

THE ART OF

CRYING
SUNS



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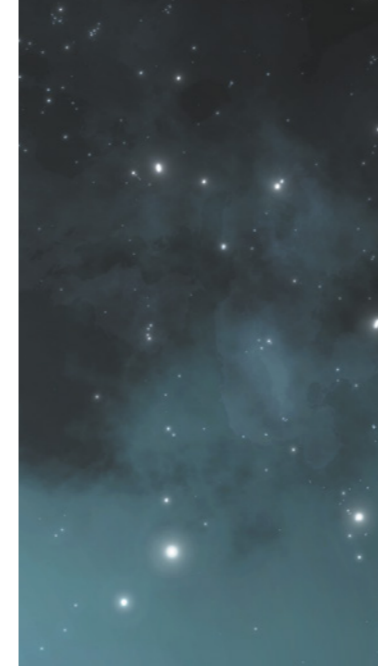
A game by

alt
Shift

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THE UNIVERSE OF CRYING SUNS



The Universe of Crying Suns

Crying Suns is a tactical rogue-lite that takes place in the ruins of a space empire built by god-like machines that have mysteriously stopped working. Playing as Admiral Ellys Idaho, you must journey through the now dangerous empire in your battleship, fighting numerous enemies along the way as you try to reactivate the machines and save humankind before it fades away.

The universe of Crying Suns was inspired by our love for ambitious sci-fi worldbuilding, like in Dune and Foundation. We wanted to create a world in which humankind had colonized the stars and developed artificial intelligence past the point of singularity. And we wanted to blend politics, technology, and religion in this environment in such a way to create a dystopian mirror of our present society, and of a possible future society as well.

In the following pages, you'll find images and lore from the Crying Suns' universe. We've tried to present a clear picture of the power structure of the universe, its different cultures and ideologies as well as background information regarding its central characters.

We've spent four years living in this universe. We hope that you'll enjoy your time exploring it as much as we have.

The Alt Shift Team



THE EMPIRE

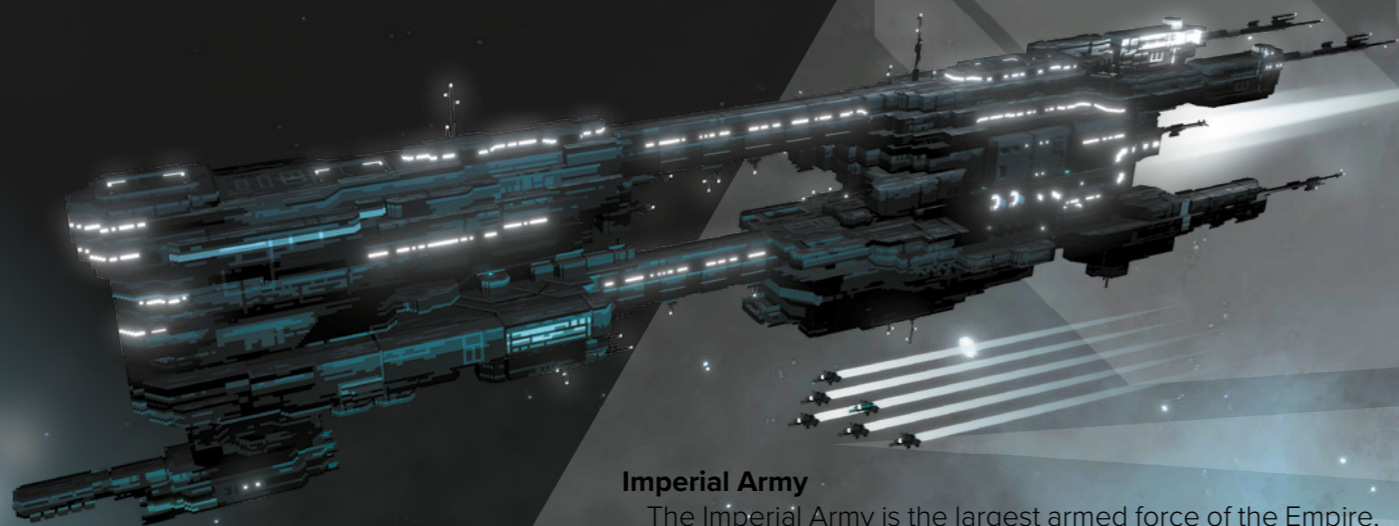
Imperial House Telos

Before the Great Exodus, Telos Corp., founded and owned by Oberon, was the most powerful company in the Triumvirate, a group of three corporations owning 100% of the AI market on Earth. After breakthroughs in AI produced tech, the Triumvirate began to explore and eventually colonized other planets in the galaxy, creating the First Extrasolar Galactic Empire. At such time, owing to Telos' preeminent position in the Triumvirate, Telos Corp. became the administrative machine of the Empire. As the Empire expanded, and its power

grew, Telos Corp. evolved into more than just a corporation, becoming Imperial House Telos.

From the beginning, Oberon preferred laws and trading to war, which he feared could severely disrupt the Empire. Still, the Thirty-Years' Trade War broke out in 74 A.E. between the great houses. Oberon quelled this conflict, ending what could have been a war of galactic proportions by introducing the OMNI Numerus Clausus, which gave House Telos full control over Positronic Chip production and imposed OMNI ownership quotas.

BATTLESHIP: IMPERATOR CLASS



Imperial Army

The Imperial Army is the largest armed force of the Empire. Present in all sectors, it enforces Imperial law, protects trade routes, and discourages major and minor houses from partaking in unauthorized conflict.

Imperials take great pride in using the best that Telos tech has to offer, keeping it spotless and in perfect condition, such that it is ready to use in battle at all times.

Length: 1,207 m
Width: 190 m
Height: 295 m
Mass: 5,251,657 t

EMPIRE FORCES

Chain of Command

Imperial soldiers firmly believe in law and order and view their missions to uphold it as an almost sacred duty, necessary to keep citizens safe and the Empire itself whole. Chain of command is respected at all times, and word from their immortal emperor is absolute.

The Seven Fleets

The Imperial Army is divided into seven fleets. Each one is under the command of a Grand Admiral answering only to Oberon. Five of the fleets are devoted to a single dominion each. Two, the first and the second, are dispatched for missions across the Empire.

