the Darcellians weren't exactly a peaceful people; in truth they were inclined toward empire-building. And the attractive blue planet their probes had discovered appeared ripe for invasion. They didn't even have a defense station on their moon! But when Klag didn't return from his expedition, his superiors sent an investigator.

The investigator, Xanthen Ceral Flul, went to Aurora under human guise so as not to raise suspicion, adopting the appearance of a man that was what the humans called a banker. There was a small military base nearby in what the humans called Fort Worth, and though a single Darcellian Corvette could decimate it he didn't want to accidentally trigger the invasion before the Darcellians were ready.

During his investigation, he learned that Aurora had recently suffered a great many problems, including a tragic fire that destroyed a great deal of the town and strange illness that was killing off its residents. Upon arriving at the cemetery, he found an old woman tending the pilot's grave, replacing the wilted grave flowers with fresh ones. He asked her why she was tending a grave for someone she didn't know, and she responded that it was the "Christian way." When he looked at her perplexed, she began to preach to him. She eventually sent him back to the Darcellians forces with a copy of the King James Bible.

Once his commanders heard his story, they all felt slightly guilty over planning to decimate the civilization. These humans seemed like nice enough folks, even if they were primitive. And this King James fellow was a good storyteller. And since the emperor considered himself a playwright, they decided to postpone the invasion until after the emperor had had an opportunity to read the book and see if he would prefer to have a summit with this King.

General Technologies

Various alien races have been scouting out earth for thousands of years. The planet was always too cold or too hot; too dry or too watery; too oxygen-rich or lacking enough oxygen. The other issue was that Earth was so far beyond the normal trade routes that it was simply too expensive to try to operate from. It only had one moon for strategic defense (though nearby Mars would suffice in a pinch). But its remoteness would have made any business ventures on the planet subject to possible raiders and space pirates.

So for millennia, Earth remained that pretty blue planet you slowed down to look at on your way to the Alexar Galaxy.

The Darcellian Empire almost changed that in 1897, but decided against launching an invasion. Earth was too far removed from its galactic borders to properly defend. And while it may have been “Christian kindness” that delayed the invasion, it was humanity’s history of self-destruction that truly changed the Emperor’s mind. Few races were so predisposed to indiscriminate slaughtering of themselves. It would take too many resources to subjugate the population, and wiping them out would require wholesale recolonization of the planet.

But by 1920, Darcellian corporations were seeing opportunities for profit. With both tropical and arctic zones, arid lands and marshes, Earth was marketed as the hot vacation spot for wealthy aliens that wanted to get away from it all. Particularly in the land called the United States, humans were hungrily devouring new technologies and were willing to pay a premium for them. In 1924, under special charters from the Emperor, the Darcellian Collective, a group of intergalactic organizations, made themselves known to the President of the United States.

In Calvin Coolidge they found a surprisingly disinterested partner. On the one hand, his general hands off approach to American business made him willing to allow American corporations the opportunity to profit from alien technology. On the other hand, he feared that direct contact between outsiders (whether European or Darcellian) and American business interests could weaken the nation’s financial infrastructure. There was also the matter of interracial relations. Americans were still having trouble adjusting to women having the right to vote, and African Americans still suffered lynching and other violence. The idea of green or gray skinned aliens walking among the population was not considered prudent by either side after close examination.

In 1925, Project Stargate was established as part of the Defense Department. The Darcellian Collective would route its technological offerings through the federal government, which would reverse engineer the technology to make it accessible to American business. The collective’s biggest customer, of course, turned out to be the United States government, which used the technology to become the world’s most formidable military.

This arrangement remained in place until 1966, when the passage of the Freedom of Information Act made it difficult to hide Project Stargate in the government ledgers. To circumvent the Act, Project Stargate was moved outside of the government to a private corporation founded by retired military men and funded indirectly with grants from the government. By 1975, General Technologies was providing technology and consulting services to dozens of new businesses, including a little start-up computer company in Albuquerque, New Mexico that would revolutionize the computer industry.

Outlook on Aliens: Aliens are their business partners. The typical GT employee that is aware of the aliens has a pragmatic view and for the most part has been so conditioned into the corporate structure that dealing with extraterrestrials is considered no different from dealing with the Japanese. While there is some level of specism with some employees (“All those Xaroasians are drunkards” or “Everybody knows all

Twillexians are perverts”), for the most part this is no more or less pronounced than the racist views humans hold of each other.

Current Recruitment Practices: GT actually has thousands of employees worldwide that have no idea of the company’s real business, and these individuals in non-sensitive positions are recruited and hired in the same manner as any other company. But when it comes to GT’s real products and services, those involving alien technologies, the company has some unique and rather disturbing hiring processes.

General Technologies employs two recruitment methods, called Cultivation and Adoption. GT is perhaps the closest to the traditional notions of mysterious Men in Black. Information is their business, and they guard it obsessively. With their Cultivation Program, they identify potential new hires while they are still in high school, providing mentoring and support indirectly to coax them into the fields of study best suited to the company’s needs.

The company identifies potential students with the help of teachers and guidance counselors, who receive “grants” from the company’s various shell non-profits by identifying candidates. The candidate is then encouraged by teachers and counselors to apply for certain “scholarships” that will effectively pay his or her entire college tuition, assuming the student majors in specific fields.

Once the student is in school, the company closely monitors attempts by other employers to recruit the student. GT has an entire department of Retention Specialists whose primary function is to make sure the student cannot find significant work elsewhere. They will engage in a variety of underhanded techniques. One common technique is to orchestrate a lawsuit against the potential employer in order to sully the student’s opinion of them. For example, if the student is female, GT may orchestrate a sexual harassment lawsuit to scare her off the company. If the student is African American, they might orchestrate a racial discrimination lawsuit. Once the student has turned away from the company, the lawsuits are dropped quietly.

If that doesn’t work, then they might go the opposite route. Anonymous phone calls to the employer that the student has a drug problem. Accusations of plagiarism, which are dropped before a student is expelled, of course. Some of the brightest students often find their senior year of college the most distressing, because door after door seems to close to them. By the time they graduate, they have suffered so many perceived setbacks that the job offer from GT is accepted without hesitation.

Cultivation, however, can take almost a decade to produce a quality employee, and there are times when positions need to be filled much sooner. Thus the practice of Adoption. GT employs hundreds of specialized computer programs that act like webcrawlers, searching the internet for specific keywords and topics to identify potential targets. Once a potential target is identified, a thorough background search is performed and the target is watched carefully for a few months. Once it is determined the target would be a good fit for the company, the company makes a job offer. Of course, if the target is already gainfully employed, it may be necessary to use their other methods to relieve him of his current job before an offer is made.

The company never hires immediate friends and family of current employees to avoid conflicts of interest. In fact, corporate policy dictates that employees may not discuss company business even with their spouses.

Organizational Structure: GT is a highly structured, publicly traded organization. It has a Board of Directors and CEO that are generally clueless as to the company’s real business. On paper, it is impossible to find evidence of GT’s interest in alien technology.

The real power at GT is with the Vice President of New Technologies, Nathan Bandelmore. Bandelmore is a Darcellian psion who has been with the company since 1977. He uses his psionic powers to manipulate the Board and the CEO as needed to ensure their compliance, and oversees all the significant decisions in the company. (See NPCs for more information).

New recruits are called Associates, and are assigned to a variety of data gathering or data processing tasks. Almost all Associates dabble in a little bit of everything, from working in the laboratories on reverse engineering projects to engaging in field work cleaning up crash sites to researching and identifying potentially true UFO or alien abduction stories. Most Associates spend several years at this level in order to make sure they have a solid understanding of the company's processes and goals, and then are promoted to other positions within the company. The vast majority of Associates lead rather mundane corporate lives, with the exception that they sometimes have business meetings with aliens.

Though hiding the presence of aliens is not actually part of GT's charter, it is vital to their business interests. Whereas originally it was feared that if humans learned of aliens they would react violently, now it is simply a matter of trade secrets. If their clients discovered the source of their technology, after all, they could buy direct from the aliens and cut them out.

Because of this, a select few Associates are promoted to Agents and assigned to the company's Risk Management Department. An agent's sole job is to identify potential security breaches and close them. A primary focus is on Witness Correction, or rather identifying, interviewing, and then erasing the memories of witnesses.

The next rank, Specialist, takes an even more proactive method to dealing with such issues. Specialists actively infiltrate various groups and industries, spreading misinformation regarding the existence of aliens in order to cloud the truth. Many work in the entertainment industry, constantly recreating the UFO "myth" to make it impossible to discern fact from fiction. Some become active members of conspiracy groups, spreading misinformation while identifying potential problems.

PC Career Options: In terms of developing and running an actual campaign, the Risk Management Department is most likely where PCs will end up. Risk Management is the more traditional "adventure" route, with opportunities to engage in crime scene investigations, espionage, and substantially interact with the greater world. Of course, if you are looking for a more political, less combative style of play, PCs can work in just about any part of GT. And frankly, negotiating business contracts with some alien species can be more dangerous than hunting down intergalactic pirates!

Starpoint Immigration Services

By 1939, despite the Great Depression and the threat of World War II, the Darcellian Collective was accumulating substantial wealth. However, much of that wealth was tied up in American dollars, making it useless on the galactic exchanges. And they learned how vulnerable this wealth was when they attempted to expand their market share by considering new business ventures outside of the United States. No longer dealing with the hands-off Coolidge, they had to deal with the very hands-on FDR, who froze all of their accounts in the United States and threatened to have them all arrested for treason. Roosevelt had no intentions of allowing alien technology to fall into Hitler's hands, and for a short time placed all Collective representatives on Earth under house arrest. Isolated from their ships and unable to contact their home planet, the delegates eventually signed the Freedom Treaty, effectively giving the United States government the exclusive right to regulate intergalactic trade on Earth.

Upon their release, the delegates immediately reported the situation to the Emperor and demanded that Earth be invaded. But the Empire was already dealing with insurgents on its fringe territories, and the Emperors' advisors expressed concern over the message it would send to trade partners if the empire's military entered into petty contract disputes. The delegates were told to live with the terms of the contract they signed.

By this time, the government had quietly mandated the Alien Registration Act, which required all visiting aliens to register with the government. This registration included a declaration of powers, and the establishment of an alternate identity for use while on Earth. The Collective feared the intense pressure on tourists would scare off business. Surprisingly, it had the opposite effect. Thrill-seeking tourists took to the notion of crafting secret identities to move about the human population. Many even joined the U.S. army for a chance to fight in World War II using the primitive weapons of men. An entire cottage industry of Earth Romances sprung up, and throughout the galaxy novels about brave intergalactic adventurers rescuing humans from certain doom became bestsellers.

All this romanticizing of Earth life led to the first Immigrant Wave of 1950. Thousands of aliens moved to the United States. Many were young people looking to free themselves from the preassigned roles given them by their home planets. Others were so-called Fringers, individuals that didn't quite fit in on their home worlds that were looking to make a new life with a new identity.

So many aliens were coming to the U.S. that the government stopped giving permanent visas in 1965. In 1970, a group of former government employees and disgruntled Darcellian delegates formed Starpoint Immigration and took over the business of issuing tourist visas as a private contractor. Armed with insider knowledge of how both the government and the Collective worked, Starpoint Immigration began selling permanent identities to those that could afford the fees and began marketing the service extensively. Under the nose of the U.S. government, the second Immigrant Wave began in 1984, and even today hundreds of aliens find new names and lives in the U.S. thanks to Starpoint Immigration.

Outlook on Aliens: Those that are aware of the alien clients tend to be either sympathetic or opportunistic. Those working with refugees, for example, tend to see their work as a calling. They hold a view that sees themselves as brothers and sisters with the greater universe, bridging the divide between races to make the cosmos a better place. These individuals often have mindsets in line with Civil War abolitionists or modern day human rights activists; only they expand those ideas to encompass all sentient beings.

The opportunists, however, are a bit more cynical. Sure these aliens have the ability to travel through space, but if their life is so great why are they all dying to live in the USA? There is money to be made in

intergalactic immigration, and they intend to make it. Some of these individuals privately have contempt for certain alien species, but put on a good show in front of clients.

Current Recruiting Practices: Because Starpoint handles “normal” immigration as well as alien immigration, Starpoint’s hiring practices are not much different from most such companies. It focuses on individuals with a strong understanding of immigration law. Its staff is renowned for their knowledge of working through the immigration system, but they also know how to work around it. With offices around the globe, they know more about how to circumvent the identification verification methods of the world’s leading nations.

However, Starpoint also hires a variety of ex-convicts under so-called “Second Chances” program. The program, which has received a great deal of praise from human rights groups and government agencies, professes to provide parolees a chance to learn new job skills and reestablish themselves in society. If someone ever bothered to get past the feel-good front of the program, one might notice that the vast majority of those recruited were in jail for things like identity theft, car burglary, computer hacking, forgery, and other frauds. These individuals are not given access to client’s personal information for security purposes and to comply with state and federal regulations. Of course, their real job is to help create new personal information for alien clients.

Organizational Structure: Starpoint is a multinational law firm, and is divided into hundreds of specialized departments, each answering to different divisional vice presidents. The majority of employees have no idea what they are involved in. Most employees work in extremely specialized areas with little contact with other departments. This makes it difficult for any one employee to accidentally connect the dots and realize what is going on. Processing Teams are divided by the type of paperwork required. One team might focus strictly on student Visas. Another might focus on acquiring social security numbers.

Much of the “documentation” required to perform these tasks are provided by the Second Chances Program, though indirectly. Fake birth certificates, fabricated medical records, forged bank statements; whatever might be needed is acquired for the client, who then turns it over to the different departments.

All the vice presidents, the president, and most of the senior partners, are fully aware of the true nature of their work. There are also select employees in each office, called Research Leaders, which are also aware of the truth. While the title might imply a management position, many Research Leaders work independently on the shadier aspects of the company’s business. Members of Second Chances that are aware of Starpoint’s real clientele would be given this title.

PC Career Options: From a campaign perspective, the PCs are mostly likely going to come from the Second Chances Program. They could be former juvenile offenders or hardened criminals or victims of circumstance genuinely trying to go straight. Keeping the PCs in the dark about the true nature of Starpoint can lead to interesting moral quandaries. Starpoint pays well, and meets the terms of their parole. But some of the tasks they will put to PCs, such as locating someone to provide fake green cards or stealing blank birth certificates for forgeries, are obviously illegal.

It is also possible for Starpoint to tell the PCs exactly why they are doing what they are doing, though this might not negate the moral issues. In fact, it could multiply them. Who is going to believe the PCs if they tell the police their employer is creating fake identities for aliens? And if they refuse to do the work, they could be in violation of their parole and go back to jail.

Welcome to the Wild West

“So, Jude Connor done told you he got probed?” asked Sarge. He took a big gulp from his whiskey bottle, and then slammed it down on the table. Marty was leaning against the wall, cigarette hanging from his mouth, shaking his head in disbelief.

“Knew this was gonna happen eventually,” said Mary Jane from the kitchen, where she was frying up pork chops for dinner. “Honey, you sure you don’t want nothing? I got plenty.”

“No, I’m good. I ate before I came over,” I lied. I didn’t want to have the conversation again about why Jews don’t eat pork. Because that conversation always led to questions like “If kosher means it’s been slaughtered in some special way, how come you have kosher pickles?”

“So what that fool tell you?” Marty said as he pulled his cigarette from his mouth.

I explained to them the conversation we had at the hospital about the abduction. I had even seen the medical reports, and there was definitely evidence to support Connor’s claims that he was assaulted, or “probed” as he said.

“Did you check his farm?” asked Sarge.

“The assault didn’t occur at the farm. He was abducted—”

“Boy, that damn fool wasn’t abducted,” said Marty. “He pays for that crap.”

“It’s one of them there fetishes,” added Mary Jane from the kitchen. “Like on that HBO show that comes on late night.”

“I’m sorry, what?” I asked.