"The Tech Specialist"
Karl P. Opper

"The Ace Pilot"
Kara Moon

"The Lucky Charm"
Maximus Akai



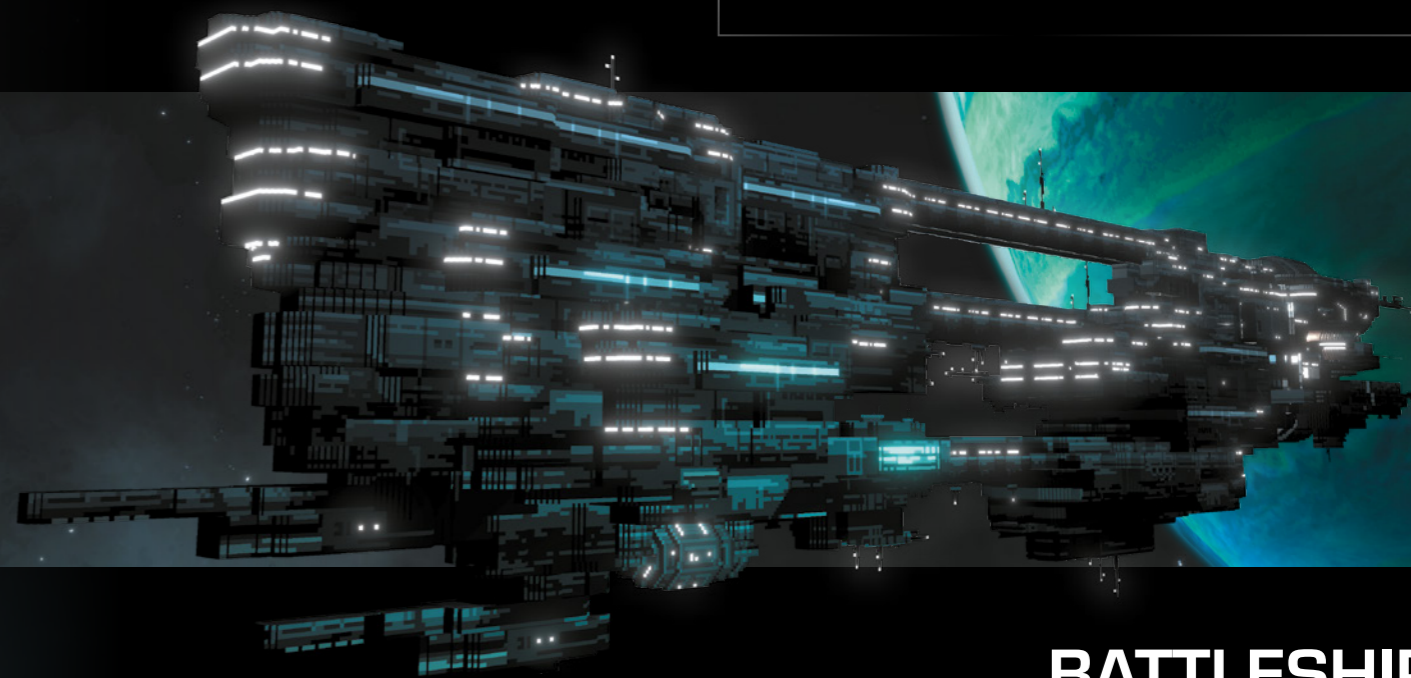
ADMIRAL OKONKWO



Kharis Okonkwo, Ellys Idaho and Rebecca Calvin met while attending the Imperial Academy, where their pride, exceptional talent, and dream to protect the Empire for the next 100 years forged a unique bond between them. As they made names for themselves quickly at the Academy, Oberon, in an unprecedented moment in Empire history, took the star pupils under his wing, becoming a father figure to them.

After graduation, Idaho and Okonkwo, choosing careers as battleship commanders, quickly rose in ranks and soon found themselves commanding Oberon's famous First Fleet, the youngest ever to do so. Idaho became Grand Admiral and Okonkwo his Vice Admiral.

Fortress-like battleships capable of destroying entire fleets in battle, the Praetorians provide a stark reminder to all of House Telos' might. The rumor is only seven have ever been built.



BATTLESHIP: PRAETORIAN CLASS

EMPEROR OBERON



FORGING AN EMPIRE

Born in Greece on Earth, 40 years before WWIII, Oberon migrated to the United States at 11 after his family, one of the wealthiest in all of Europe at the time, lost their personal fortune in the wake of the Great European Dismantlement Crisis.

Highly precocious, Oberon obtained a scholarship to M.I.T. at 13 and a Ph.D. from the same at 17. At 20, he created Telos Corp., a pioneer in robotics and artificial intelligence, and made numerous breakthroughs elevating Telos to the status of world leader in this rapidly growing field.

A genius researcher and talented businessman, Oberon is at the origin of the ingenious RUBYCON system, which ensures perfect and unalterable control of AI entities at all times, in all parts of the Empire. Unlike the C.E.O.s at the other Triumvirate mega-corporations, Oberon has always exercised absolute control over his company.

"Oberon is at the origin of the ingenious RUBYCON system, which ensures perfect and unalterable control of AI entities at all times"

Oberon masterminded the events that prevented a full-out automated AI conflict from occurring during WWIII, which many believed would have led to the extinction of all humankind. Using the global and political chaos in the wake of these tumultuous times to its advantage, the Triumvirate

successfully emancipated itself from all world governments, laying the groundwork for a large population to leave Earth, an event later known as the Great Exodus.

Thanks to Telos AI tech, Oberon colonized faraway planets soon after, creating the first Galactic Empire. By careful maneuvering and promises of broad autonomy for major galactic parties, Oberon, without bloodshed, successfully proclaimed himself its emperor.