Sarge stood up, walked over to me, and slapped me on the shoulder. “Look, I know you trying to do your job and all. And yeah we needed the extra set of hands here so I ain’t mad that Gordon sent you here even if you are some tight-laced city boy. But son, you need to learn the ways of people or you ain’t gonna ever get nothing done.”

“Soon as I heard you were going to the hospital to talk to Jude I knew what happened,” said Marty. “Didn’t I tell ya, Sarge?”

“Yep, you did. Look, son, Jude...Jude ain’t exactly a straight shooter, if you know what I mean. Now I know up there where you come from they got a lot of those guys that go both ways, but around these parts folks don’t tolerate that stuff. So Jude, well, whenever the Twillexians come round with their party ships, he likes to go for a ride. It was just a matter of time before one of those parties got out of hand and he got hurt. Now he is trying to save face by saying he was abducted and probed. But I can tell you, he weren’t abducted, and if there was any probing going on it was mutual.”

I collapsed onto the sofa and dropped by head into my hands.

“Look, after we eat you and me can go out to Juniper and get our hands dirty,” said Marty. “I hear a couple of Noralese punks been picking fights and roughing up folks. Need to remind them of their place. Sound good?”

“Sounds great, Marty. Great.”

Zero Corp

The Wild West never died. It just became Zero Corps.

The Midwest, particularly Texas, have always been favored landing spots for extraterrestrials. Wide open spaces with miles of nothing but prairie dogs and snakes to witness the landings. And even when a human did happen by, for the most part they were friendly folks that had a strange indifference to the fact that a particular new visitor had three eyes or an extra set of arms. Freedom loving individualists that they are, they would rather leave the aliens alone than let the government come in and start investigating. Because you know how the government gets when they investigate something. First they round up the aliens, but then they come for the witnesses.

Half the time, even if the government was informed, by the time the bureaucrats got their heads out of their asses and send an investigator, the aliens were already gone. So then the witnesses were left telling their stories to reporters looking to sell papers and scientists looking to prove the whole thing was a hoax.

For the most part, the aliens never bothered anyone. Well, they did have a bad habit of inviting humans out for drinks and partying. Humans would wake up the next day feeling embarrassed about what they did, and end up making up stories about being “probed” to hide their shame over their own bad behavior. But once in a while an alien renegade would cause some real trouble, or some extraterrestrial criminal would bring his bad behavior to Earth.

So whom do you call when the criminals aren’t human?

For most of the early 20th century, the answer was no one. You handled it yourself. Over time, a few men began to formalize the hunting of rogue aliens, becoming specialized bounty hunters working on the outside of the law. Aliens did not have a constitutional right to anything, as far as they were concerned, and so they could meet out justice as needed. By the 1950’s, these bounty hunters had formed an informal network of connections, sharing information on different species and hunting techniques.

Once the Darcellian Collective learned of these specialized bounty hunters, they became one of the biggest clients. Much of the business was legitimate: intergalactic pirates trying to set up shop on Earth, criminals on the run from justice. But a few were little more than cold-blooded hits, particularly in the late 1950’s when the Forox Corporation tried to establish its own independent ties on Earth.

In 1975, during the height of the First Immigrant Wave, the network consolidated and formed an official private security company, Zero Corp. Recruiting heavily from the returning Vietnam War veterans, Zero Corp handles both mundane security needs and extraterrestrial ones. It uses its mundane business as a cover for its alien hunting, allowing it to operate effectively in a rapidly changing world.

In the 1990’s, there was an argument within Zero Corps as to whether or not to go public with what they knew about aliens. Some argued that humans, particularly Americans since they were dealing with the bulk of the alien crap, had a right to know the truth. Others, however, felt it was best to keep the alien presence secret from others. First, there was a question as to whether or not the average human could handle the truth. Second, revealing the truth would open the way for all sorts of vigilantes and usurpers to move in on their territory. And third, chances are if the truth came out, some bleeding heart in Washington would want to grant all the aliens special rights and protection and put Zero Corps out of business.

Outlook on Aliens: Members of Zero Corp tend to have a low opinion of aliens in general, mostly because they tend to deal with the bottom of the barrel. Sure, maybe some aliens are enlightened and all that, but from their vantage point they aren’t any better than your typical thug. In fact, in most cases they are worst because they think they can come into our backyards and do whatever the hell they want. Sometimes, you gotta put them in their place. Having a spaceship doesn’t make them smart. Hell, Paris Hilton has how many Rolls Royces? And nobody mistakes her for a rocket scientist.

And well, maybe some of them ARE rocket scientists, but that don't mean they have a lick of common sense.

Recruiting Practices: Because Zero Corp is set up in franchises, each local group has its own way of recruiting. Some are run like family businesses, with parents raising their children to understand the truth and learn the skills needed to hunt aliens. Some spontaneously recruit from survivors of rogue alien attacks, offering such individuals a renewed sense of purpose. Others use the internet to identify good candidates, and then slowly begin to reveal the truth to them.

Regardless of the methods, Zero Corp candidates need to be physically in shape. Many Zero Corp members are ex-military who came across aliens at one point or another in their tours, and began digging for information after their superiors told them they were mistaken and gave them early honorary discharges.

Organizational Structure: While Zero Corp has formal corporate offices in New York, Washington, and London, many of its "franchises" still function in the same, cowboy style as the early bounty hunters. Some are run out of members' homes, while others have actual storefronts. In a peculiar way, Zero Corp resembles a medieval fiefdom more than a corporate hierarchy. Each local franchise conducts its business how it sees fit, within rather loose guidelines. However if central office needs people for a large-scale task, local franchises are required to send support. Franchises still maintain the original spirit of mutual support as well; often cross-training each other's members or lending out members if a specific region needs a specialist with a certain type of alien. All franchises take on mundane security and traditional (i.e., non-alien) bounty hunting to cover their real activities.

Unlike GT and Starpoint, just about everyone in Zero Corp understands full well the company's mission. And while most rank and file employees at GT and Starpoint are unaware of Zero Corps, Zero Corps is very aware of them.

PC Career Options: If you are looking to run a shot-em-up, high adventure type campaign, having the players be members of Zero Corp is the way to go. The loose structure of the company allows for just about any sort of style of play, and PCs can spend their time chasing down space pirates, intergalactic criminals, and alien thugs. This is very much an Old West with Laser guns sort of gameplay, but one players can cut loose and have fun with.

The Federal Government

Blame it on short memories. Blame it on the Bureaucracy. Blame it on the Democrats. Or the Republicans. But the fact is that the Federal government as a whole knows very little about aliens. A lot of this goes back to the original Freedom of Information Act. In 1966, the military scrubbed most of its records, or turned them over to General Technologies, to avoid sharing it with the public. As time passed, those that had first hand knowledge of those early records died off, leaving little evidence behind for others to follow.

So who knows what? And why aren't they talking?

The President: Starting with Coolidge, all U.S. presidents have detailed what they knew about aliens in a secret journal that is passed on from administration to administration. The journal includes information on alien species strengths and weaknesses, technology, and the various companies that deal with aliens. In short, the president knows everything.

So why doesn't he tell the world?

The biggest reason is the Freedom Treaty. If the President allows information about aliens to reach the public, it nullifies the treaty. Directly and indirectly, alien technology accounts for a huge chunk of the U.S. Gross National Product. Losing control over that technology would be devastating to the economy. No U.S. President has even contemplated announcing the existence of aliens for specifically this reason.

Each president has had his own personal reasons as well. Some worried left-leaning liberals would want to give aliens special protections. Others worried that the religious right would spasm into apocalyptic fits. Some just felt there wasn't anything wrong with the status quo and chose to leave it alone.

The Secret Service: The Secret Service has two publicly acknowledged missions: protect the president and investigate treasury related issues such as counterfeiting. In 1969, President Richard Nixon gave them a third, shadow responsibility: track aliens. Upon learning of aliens, Nixon became obsessed with space exploration, and felt humans should be able to master space travel. But even as he looked for new ways to quickly integrate alien technology with human ingenuity to get Americans in space, he distrusted the aliens themselves, particularly those of the Collective. Nixon hand picked a small group of Secret Service agents and assigned them the specific job of spying on aliens.

Generally, every president since has had a similar retinue of hand-picked agents for this task, who keep the president briefed on alien activity. But what they learn is not shared with the rest of the Secret Service. The briefings are, however, added to the secret journal to be given to the president's successor.

NASA: Thanks to dozens of GT "specialists" that have infiltrated NASA over the years, NASA knows surprisingly little about aliens. The occasional uncloaked craft that appears on a satellite image is quickly explained away as an odd-shaped asteroid or space junk, and the evidence removed from the general archives.

U.S. Military: The current U.S. military is on the whole oblivious to aliens. In their defense, they have enough Earth-based issues to worry about. GT has a variety of specialists inside the military to tap down reports of aliens in the field, including military psychologists that help soldiers "understand" what they really saw. These specialists in the military are generally aware of Zero Corp, and particularly strong-minded soldiers that can't be made to "re-remember" can be directed to their employment.

FBI: HP Lovecraft once wrote, "The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents." A close second, however, would be the inability of the FBI to

correlate all its contents. If one had the wherewithal and access to fully cull the massive databases and files of the FBI, one would be able to document without question the existence of aliens. Unfortunately, the sheer size of the FBI, along with the notorious issue of departments not sharing information with each other in order to “protect their turf” prevents another from connecting the dots.

The issues with the FBI are manifold. First, there is the problem of GT operatives within the FBI itself. Most of these operatives are not actual FBI agents, however, but janitors, secretaries, and others that theoretically do not have access to classified files but in practice can do impressive damage to paper trails.

Second is the competitive nature of the FBI. Nobody wants to be known as “that guy” who sees aliens, because “that guy” ends up released after multiple psyche evaluations. Or at the very least, sees his chances of advancement limited. So agents tend to rationalize things they might not normally brush aside. A subject with superhuman strength is noted as “under the apparent effects of narcotics.” A subject that dodges bullets becomes “subject evaded attempts at capture.”

Third, the agency is just stretched so thin that nobody has time to worry about filling in the obvious blanks. If resources have to be allocated to investigating a report of a cat with two heads or possible terrorists trying to cross the border, the cat is going to have to wait...and wait...and wait.

Further, much like the employees at Starpoint Immigration, many employees work in such narrow, specialized fields that evidence of aliens often is overlooked or considered a weird anomaly. A lab technician processing a blood sample might dismiss the presence or absence of certain markers as a contaminated sample. Meanwhile, the employee processing fingerprints dismissing the bizarre geometric shapes as a bad print or artificially created. And even the crime scene investigator trying to determine cause of death might conclude that someone was shot by two separate perps based on the trajectory of the bullets, instead of realizing a single perp with two excessively long arms pulled both triggers.

PC Career Options: Certainly, PCs might be a member of various government agencies and stumble upon evidence of alien activity. However, they will find few allies in their own departments, and plenty of enemies to circumvent their investigations. But this option also provides interesting quandaries. Do the PCs press their search for the truth, or take the advice of their superiors and “preserve their careers”? How many toes are they willing to step on to put the pieces of the puzzle together? And who stands to lose if the PCs are successful?

Alien Races

There are thousands of alien races in the cosmos, and almost all of them at one point or another have visited Earth. This section details four of the most prevalent alien races currently found on Earth, but they are by no means the only ones. Storytellers should feel free to create new races to fit their adventures.

When creating new alien species, it is important to keep in mind the goals of your campaign, the setting, and the role the players will have. A campaign involving Zero Corp operatives fighting off vicious alien raiders in the Texas desert may allow more freedom to use truly terrifying alien races than General Technologies associates covering up alien activity in New York City.

Some things to consider when designing alien races:

Why is the alien on Earth?: Aliens are just as varied in their motivations as humans. Why is this specific alien on Earth? What are its goals and motivations? Is it a space tourist? Cosmic Entrepreneur? Intergalactic criminal? Refugee from a war-torn planet? Semi-sentient monstrosity accidentally deposited on Earth? Advanced scout for an invading force?

What does it need to survive?: Most aliens require special nutrients and dietary considerations to survive on Earth. What does the alien eat, and how will it survive on Earth? How does its biological needs impact its mission on the planet?

How well can it remain 'invisible' from humans?: Part of the theme behind *Back in Black* is a shadow world where aliens live among humans without humans knowing the truth. How well does the alien race integrate into human society? Does it appear mostly human and move in the open, or does it have to hide in the shadows to avoid detection?

What about human culture would be "alien" to the alien?: How does the alien think? How does it perceive humans? Does it consider humans lesser creatures or equals? Allies or food? What common things about human culture would be confusing to it? This will color the alien's behavior toward humans.

Darcellians

Darcellia is one of the great superpowers of the universe. Its holdings span over dozens of galaxies and encompass hundreds of planets. For eight millennia, Great House Martaxalor has sat on the Haracta Sheelix, or the Throne of Eternity. Ruled by the Supreme Emperor, the Imperial forces of Darcellia can bow almost any planet in the universe.

Despite their military might, the Darcellians are not a warlike people in the truest sense. They believe themselves the supreme race of the universe, and act accordingly. They prefer to take over a planet in one piece so as to immediately put the planet's resources to work. Only rarely do they decimate an entire population, as such requires repopulating the planet. This is a time consuming process and counter-productive to their goals. If planets can be peacefully annexed into the empire, that is preferable.

Darcellians are analytical, pragmatic, and direct. They rely on intellect, discipline, and their technology to achieve goals.

Appearance and Physiology: Darcellians are short, willowy humanoids with large, bulbous heads, huge round black eyes and lipless mouths. Their skin ranges in color from pale grey to dark green. The typical Darcellian weighs less than 120 lbs. Both males and females are bald and lack body hair. Their hands are slender, and their fingers are exceptionally long. Both genders are androgynous in appearance. Females tend to have narrower but taller foreheads than the males.

They are warm-blooded and breathe oxygen. Darcellian digestion is similar to humans, except their metabolisms cannot process red meat. The typical Darcellian achieves adulthood by the age of 20, and has a lifespan of about 150 years.

Government: The Empire is ruled by the Supreme Emperor, who is always a member of House Martaxalor. The Bacnara Sheelixi, or Eternal Council, are the Emperors' advisors and is comprised of the head of each of the other twelve noble houses of Darcellia. Each noble house is assigned a segment of the empire as his or her Aerarnex, or domain. Each Aerarnex is divided into twelve segments, called Torens, which is assigned to a minor noble house under the authority of the greater noble house.

The Bacnara Horator, or Council of Judgments, is an independent arm of the government that analyzes Imperial law before it goes into effect and reports to the Emperor how the law will impact the empire in actual practice. In some ways, it functions similarly to the Congressional Budget Office, informing the Emperor how much a plan will actually cost to implement and how much of a return on investment can be expected. Often, about 50% of the laws passed through the Bacnara Sheelixi and approved by the Emperor are revised or never finalized after the actual financial costs of implementation are revealed.

The Bacnara Horator has gained in prominence over the last three centuries, as the cost of maintaining fringe planets has strained the resources of the empire. The Empire has liberated some of its fringe holdings to cut costs, and has taken to finding ways to profit from planets without having to actually run them.

The Darcellian Collective is the direct result of this resource juggling. The Emperor has been pleased with the cost/profit results of the experiment on Earth, and supports the hands off approach approved by the Bacnara Horator for handling Earth.

Religion: The Darcellians believe strongly in reincarnation. They believe that at the beginning of the universe, a set number of perfect souls manifested from the chaos of creation. These souls belong to the Darcellians. The Darcellian theory of the soul is complicated. The Darcellians actually believe that they have two souls, their Piquo, or Little Soul, and their Sheelixu, or Eternal Soul. When a Darcellian dies, its soul breaks up into two parts. The Little Soul immediately seeks out a new host. All newborn Darcellians possess a Piquo. The Piquo is believed to carry the lifeforce, and therefore stillbirths are considered the result of no Piquo being available or willing to enter the newborn body.

The Sheelixu remains with the body or, in the case of exceptionally strong souls, becomes attached to a relic. The Sheelixu possesses the sentience of the original Perfect Soul, and strong souls may have their own distinct personalities. The Sheelixu does not leave the body or relic until it has found a suitable host. The Darcellians believe people do not have their full soul until well past adulthood, when they have demonstrated to their ancestors that they are worthy hosts.