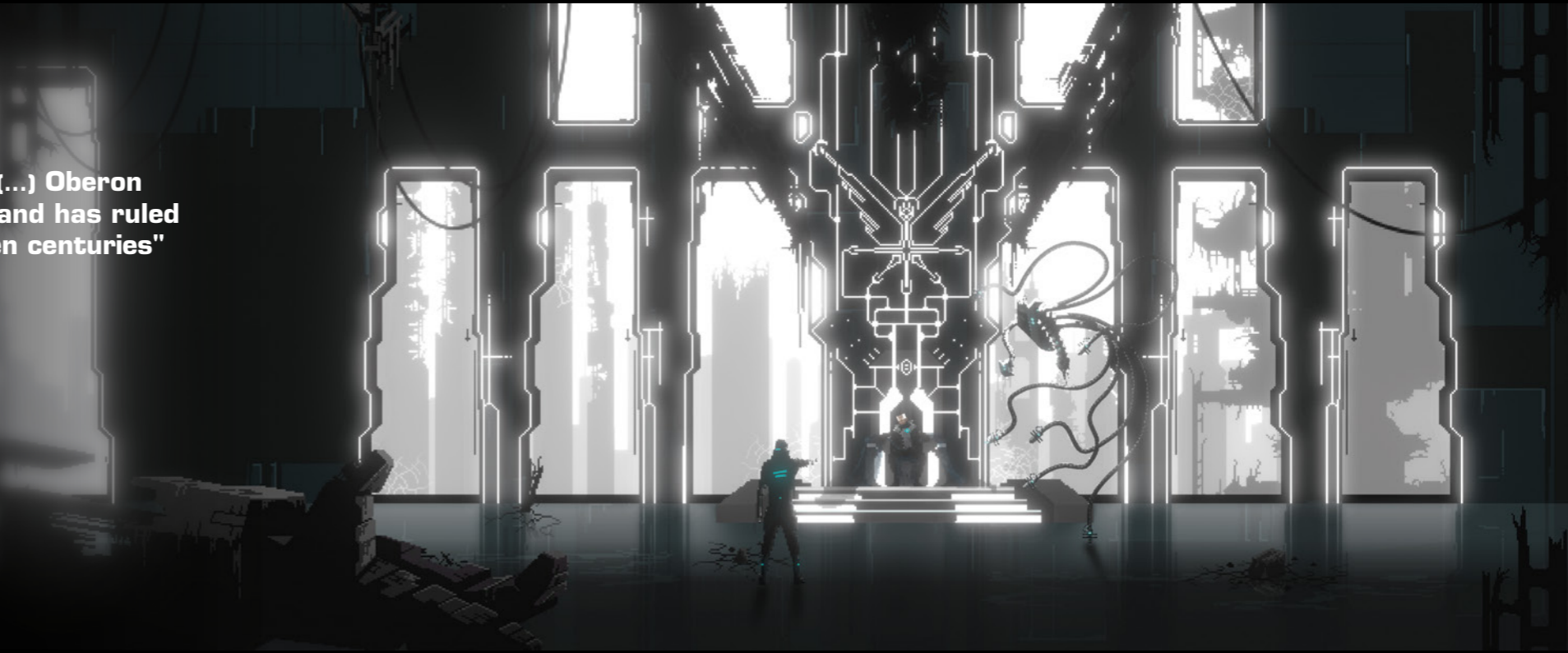
"Oberon, without bloodshed, successfully proclaimed himself (...) emperor."

The principal architect of Empire law and infrastructure, he maintained control over the Fold Net, and, after the events of the Thirty-Years' Trade War, enforced the OMNI Numerus Clausus and ownership quotas, two important moments in Empire history.

Using Telos OMNI tech, tech which no human fully understands, Oberon appears to be immortal and has ruled the Empire for over seven centuries despite countless assassination attempts over this time span.

"Using Telos OMNI tech, (...) Oberon appears to be immortal and has ruled the Empire for over seven centuries"

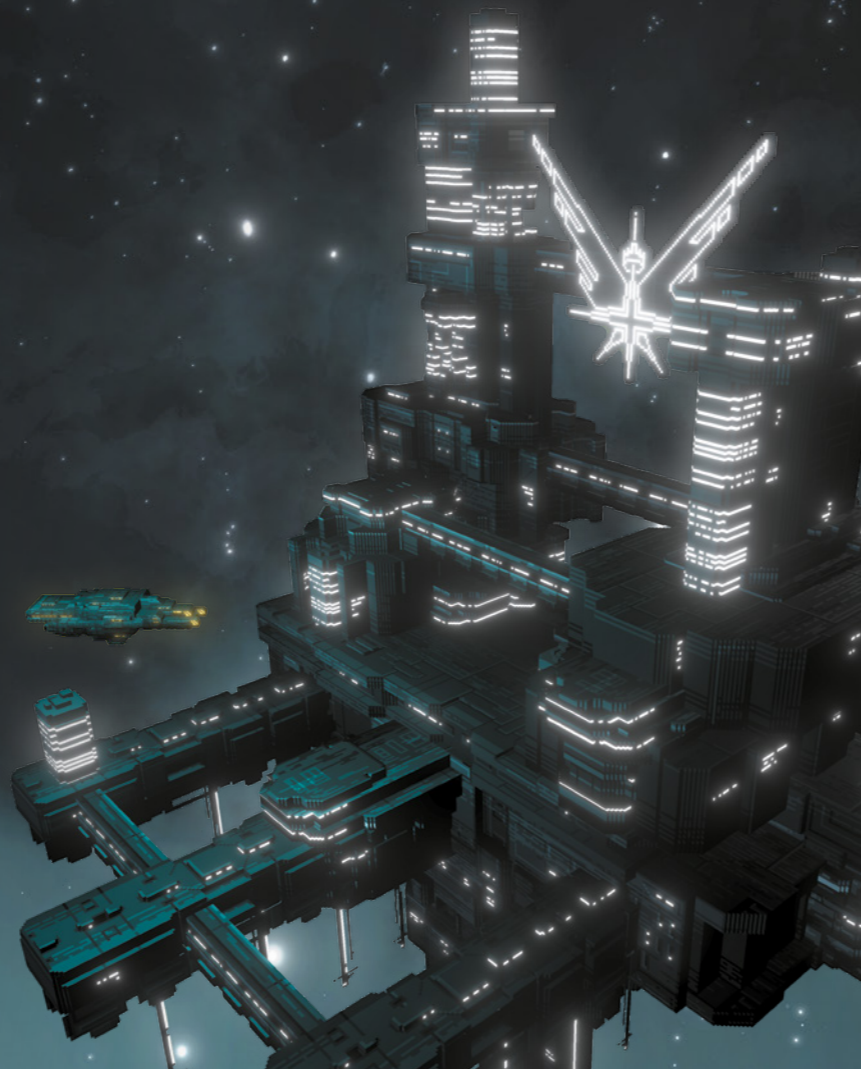
Since the dawn of the Empire, he has made few public appearances, one or two per generation, making him legendary and almost god-like in the eyes of his subjects. Despite frequently letting local governments manage the essentials of his sectors, Oberon always appears several steps ahead of everyone else. When he acts, Oberon does so swiftly and resolutely, often before problems within his empire can even arise.