Ancestor worship is high among the Darcellians, with fierce competition among families for specific souls to favor certain children. Darcellians know when a person has gained his or her full soul, because there will often be a physical change in the person. A Darcellian with gray skin may suddenly turn light green, or vice versa. There may also be changes in behavior, such as a formerly morose individual suddenly become more spirited, or a previously undisciplined person becoming more responsible. In the case of truly powerful Sheelixu, the person may also gain memories from the previous lives.

The Imperial Crown is a relic that houses the Emperor's Sheelixu. When the Emperor dies, the Sheelixu passes back into the Crown until such time as it can select an heir. Once the heir is chosen, it leaves the Crown and enters the heir's body, which then becomes the new Emperor. The Emperor is the closest the Darcellians have to a God-Figure, and he is revered and even prayed to during times of trouble.

The last century has seen the rise of a heretical cult dubbed the Cult of King James. Followers of the cult believe the God detailed in the Christian Bible is the Supreme Emperor. The belief hinges on a period of Darcellian history known as the Time of Troubles, when the Supreme Emperor had died and two generations of House Martaxalor passed without the Emperor's Sheelixu passing into an heir. The cultists believe at this time the Sheelixu was visiting Earth and sought to raise the primitive people there to a higher purpose. The Emperor has adamantly denied the heresy, and such beliefs are outlawed in the empire. It doesn't stop the cult from growing, however, particularly in light of the fact that while Earth has never been formally conquered, it is still listed as part of the empire (though nobody has informed the residents of

Earth about this!). The cult claims this is proof of the planet's special status with the Emperor. Some scholars have even gone so far as to attempt to match up a timeline between certain Biblical events and cases of temporary delays in the selection of a new Emperor. The fact that there is no significant scientific evidence or hard facts to support their claims has not slowed them down.

Culture: Darcellian Culture is divided into three castes. The nobility is comprised of the Great Houses which rule over the empire. All laws come from the Great Houses. The Chalex, or the Chosen, are the true-blooded Darcellians that are not members of a Great House. The Fortexus, or Select, are non-Darcellians living under Darcellian rule. Only Chalex may sit on the Bacnara Horator or serve in one of the Great Houses. With those exceptions, Fortexus are free to do whatever they want so long as they follow the laws.

The Darcellians have a saying that translates to "What is good for business is good for the empire, and what is good for the empire is good for business." They are pragmatic, analytical, and goal-oriented people with a keen eye on the bottom line. Personal debt is considered the result of poor intellect and poorer planning. Attempting to shirk personal debt is close to treason. Even school aged children are taught the fundamentals of accounting and business so that they can give consideration to what they want to be as adults.

Darcellians are not necessarily greedy. They do not horde wealth or waste it on superficial trinkets. But personal productivity is tied closely to one's ability to give back to the greater community. Wealthy Darcellians fund almost all cultural institutions, such as museums and theatres. Almost all health services are funded by private individuals or privately held collectives. It is a point of pride for many, particularly the nobility, to have hospitals and schools scattered across the universe with their names on them. The government primarily funds infrastructure and defense. The Darcellians themselves do everything else.

Oddly, there is no word for charity in the Darcellian vocabulary. There are, however, fifteen words for opportunity. When Darcellians take over a planet, they immediately round up those that are impoverished or chronically unemployed and put them to work on restructuring projects or other jobs that need to be done. Some view this as slavery. But to the Darcellians, they are providing *achieleva*, an opportunity to rebuild that which is broken, to these individuals. Instead of being placed in orphanages, orphans and other children without parents are placed in apprenticeships for *bacchun*, an opportunity to learn a productive trade. What some would view as child labor, the Darcellians see as providing a child a chance to learn a marketable skill.

Family: The Fortexus maintain whatever family structures and naming conventions they had as part of their former culture, though many adopt the Darcellian ways. A Darcellian's name is comprised of three parts. The first part identifies the *toren* the Darcellian was born in. The second is a family surname. The last is the given name. Among the Chalex, the surname is determined by the father's family name. Among the nobility, the surname is determined by the status of the House. If a member of a lower House marries into a greater House, that person takes the surname of the greater house regardless of gender.

The family unit among the Chalex is comprised of the mother and father and their children. Adult children live at home until they have acquired enough resources to maintain their own homes. Among the nobility, the family unit is comprised of several generations living in the same mansion, with adult children remaining at the estate in the main home or building private quarters on the family estate when they start their own families. Noble estates are often sprawling compounds covering miles of land.

It is not uncommon for a member of the Chalex to marry into a Noble House. Generally in such cases the Chalex's family has achieved some exceptional level of success, or the Chalex has proven a worthy new member of the House.

Romantic love, though not unheard of, is a rare notion among Darcellians. Marriages normally take place based on mutual compatibility and similar business interests. Marriages are treated almost like corporate mergers, with both parties negotiating the terms of the marriage before the formal signing

ceremony. While marriages are strictly between two people, this doesn't mean they are monogamous. Marriage contracts, particularly among the nobility, can often include explicit permissions for either party to have affairs. In practice, Darcellians are too busy professionally to maintain multiple relationships outside of marriage, and in many cases the whole point of getting married is so they don't have to bother wasting time on such things. Divorce is almost unheard of among Darcellians, as it is seen as a personal failure.

Darcellians on Earth: Most Darcellians on Earth work for the Collective in some capacity, or are immediate family of a Collective employee. A growing number of cultists have taken up permanent residency on Earth, convinced that the Emperor really wants them to continue his original plan for the human species. Of course, he has yet to reveal that plan, but they will be ready when he does. There is something of a generational war going on between the Darcellians that came to Earth and the new generation that was born on Earth. The younger generation, learning early the need to adapt to human culture, has embraced much of the American culture as its own. Instead of acquiring wealth for the benefit of the greater community, they seek to accumulate wealth for the sake of wealth. In many, the natural Darcellian inclination to offer opportunity has taken a cruel turn. Rich Darcellian youths may take advantage of poor human peers by having them engage in embarrassing or even dangerous situations in exchange for money. It is a troubling turn of events for the Darcellians.

Creating Darcellian Characters: Despite their appearance, Darcellians can be treated like normal humans for purposes of NPC and PC character creation. Primary attributes will always focus on the Cerebral, and Knowledges will take up much of the character's ability points. Note, however, that their Knowledges will be rather different than a normal human. Natural Sciences, for example, would cover anything from their homeworld, but they would need a specialization (such as Earth lifeforms) to properly apply that ability to situations on Earth.

Kandorians

Originally from the desert planet of Kandor, the Kandorians have a kingdom that spans seven planets. Though they mastered spaceflight early in their civilization, they only began to venture outside of their own solar system in the last four hundred years. Though not particularly known as conquerors, many other races try to avoid regular contact with them. The Kandorians are strict carnivores, and have no qualms about consuming the flesh of sentient beings...even their own relatives.

Appearance and Physiology: Kandorians have a humanoid appearance. They stand between 6 ft to almost 7 ft tall and have muscular, slightly square physiques. Males have dark red to almost black skin tones, while females have more “human” peach or light brown skin tones. They have brown, green, or red eyes. Both genders have very little body hair. They often have pronounced jaw lines that give males a “Neanderthal” appearance.

Kandorians obtain all of their nutritional needs from meat. Though most can tolerate some plant-based products in their meals, some become physical ill if they consume plant-based food. The Kandorian digestive system is so efficient that they use almost 100% of what they eat for energy. What little is not broken down by their digestive system is regurgitated. On their home worlds, this purging would only be needed once a week. Those who live on Earth, however, often have to purge once a day in order to remove non-meat filler and preservatives from their systems.

Kandorians have a lifespan of approximately one hundred twenty years.

Government: Kandor acquired space traveling technology by accident when it was invaded by the Mavicar Empire. When the Mavics were driven off, some of their spacecrafts were left behind. Kandorian scientists reverse engineered the spacecraft. Explorers then decided to put the craft to use and visited the nearby planet of Ravien. Though uninhabited by humanoids, the planet possessed a lush jungle environment with a variety of creatures. The Kandorians settled Ravien as a result and soon expanded to other planets in their solar system.

The Kingdom of Kandor is a democratic monarchy. Every fifty years, the kingdom elects a new monarch. The monarch’s primary duties are to oversee the military, preside over the Senate, and serve as the final arbiter for those subject to the death penalty. The kingdom has a number of restrictions in place insofar as who can campaign for the position. Blood relatives and close in-laws of the outgoing monarch cannot compete in order to prevent imperial dynasties from developing. If the throne had been held by a native of the same planet for two terms, then no candidate from that planet can be considered to make sure all planets in the kingdom are given the same opportunities and are not relegated to a servitor planet. Candidates must pass tests to show their understanding of Kandorian law and have served at least ten years in the military.

Campaigns are conducted through a series of a dozen debates between all of the candidates, which are broadcast across the kingdom. Candidates also publish treatises regarding their opinions on various issues of importance to the kingdom, which are distributed to the libraries and universities on each planet.

Every ten years, each planet also elects five senators to represent it in the Royal Senate, and the election process for Senate seats is similar to that of the monarch, except that Senators may serve multiple terms in office.

It is important to note that in Kandor law, executions and death penalties are not the same thing. If a person is executed for a crime, the body is turned over to the family. With the death penalty, the body is burned to ash. This is a vital distinction to the Kandorians (see Culture).

Religion: Kandorians engage in a form of hero worship. Legendary heroes are believed to ascend to godhood and watch over the Kandorian people, and the virtuous who seek to emulate them serve their patrons in the afterlife. Individuals who have performed extraordinary feats, whether in battle or in intellectual pursuits, can become Ascendants.

The pantheon of Ascendants is not universally accepted. Some are only worshipped on certain planets in the kingdom. Others are only revered by specific cults. Conflicts erupt periodically between factions regarding which Ascendants are “true” and which are frauds. Though the Kandorians have tried over the centuries to adopt more secular ideas, they remain a superstitious lot and see all manner of phenomena as signs from their various patron Ascendants. An earthquake may be interpreted as a sign of an Ascendant’s anger, and even something as mundane as winning a sporting event can be seen as a sign of an Ascendant’s favor.

The Kandorians do not have priests per se. Rather, they have Keepers of the Lore who maintain the histories of the various Ascendants. The Keepers are responsible for protecting all relics and written lore about the Ascendants, preserving the Tern of Lineage (the Ascendant’s family tree, including any living, verifiable descendants, and validating miracles performed in the Ascendant’s name. Keepers tend to be rather stringent in their validation processes, as most feel validating too many alleged miracles diminishes both their credibility and the standing of the Ascendant in question. Instead of working out of temples, Keepers of popular Ascendants are often found working with universities while those of regional or niche Ascendants may work out of privately funded libraries dedicated to their patron.

Culture: Despite their exclusively carnivorous diet, Kandorians are not any more or less warlike than other races. Their diet evolved from the nature of their home planet, where little vegetation grows. In ancient times, Kandorians consumed their dead during particularly harsh seasons when there was little game. It was not uncommon for the elderly or sick to commit ritual suicide in order to provide food for their relatives. During the Mavic Siege, when the Mavicar Empire invaded the planet and poisoned much of the livestock in an effort to starve the Kandorians, the legendary monk Toio Fon ritually sacrificed himself for his clan. According to the Keepers of the Lore that revere Toio Fon, his body mystically regenerated over and over to provide sustenance for the entire clan for three months. The Clan eventually drove off the Mavic invaders. Toio Fon’s cult is one of the oldest and mostly widely respected of the Ascendants.

Even in modern times, Kandorians still eat their dead out of respect for the deceased. Kandorian mysticism claims that the act of consuming the dead liberates the soul from the body so that it can join with the ancestors in the afterlife just as the body joins with the survivors by being eaten. Kandorian funerals involve the family butchering and then cooking the corpse and serving it to friends and family during a feast in honor of the deceased.

The greatest fear for Kandorians is to die in such a way that the body cannot be consumed. If the body is not consumed, the soul cannot pass into the afterlife and is completely destroyed. This is the ultimate death for a Kandorian. Under Kandorian law, even if a criminal is executed for a crime, the body must be turned over to the family for the funeral. In the case of particularly heinous crimes or treason to the kingdom, a judge can issue a Death Sentence instead of an execution. Under a Death Sentence, the body is burned and the ashes scattered on the wind. Because such punishment effectively destroys the soul of the condemned, it is considered “true death” by the Kandorians.

Family: Kandorians are matriarchal due to the nature of Kandorian reproduction. Females are only fertile during specific times over the course of their lifespan. The first cycle occurs between the ages of twenty to twenty five. The second occurs between the ages of thirty five and forty. And the last cycle occurs between the ages of fifty to fifty five. During these periods, the female’s skin becomes warm to the touch and takes on a darker complexion. Hormonal changes also cause a strong breeding instinct to

develop. Kandorian culture works around these cycles to ensure population stability. Most schools and universities, for example, provide child care services for students, while almost all employers grant leave of absences without restriction to female employees during their fertility cycles.

First Marriages are normally arranged by the family Matriarch before the daughter's first cycle to ensure that the first pregnancy comes from "respectable stock" and not hormone-driven opportunity. The husband lives with his wife's family during the first cycle and helps support and care for any children produced from the union. Once the first cycle is over, the couple may either chose to part ways or become life mates if a genuine bond developed between them. If the husband leaves, he has no further obligation to the children and moves back to his own family. Because of the young age of the couple, few First Marriages result in lifelong commitments.

Most women marry again later in life before their second cycle, choosing a spouse based on their own interests. These unions more often result in life marriages. When a couple declare themselves life mates, they move out of the wife's home and establish their own house.

Some women, however, have no interest in life mates and merely seek a husband to reproduce with. These Second Marriages are often marriages of convenience with unmarried business partners who share common interests or male friends that the woman trusts. Some wealthy women "hire" husbands for the task as well, and unemployed young men often find gainful employment offering such "services" to the rich. Once the wife's cycle in completed, the "employment" is over and the couple part ways.

Most men at some point, however, hope to find a lifemate if for no other reason than to ensure that the funerary rites are performed for them. A man who dies without a spouse and children runs the risk of dying without anyone to make sure his corpse is consumed so that he can pass on into the afterlife. Some funeral homes provide insurance policies for such situations, guaranteeing that the deceased will receive a proper funeral feast in the event there is no family available to do so.

Kandorians on Earth: Female Kandorians can normally pass for human by wearing wigs and using cosmetics. Males with black skintones can often pass as being of African descent, and many with red skin will employ skin dyes to replicate the darker human skin color. Many Kandorians on Earth are either employees of General Technologies or employees of intergalactic trade associations that work through GT. They are particularly interested in the food industry and how U.S. food companies create modified versions of animals and plants for consumption. They hope to replicate the technology so that Kandor can be populated with animal species that can survive in the barren environment, thus making the home planet less dependent on its sister planets in the kingdom for food for its ever increasing population. Because of their muscular physiques, quite a few young Kandorian males come to Earth to participate in professional sports, particularly basketball and American football.

Unfortunately, the Cult of Canin Doi has been trying to establish a foothold on Earth. Canin Doi was a warlord on the planet Larccal who attempted to succeed from the Kingdom three hundred years ago. While Kandorians are not shy about eating their dead, Canin Doi took cannibalism to the extreme and attempted to enslave and breed other races for food. Though his worship is outlawed in the Kingdom, his Cult has spread over the centuries by forming alliances with slaver races. Cultists are most active in third-world countries, where they can kidnap and ship victims offworld without detections. But some are also active in developed countries, seeking the thrill of the hunt and looking to recruit like minded, depraved humans into the cult. Zero Corp. recently became aware of the Cult and has been trying to track down its leaders in the United States, but so far the Cult has managed to stay a step ahead.

Creating Kandorian Characters: Kandorian characters do not get the benefit of a Profession. They instead gain the following Powers:

Poison Immunity: Kandorians are immune to animal-based venoms and toxins. This immunity does not extend to plant-based or chemical toxins.