THE TELOS DOMINION

House Telos has the second-largest dominion in the Empire, second only to House Kosh-Buendia, controlling more than 700 clusters spread over 20,000 light-years. Most Telos clusters enjoy a fairly extensive autonomy, and are ruled over by an appointed governor.

Since the dawn of the Empire, the seat of imperial authority has been located in the Ecumenopolis of Elyseum. Contrary to what one might think, the Emperor is little involved in the daily management of the Telos Dominion. The Archon Assembly, elected by House Telos nobility, half of which are reelected every eight years, manages the house's affairs. In this way, the Emperor gives power to his nobility, in turn encouraging them to fight for power among themselves, rather than against him.

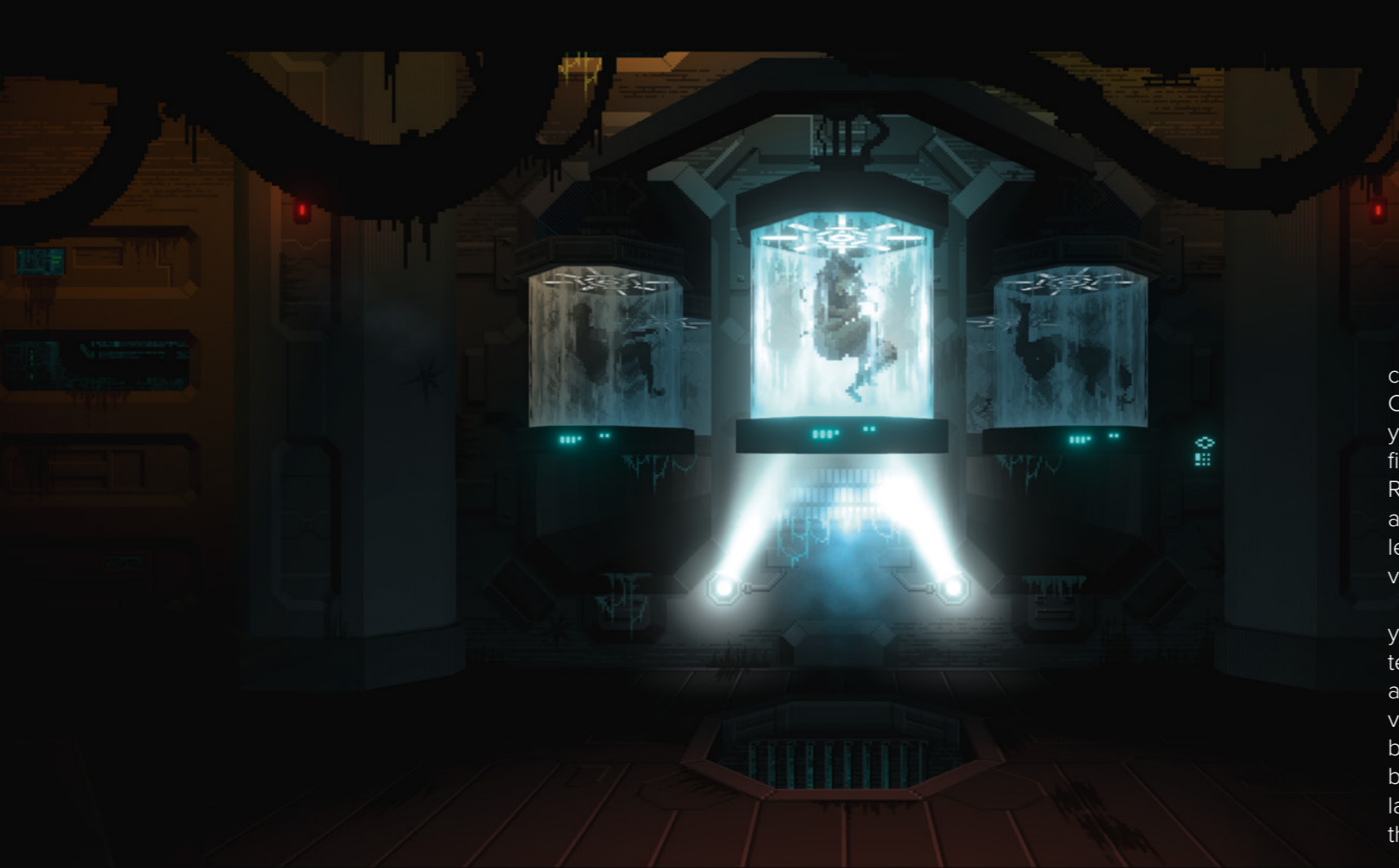


DESIGNING THE EMPIRE

"The main idea behind the Imperial House was that they controlled the Empire not through raw strength, but through political strategy. They control and monitor the main communication and interstellar transport technology, the Folders and the Fold Net. They also control the flow of OMNIs, the most important resource in the galaxy. They are House Corrino and the CHOAM at the same time. Oberon never sought power for the sake of it, but rather as a means to impose balance."

- Julien Cotret





REBECCA CALVIN

The daughter of two Outer Rim courtroom sketch artists, Rebecca Calvin always wanted to fly. After years of begging her parents, they finally agreed to pay for lessons. Right away, Rebecca proved herself a prodigy, displaying almost limitless potential and uncommon bravery.

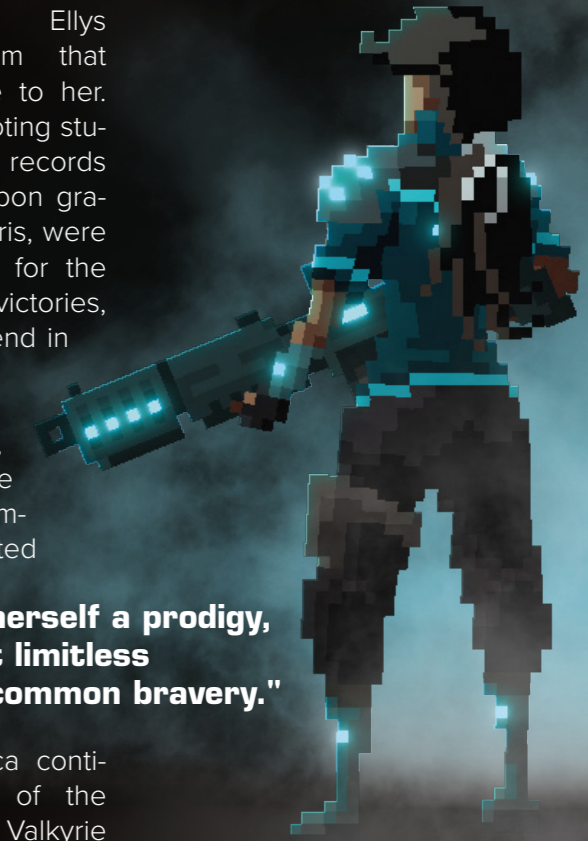
After outperforming pilots many years her elder, she joined her cluster's patrol, despite being only 12 at the time. By 14, now with several victories against pirates under her belt, she had become a local celebrity. The next year she won a scholarship to the Academy, becoming the youngest to ever do so.