Enhanced Physique: Kandorian characters gain a free attribute point that can be allotted to one of their Physical attributes.

Natural Weapons: Because of the design of their jaws, Kandorians can deliver devastating bites that rip and tear flesh. The bite of a Kandorian deals Strength + 1 lethal damage.

Powerful Built: As per the Basic Power.

Mavics

Once the masters of a mighty empire that spanned over multiple galaxies, The Mavics' own hubris and overreach resulted in the destruction of their homeworld of Mavicar and the dismantling of their kingdom. Mavics now travel the universe selling their services as hired guns or terrorizing trading routes as raiders.

Appearance and physiology: Mavics appear as massive human with animal heads. Some scholars speculate that the Mavics may have been the inspiration for some of the animal-headed deities of the Egyptian pantheon. While there is no surviving evidence, Mavic oral history does speak of ancient heroes named Anubin and Sethos who may have visited Earth thousands of years ago. The majority of Mavics are canine in appearance, but a few clans have more feline features. Most Mavics stand around six feet tall, with females slightly shorter. Skin color ranges from light to dark brown. With the exception of their beastial heads, Mavics appear completely human. Thousands of years of conquest have made the Mavics resilient and capable of surviving in a variety of hostile environments. Mavics have a lifespan of approximately two hundred years, though their violent nature often results in earlier death.

Government: The Mavics were one of the earliest spacefaring races, mastering intergalactic travel a millennia before Darcellia. The technology developed around the same time the first Supreme General, Anonok, unified the planet under his control. Over the centuries, Mavic warships travelled from planet to planet demanding surrender. Those that surrendered were quickly subjugated and forced to work for the glory of the Supreme General. Those that refused were slaughtered and their planets repopulated by Mavic settlers. At one point, the Mavic empire controlled over three hundred planets.

But a series of missteps and tactical errors lead to the Mavics downfall. During the siege of Kandor, the Mavic ground forces found themselves against opponents that could match them in physical combat. Their attempts to starve off the Kandorians by poisoning their livestock failed as well, as the Mavics had not taken into account the fact that Kandorians will eat their own dead. And much to their horror, they discovered that the Kandorian fighters were also eating Mavic dead as well. Mavic beliefs in the afterlife require the body be preserved for a period of ten years before it is cremated so the soul can be judged. By eating the dead, the Kandorians were condemning Mavic souls to damnation. This broke the will of many soldiers who refused to risk suffering the same fate.

After the defeat at Kandor, the military began to experiment with "World-killer" weapons that would allow Mavic to conquer planets without employing ground troops. At the same time, The Mavicar Empire first came in contact with the Darcellian Empire when both kingdoms took an interest in the planet of Twillexu. While the Mavics had superior battle prowess, the Darcellians had technologically superior weaponry. This caused the military to push its researchers harder to produce results faster. Despite researcher reservations, the Supreme General Xarniv ordered a test firing of the weapon.

The results were catastrophic.

The weapon exploded and triggered a seismic shift in the planet's crust. Over a series of weeks, earthquakes, volcanoes, and assorted other disasters devastated Mavicar. These disasters triggered more destruction as other weapon research facilities were destroyed. Some of these facilities stored the toxins Mavicar so often used to poison the water of other planets. Others were experimental laboratories that released chemicals that destroyed the atmosphere of the planet. Within a year, the planet was uninhabitable.

With the destruction of Mavicar (and the deaths of the Supreme General and most of the empire's central leadership) the empire quickly fell apart. Darcellians forces overtook many former Mavic planets, while others rebelled against their oppressors and gained their freedom in the chaos.

In the modern era, the Mavics are a shadow of their former selves. Though they still possess a strong racial loyalty to their own, they have no real organized government to speak of.

Religion: The Mavicar have a huge pantheon of gods that they worship even in their current fragmented state. The Mavicar pantheon is expansive and complex, with hundreds of greater and lesser deities with specific spheres of influence. In the modern era, the pantheon has been divided into the Dreaming Gods and the Protectorate.

The Dreaming Gods represent those deities believed to have gone into hibernation after the destruction of Mavicar and will only awaken when the Mavics have founded a new homeworld. These gods were responsible for what would be called planetary spheres of influence: Avvi (goddess of fishing), Gerd (god of farming), Nomki (god of mining) and dozens of gods are believed to have gone into the Dreaming until such time as the Mavicar offer them a new homeworld to care for. Also among the Dreaming Gods, Omendus, the Supreme God of the Mavicar who anoints the Supreme General as his divine representative to the people. The Great God sleeps until a Mavic of sufficient power, ability, and leadership arises to unite the fractured people once more.

The Protectorate is comprised of those gods that continue to command their spheres of influence. Many were formerly minor deities who have become increasingly important in the modern era: Abreena (goddess of contracts), Roovan (god of engineers), Wasvenshan (god of traveling) are examples of minor deities who now hold places of influence among the Mavicar. Mavics each have a patron deity, depending on their own areas of knowledge and expertise, but also show respect to the other gods. Each Mavic is expected to pray twice a day, once to his or her own personal patron and again by way of reciting the Great Litany, a prayer that thanks each god by name for his or her continued protection.

Some Mavics take a “shortcut” and simply refer to the Dreaming Gods as a single entity. After all, if they are sleeping, they probably don’t hear the Great Litany anyway. This causes a breach with more traditional Mavics, who feel it is important for them to remember even the Dreaming Gods lest they never wake up.

Culture: With the exception of their strict adherence to their religious worship, little remains of Mavic culture. Mavics do what needs to be done to survive until such time as they can claim a new homeworld. All Mavics agree that a new homeworld won’t be settled until Omendus anoints a new Supreme General to lead them, but there is no agreement on what that actually means. Despite their strong sense of racial loyalty to each other, Mavics have become increasingly tribal due to their nomadic nature. The leader of one group isn’t going to just bow to the leader of another because someone decided that leader might be the new Supreme General. Small groups of mercenaries adapt to the cultures of the worlds they do business with. Raiding groups develop their own localized cultures that suit their own needs. The only thing that unites Mavics is a sense of common cause. Mavic mercenaries won’t accept contracts to hunt down their raider brothers and sisters regardless of the atrocities they might perform, and raiders won’t attack vessels protected by their more law-abiding kin to avoid shedding Mavic blood.

The only cultural ritual the Mavics cling to is the Judgment. When a Mavic dies, his body must be preserved for ten years, trapping the soul in the body while the gods confer and pass their judgment. If the body is destroyed or not properly preserved, it is believed the soul will evaporate into nothingness. After the ten years have past, the body is cremated to release the soul. Those that have been judged worthy join the gods in the heavens to live in glory for eternity. Those judged lacking are sent back to be reincarnated for another chance.

Family: Though in the past families were strictly patriarchal in nature, in the modern era family ties have become more a matter of group loyalty than familial obedience. Since the destruction of Mavicar, women have taken on increasingly important roles among surviving bands, with some groups even having

female leaders. The increased influence of women among the Mavics is less to do with any newfound “enlightenment” and more to do with pragmatism. It simply doesn’t make sense to have half the population unable to defend itself in a firefight. And encouraging helplessness among women merely creates easy targets for the Mavics’ enemies.

Children are raised communally in the early years. As they grow older and begin to display their own interests or talents, they enter apprenticeship relationships with adults in the band. Mavics don’t place any special value on blood ties per se. Just because someone is your biological parent doesn’t mean they deserve some special consideration. Breeding is a Mavic duty to secure the race for its future return to glory.

Mavics on Earth: Despite their monstrous appearance, there are a surprising number of Mavics on Earth. Various bands of Mavics have looked to Earth with increased interest, as its environment so closely resembles that of Mavicar. The names of ancient heroes echo through the old mythologies of the humans. Some wonder how easy it might be for a concentrated force to take the planet and claim it for themselves. If only a Supreme General was anointed for the task.

Even with the use of high-end ORDs, it is difficult for a Mavic to pass as human. This has not prevented the Mavics from carving niches for themselves, however. Mavic mercenaries can be found on the private islands of billionaires, serving as deadly security against intruders. They can be found stirring up trouble in the lawless lands of Africa, where the oppressed and superstitious refugees refuse to speak of the half man-half animals that stalk the jungles. Mavic raiders have increasingly moved to take control of diamond mines, working out arrangements with greedy and corrupt politicians and local warlords.