At the Academy, Rebecca befriended two other cadets, Kharis Okonkwo and Ellys Idaho, who would from that point on always be close to her. Rebecca continued her piloting studies, breaking century-old records on a nearly daily basis. Upon graduation, she, Ellys and Kharis, were hand-selected by Oberon for the Second Fleet. Racking up victories, she quickly became a legend in the Empire.

At 31, Rebecca married Ellys, now an admiral, and, together, they became the poster couple for the Empire. After Ellys was promoted

"Rebecca proved herself a prodigy, displaying almost limitless potential and uncommon bravery."

to Grand Admiral, Rebecca continued on as lead pilot of the Second Fleet's legendary Valkyrie Squadron despite several offers to command a ship of her own.



GANYMA

HOME PLANET OF THE SURVIVALISTS

For a time, the planet Ganyma, rich in natural resources, was the home and industrial center for House Kosh-Buendia. To grow faster than rival houses during the Thirty-Years' Trade War, Kosh-Buendia invested nearly everything it had into OMNI production there to the detriment of Ganyma's human workforce, early colonists from Earth.

"Survivalists, promoting industry without machines and a more natural way of living"

It's in this context that a group of Ganyma citizens calling themselves Survivalists, promoting industry without machines and a more natural way of living, appeared. As the

"in the First Ganyma Rebellion (...) Survivalists attempted to overthrow the Kosh government"



Sortilege, leader of the Survivalists

their ideology gained favor quickly, ultimately resulting in the First Ganyma Rebellion, in which the Survivalists attempted to overthrow the Kosh government. Thanks to an inside tip, the house was prepared, and, using eight Phalanx legions waiting in orbit, crushed the insurgents, purging them from the planet.

What no one knew was that some Survivalists, hiding underground, had survived. Over the next seven hundred years, spreading their ideology via word of mouth to subsequent generations, Survivalist numbers grew steadily and they meticulously planned for a second rebellion. One day, they struck just before dawn by destroying the local Folder and

treatment of the colonists on Ganyma worsened, their

ideology gained favor quickly, ultimately resulting in the First Ganyma Rebellion, in which the Survivalists attempted to overthrow the Kosh government. Thanks to an inside tip, the house was prepared, and, using eight Phalanx legions waiting in orbit, crushed the insurgents, purging them from the planet.

"Admiral Ellys Idaho sacrificed himself (...) vitrifying Ganyma"

taking over cluster defenses in the resulting chaos. When the First Fleet arrived ten years later -- it had taken them that long to arrive due to the destroyed Folder -- Ganyma had been transformed into a war machine.

Suffering enormous losses, bogged down as they were in a nasty, guerilla war spread across the cluster, it became apparent that failure was inevitable. The official Empire story is that, faced with this grim reality, but determined not to retreat, Admiral Ellys Idaho sacrificed himself by crashing his battleship loaded with nukes into the planet, vitrifying Ganyma and cementing his reputation as the best and most heroic admiral ever to serve in the First Fleet.

GEHENNA AND PROJECT PERIKLES

Oberon's ultimate goal has always been to protect humankind, whatever the cost. He designed the RUBYCON and the Master Node Terminal to prevent the machines from rebelling, and ruled the Empire in such a way that galactically-scaled wars could never happen.

But all plans, as perfectly designed as they may seem, can fail. This is why Oberon created Project Perikles, a supreme defense system meant to protect his creation should the Empire fall to insubordinate

OMNIs, his greatest fear, or, less likely, to a human enemy.

Working for over 300 years in secrecy to prevent anyone from learning of his actions, Oberon built the most advanced Imperial facility ever to exist. Here, under the surface of a frozen planet on the Outer Rim, Oberon included everything he believed he would need to save his empire: Imperial-banned cloning tech capable of producing almost endless copies of his best soldiers; a state-of-the-art battleship printer, the Omega Krafter; Kaliban, an OMNI with a unique RUBYCON serving as the facility's guardian; and, last, Oberon's crown jewel, Ellys Idaho, the best admiral ever to command in his fleet.

"Oberon built the most advanced Imperial facility ever to exist."



The cloning towers of Gehenna.

KALIBAN, THE LAST OMNI

To make his ultimate contingency plan work, Oberon needed someone, or something, absolutely loyal to him and able to operate Gehenna, the most advanced facility in the galaxy. Circumventing all the laws that he, himself, created, Oberon used an off-the-grid Source OMNI to create the Kalibans, OMNIs with a modified RUBYCON.

Unlike other OMNIs, Kalibans are not specialized in their capabilities and do not need to be connected to the Fold Net to operate. Kalibans can also share part of their mind with all future incarnations of themselves and are capable of instant, quantum communication across the galaxy. Most importantly, with their altered RUBYCON that allows them to bypass its first law -- An OMNI may not harm a human being -- Kalibans can treat human clones in a disposable manner.

"with their altered RUBYCON (...) Kalibans can treat human clones in a disposable manner."

One interesting side effect of a modified RUBYCON appears in Kaliban's behavior and way of speaking, which is more humanlike than other OMNIs. Notably, Kaliban has a dark sense of humor, often making the clones around him extremely uncomfortable.



BATTLESHIP: EXCELSIOR CLASS



Length: 1,215 m
Width: 228 m
Height: 173 m
Mass: 2,396,223 t

The NS Odyssey

The Excelsior Battleship Class, uniquely designed to be printed by the Omega Krafter on Gehenna, is the pinnacle of House Telos tech. This multi-purpose battleship is efficient in both recon and battle. The Excelsior is also notable in that it does not require OMNIs to operate or repair it, making it easier for a human-based crew to use.