A handful of enterprising Mavics have even begun to build cults around themselves. The feline Bacasta, who operates a cult out of Cairo under the guise of the ancient goddess Bastet, has mastered the art of subterfuge in ways few Mavics can compare. She has slowly built up her cult to have agents in several major Middle Eastern and Eastern European cities. Throughout South America, Africa, and even parts of the United States, these cults slip below the radar of even General Technologies. Currently, these cults appear to be working independently of each other. Should they begin to coordinate efforts, however, the Mavics could rapidly consolidate a frightening amount of power over a short period of time.

Creating Mavic Characters: Mavic characters do not get the benefit of a Profession. They instead gain the following Powers:

Enhanced Physique: Mavic characters gain a free attribute point that can be allotted to one of their Physical attributes.

Fast Healing: As per the Basic Power.

Imposing: As per the Basic Power. Note that this Power has no effect on other Mavics.

Powerful Built: As per the Basic Power.

Twillexians

Contrary to popular opinion, humanity is not the youngest race in the galaxy. The Twillexians are approximately 20,000 years younger than humanity. And what a difference a few millennia make. At their best, the race is treated like precocious but undisciplined children who need constant supervision to channel their creative energy. At their worst, they are considered decadent, depraved deviants who despoil the cultures they infect. The Twillexians, for their part, have trouble understanding all the fuss. All they want is to enjoy the life they were given and help others enjoy life along the way. What could possibly be wrong with that?

The atmosphere of Twillexu contains a unique chemical compound that is essential to Twillexian biology, but has the peculiar effect of elevating the mood of other races. Often called “The Happy Planet” by intergalactic tourists, the entire planet seems to share the race’s desire for pleasure.

Appearance and Physiology: Twillexians range between four and a half feet to around five feet, ten inches tall. They have an androgynous but attractive appearance and pastel skin tones that vary from light blue to pale yellow to pink. Twillexians have minimal body hair except for the thick manes they maintain on their heads. Both genders take a great deal of pride in their hair and often dye it different colors (or multiple colors) or adorn it with various gems, ribbons, and other adornments. Elaborate hairstyles are common in both genders. Twillexians reach maturity at around the age of sixteen and have an average lifespan of around 80 years.

Twillexians are strict vegetarians and can eat almost any type of plant, even those that would be poisonous to other races. They become violently ill, however, if they consume meat or animal-based foods such as dairy or eggs. Twillexians can breathe in any oxygen-rich atmosphere, but require chemical supplements to replicate certain elements of their home world’s atmosphere.

The Twillexian sense of touch is one of the most sensitive of all the known races. They can detect the slightest imperfections or variations in an item by rubbing their fingertips over it. They can even “feel” the energy of others within close proximity to them. Strong emotions trigger changes in the energy patterns surrounding living things, giving the Twillexian a unique insight into that subject’s thought processes. This ability also means that Twillexians are almost biologically opposed to doing harm, because they can feel the fear and pain of other people.

Government: Twillexu is a self-governed planet in the Darcellian empire. The planet actually is comprised of over twenty unique countries, each with its own sub-race. Blue-skinned Twillexians hail from the country of Shavren, while pink-skinned Twillexians call the nation of Haventwel home. The lavender-skinned residents of the Lilvari nation share a continent with the yellow-skinned denizens of the nation of Vulmortane. Each country has its own government structure, though most are democracies or democratic monarchies. Regardless of the government structure, all nations share the common trait of having surprisingly few laws on the books. Most laws focus on infrastructure and logistics. Only a handful involves interaction between individuals. Until the Twillexians began engaging in space travel, they didn’t even have a word in their language for murder. The idea of deliberately killing someone was not fathomable to them.

Religion: Twillexians are duotheistic and worship Twillexu, The Great Mother, and Socca, The Great Light. The planet is actually believed to be the body of the goddess herself. Their mythos often describes her as previously being a planet-sized, living entity that floated through the expanse of space aimlessly. One day, she came within close proximity of Socca (the planet’s sun) and the warmth of the star caused the various spores and seeds she had picked up in her travels to sprout and grow. The growth of all the

vegetation delighted Twillexu. She decided to stay near Socca in order to allow the vegetation to continue to spread across her body. She eventually gave birth to the first Twillexians. The planet possesses dozens of plants that are also found native to other planets, a point the Twillexians indicate proves the truth of their goddess's origin.

Twillexians believe their goddess wants them to be happy, and through their happiness she gains joy. Being happy, in a sense, is the equivalent of having faith in most other religions. Because they believe the planet is also their goddess, they are exceptional stewards of the land and take great care to avoid polluting it.

Culture: Twillexian culture centers on happiness. They revel in both tactile and intellectual stimulation. Music, dancing, arts, sports, sex: anything that brings pleasure is fair game. So long as all participants are consenting and having fun, just about anything is permissible. If everyone is having a good time, very little is off limits. But Twillexians also take joy in their day-to-day work. Solving a complex logistical problem or developing a new technological marvel is just as exciting and entertaining to them as a beach party or an orgy.

Though there are different economic classes on Twillexu just as there are on Earth, concepts of "class envy" or "elitism" aren't really found among the Twillexians. Those that have routinely mingle with the have-nots in all sorts of social situations. And one of the benefits of having wealth is the ability to spread it around so that everyone has a good time.

Twillexian society also places a great emphasis on community care of children. Just as Twillexu takes joy in her children's happiness, the Twillexians place a great deal of importance on happy, healthy children. A crying child will often cause six or seven complete strangers to come running to see what is wrong.

Family: Twillexian family units are generally comprised of the mother and her children. Marriage is a relatively new concept to the Twillexians (as is monogamy, for that matter). Fathers are rarely in the picture, as the mother quite often doesn't know who the father is. Adult males usually live with their mother and help to care for her in her golden years or with their sisters to help care for nieces and nephews. Sometimes male friends will even move in temporarily to help young mothers who are juggling babies and careers. All major corporations have on-site daycare, and smaller employers often band together to provide accommodations for working mothers.

Twillexians on Earth: Twillexians are simultaneously fascinated with and horrified by Earthlings. They have a great affection for humans in general, seeing them as their closest "cousins" in the cosmos. But they are often appalled with how violent humans can be to each other and how viciously they pollute their mother planet. Many see it as their obligation to "teach" humans how to enjoy life without causing pain to others, but such attempts often conflict with human understandings of morality. The Twillexian philosophy is that one can do anything so long as you don't bother or harm anyone else. This puts them at odds with most Earth cultures as a whole.

Twillexians rely on cosmetic and dyes to subdue their pastel complexions while on Earth. Individuals living among humans might hold just about any sort of job so long it was interesting or challenging enough. They can be found in everything from the fashion industry to academia to technology fields.

Much of the race's decadent reputation comes from the party ships. Groups of ten to thirty travel across the planet like an intergalactic circus, stopping in an area just long enough to experience the "local flavor" and maybe help some of the locals lighten up. More than one unsuspecting college co-ed on Spring Break has found themselves waking up the next day with weird, drunken memories of a really "out of this world" party.

Creating Twillexian Characters: Twillexian characters do not get the benefit of a Profession. They instead gain the following Powers:

Charismatic: A Twillexian gets a free point in the Charisma attribute.

Enhanced Empathy: A Twillexian treats her Empathy as two higher when making Discern, Manipulation, and Presence checks. A Twillexian also adds her Empathy ranks to Diplomacy and Leadership checks involving direct interaction with humanoids within ten feet.

Enhanced Senses: The Twillexian's exceptional sense of touch grants a +4 bonus to the following checks: Mechanical Aptitude checks to build, create, or repair an item, Alertness checks that involve tactile interaction (such as detecting someone sneaking up behind you by feeling a vibration in the floorboards), and Discern checks that involve tactile interaction (such as identifying a fake art object by touching it).

Poison Immunity: As per the basic power, however this only applies to plant-based toxins and poisons.

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