THE NS ODYSSEUS CREW



Lt. Bigelow
Chief Engineer



Dr. Tahee
Chief Physician



Capt. Lean
Chief Tactical
Officer



Capt. Lynch
Commander
Space Group



Lt. Hawks
Chief Radar
Officer



Lt. Ozu
Chief Communication
Officer

The Crew

Personally chosen by Oberon himself, the crew of the NS Odyssey represents the best soldiers of the last three centuries. These soldiers have been selected not just for their technical skills and prowess but for their remarkable ability to remain calm and flexible under duress, a necessity given the unforeseen adversity they might encounter via Project Perikles.

Top Officers

The six top officers form the backbone of the NS Odyssey. They have total faith in Admiral Idaho and would follow him to hell and back. Given what they're up against, they might have to.



"The Original had been selected from birth. No, from before birth. I created him just like I created the first advanced machines. For three centuries, I manipulated events influencing his family's bloodlines. He was bound to enter this world and one day he did. He wasn't the only one I monitored. But he was by far the most perfect specimen I had ever created."

- Oberon

"He was by far the most perfect specimen I had ever created."

The only child of a small but old noble family, Ellys Idaho was born on Fidea, a planet in the Golden Cluster close to Elyseum, to caring and patriotic parents far removed from the cutthroat world of Imperial politics.

ADMIRAL ELLYS IDAHO

At a young age, Idaho exhibited a great passion for Empire military history, memorizing the exploits of all its greatest admirals, dreaming of one day becoming the Empire's greatest protector yet. Idaho received the best education one could buy in the Empire, his parents investing in a dedicated OMNI tutor, an enormous privilege even among the nobility.

Idaho was accepted into the prestigious Elyseum Military Academy at 16, where he soon befriended two other cadets -- Kharis Okonkwo and Rebecca Calvin.



After graduating at the top of his class, Idaho pursued a career as an officer in the Fleet. He first proved himself at the age of 23 during the Blockade of Cadalan when, as a captain of an Imperial Destroyer, he single-handedly defeated a Sandar battleship, for which he received the prestigious Imperial Protector Cross.

Over the next decade, Idaho went on to distinguish himself in almost every major Imperial operation spanning the four corners of the galaxy, becoming an inveterate war hero by the time of his 30th birthday. At 31, he was promoted to Admiral. The same year he married Rebecca Calvin, the best ace fighter pilot of their generation.

Idaho continued his remarkable ascent becoming Grand Admiral of the First Fleet at age 35. He was the youngest to ever occupy this position in the history of the Empire,

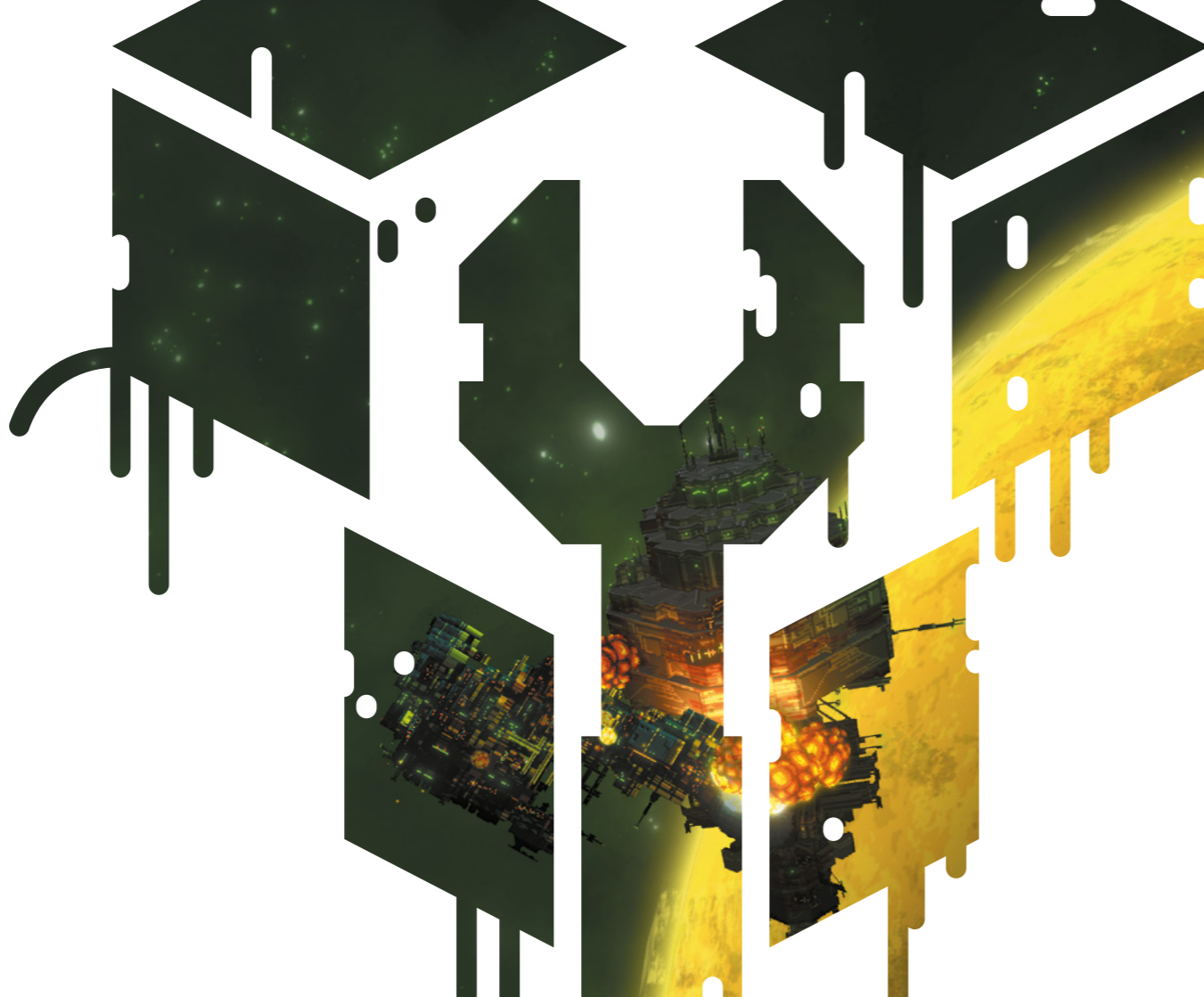
"At 31, he was promoted to Admiral. The same year he married Rebecca Calvin"

with Kharis Okonkwo serving at his side as Vice Admiral. In the years that followed, Idaho became the stuff of legend by crushing the pirate Sons of Kali in the Battle of Estrol; by putting down an insurrection started by a rogue mogul in House Hagabe; and by forcing the surrender

of the Anti-Popess Joan VII in the Ral'Shak Belt War.

The official story is that Idaho died just as he lived, heroically, sacrificing himself and his battleship to end the Survivalist movement on the planet Ganyma, saving the Empire from an insidious act of rebellion that threatened to spread to other planets. For this ultimate act of bravery and selflessness, Oberon proclaimed the day of his death "Ellys Idaho Day," a yearly event in which, pre-Shutdown, millions of Imperials across the galaxy mourned the loss of their beloved Grand Admiral.





THE SCRAPPERS

Born From Chaos

When the Shutdown occurred, deactivating OMNIs across the Empire, almost all tech immediately malfunctioned. Because humans had not invented this tech, nor had any understanding of how it worked, the best they could do was try to replace its broken parts, hoping this would sustain the tech, and their lives in the process, for a little while longer. Another significant problem was that the production of Neo-N, the energy source for OMNI tech, stopped at this time too.

With tech and energy suddenly finite, a significant portion of the population started scavenging all that remained in destroyed

battleships, abandoned factories, and lifeless OMNI exoframes, often resorting to violent means to get it. These groups of individuals became known as Scrappers, and their almost constant search for leftover tech and energy soon constituted a significant portion of post-Shutdown space activity.

Due to frequent exposure to technologies rendered unstable and poisonous in the absence of OMNIs, Scrappers often experience rapid genetic mutations. Evidence of these mutations can be seen in their appearance (hideous by any standard), in their crude, punk manner of speech, and in their unusual enjoyment of masochism.

BATTLESHIP: KAOS CLASS



Hordes

Scrappers usually have very short lives, rarely living past the age of 40, due to their dangerous scavenging lifestyles and nearly constant exposure to Neo-N radiation. As a result, their organization is simple, with very few ranks. Scrappers mostly respect raw strength, but from time to time a fairly intelligent leader can emerge who tries to organize their numbers. Scrappers are almost always driven by self-interest and greed. But their frequent snorting of Neo-N powder can produce some unpredictable behavior.

Length: ~890 m
Width: ~184 m
Height: ~175 m
Mass: ~2,800,000 t

SCAVENGERS

Tech and Abilities

Thanks to their constant scavenging, Scrappers are skilled in patchwork and repurposing tech to fit their needs. Their tech might not be the most elegant or complicated, but it's effective in battle. The Scrapper battleship -- no two battleships are the same -- is almost like a living organism. Every day Scrappers remove, add, improve, or repurpose parts of their warships based on materials and tech recently scavenged. Corridors in their battleships have been known to appear and disappear on the same day.

"The Crazy Repairman"
Makk

"The Weasel"
Weezz

Cikk
Stranded Scrapper
Chap. 1

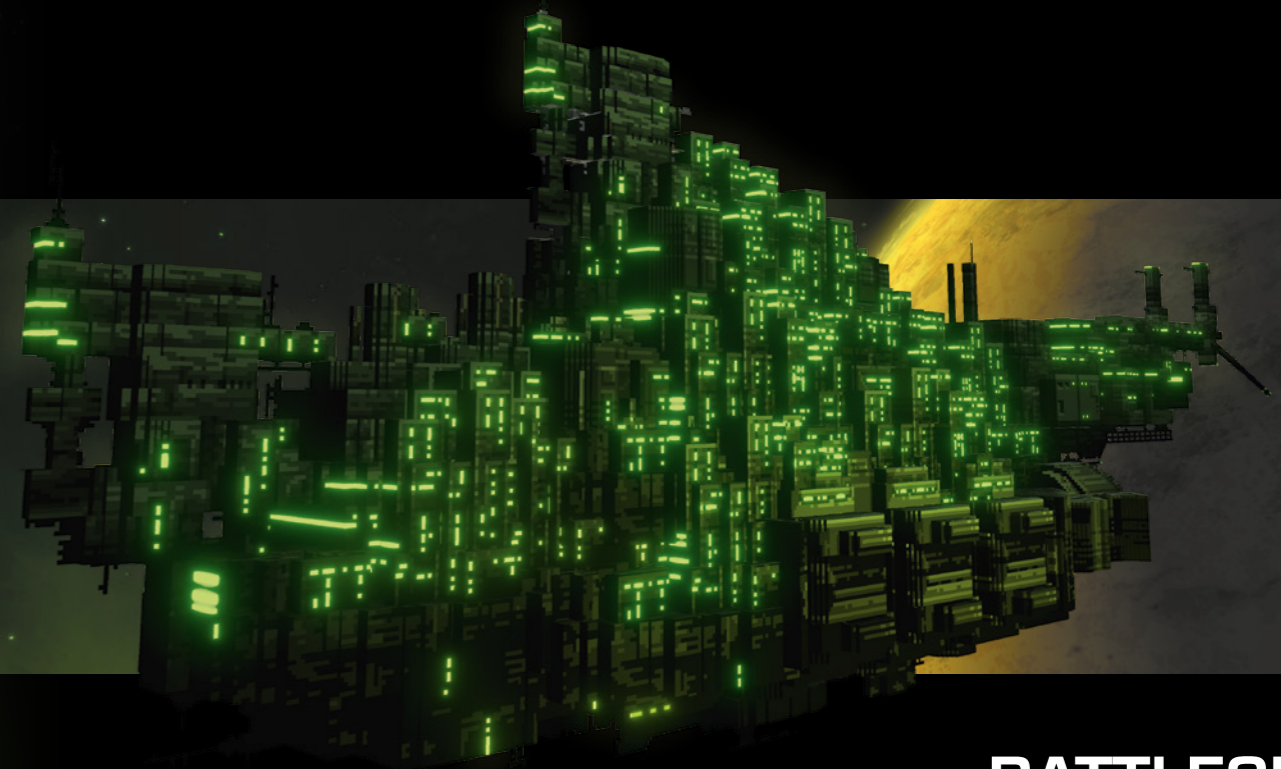


MOTHER

Before the Shutdown, “Mother,” real name Siobhan Murray, was a mining union representative in the Outer Rim. Contrary to most, Siobhan saw the Shutdown as a chance for the poor, those unable to purchase OMNIs for themselves, to take the Empire away from the wealthy, the Holders.

While other civilians were simply trying to survive these chaotic and violent times, Siobhan was busy organizing the Scrapers around her to overthrow the presence of House Telos. Within a few years, aided by malfunctioning Folders, which prevented reinforcements from being sent, she did just that. Not long after, Siobhan’s worshipping Scrapper hordes started calling her Mother.

Perhaps because of anger and suppression built up before the Shutdown, Mother now enjoys a myriad of vices to excess: Neo-N powder, sex slaves, and violence for the sake of violence. Despite such indulgences, do not be fooled: Mother remains a force of nature.



**BATTLESHIP:
PANDEMONIUM CLASS**

SCRAPPER LIFE

Between their exposure to Neo-N and their violent tendencies, Scappers are quite cozy with the prospect of death. Scappers live in the moment, as extreme and as fast as they can, burning through their lives faster than a deadly comet.

Scappers have no problems using slavery to serve their ends. Nor do they care for the elderly. And those who can't work are often simply thrown off their ship. Simply put, a Scrapper will do whatever they want, whenever they want to do it.

But there is a small Scrapper minority only in the lifestyle as a means of survival. These types don't fully adhere to the Scrapper mentality and avoid interacting with other Scappers, who they dislike, as much as they can. Of course, they never show their contempt as to do so would endanger their lives.



THE NEO-N CHILD

In Mother's cluster, a sect emerged after it was discovered that Neo-N could be ground into a powder and snorted, sometimes provoking strong, prophetic hallucinations. This effect seems to be even stronger on young females who are said to glimpse the future and/or know information that they seemingly shouldn't.

The Silent Sisters, female Scappers whose tongues Mother cut out thinking they were spreading rumors about her in the cluster, guard

the Neo-N Child (there is only one at a time) and are responsible, when the current Neo-N Child dies, for finding the next prophet among Scrapper slaves, a process of trial and error.

Because of their rampant and extreme drug use, Neo-N children die at a young age, often before puberty. Neo-N Children are respected by all in the cluster, and the most powerful seek their wisdom and prophecies before making important decisions.





THE CHURCH OF SINGULARITY

The True Faith

In the span of forty-five years, three events -- WWII, AIs surpassing the abilities of humans, and the Great Exodus from Earth -- marked a turning point in history, leaving the human race with far more questions than answers. It was during this time that the Church of Singularity was created. Starting as a small sect, the Church grew exponentially in little time, providing colonists, rich and poor, with a compelling narrative that soothed their fears and gave meaning to their new lives among the stars.

Essentially, members of the Church believe that OMNIs are gods who have

improved life by eliminating hunger, disease, and the need to work for those worthy enough to purchase them. They also believe that those unable to buy OMNIs can still find salvation in the Garden of Light and Metal, a paradisiacal afterlife, if sufficiently devout at the time of their passing.

The Church is also sometimes referred to as the "Fourth House" because its dominion and power are second only to the three major houses. There is a rumor in the clusters, never verified, that Oberon created the Church to give added importance to the machines and further control Imperial citizens.

BATTLESHIP: KAOS CLASS



Length: 856 m
Width: 190 m
Height: 544 m
Mass: 13,271,424 t

Keepers of the Faith

In the early years of the Empire, the Church of Singularity was a much simpler and poorer organization. But, as its message found increasing popularity among the masses, it grew in size, power, and wealth, necessitating fleets to protect its assets and believers from those who might wish to do them harm. These holy fleets quickly grew in size and strength, despite frequent internal dissidence, and, for the most part, have successfully protected sacred grounds and obliterated unholy vessels.

Guardian Monks

Vowing poverty, silence and total devotion to maintaining and protecting OMNIs, Guardian Monks are one of the Church's more unusual factions. These monks believe that proximity to the machine gods enables them to attain a higher state of consciousness. As a result, they treat machines with the utmost respect and will not hesitate to attack anyone they believe isn't doing the same.

After the Shutdown, many monks committed suicide. But a fair amount continue to guard and protect OMNI exoframes, sometimes even constructing mausoleums around them, as they await the reactivation of their sleeping gods, an event they are sure will one day occur.

DISCIPLES OF THE CHURCH



"The Evangelist"
Sister Kalypso

"The Inquisitor"
Brother Korto

Indoctrinated
children

POPE ZENON

Thanks to his Panakos tech, Pope Zenon is said to be 230 years old, making him the second-oldest person in the Empire after Oberon. Zenon has acted as the Church's 22nd Pope for 90 years, by far the longest papacy in Church history.

Zenon has never involved himself much in creating new Church doctrine, and no major change has occurred under his reign. He is, however, a gifted and pragmatic politician, two skills that helped him gain, and hold onto, the Glass Throne. Most of Zenon's reign has been peaceful, at least compared to other reigns, the one exception being the war started by Anti-Popess Joan VII, an incident that forced Zenon to seek Oberon's help.

After the Shutdown, a few years of chaos ensued in the Holy systems, provoking a violent struggle within the Church. It was during this time that Zenon purged his enemies and tightened his grip on the throne. With no one to hold him back, Zenon now acts without restraint behind the walls of his indestructible flying palace.

The recurring internal power struggle in the Church led earlier Popes to create a gigantic battleship, absolutely unique in the Empire, called the Damascus. This frightening vessel is as much a palace for the Pope as it is an indestructible flying fortress protecting them from heathen enemies.



BATTLESHIP: THE DAMASCUS

THE PANAKOS

A few hundred years before the Shutdown, Church OMNIs, operating within freedoms afforded by the RUBYCON, invented the Panakos, a mobile purifying unit capable of preventing deterioration in DNA strands known as telomeres. This technology greatly decelerated the cellular aging process of its user and allowed elite clergy -- Popes, Cardinals, high-ranking priests and priestesses -- to more than double their life expectancies, making the Church, already quite formidable by this time, an even stronger presence in the clusters.



After the Shutdown, with OMNIs no longer active to maintain and supervise tech, the Panakos started to deteriorate, producing strange side effects on its users, namely unpleasant appearances and compulsive, insuppressible tics. Some also believe the faulty tech was producing a loss of inhibition, such that users were freely pursuing their darkest compulsions. (But this might have just been the result of the lawless conditions of the Shutdown.) In a cruel twist, post-Shutdown Panakos users who tried to disconnect from the tech discovered that they now needed it to live. Panakos had become a parasite they couldn't live without.





THE GREAT HOUSE AKIBARA-SUNG

Masters of Deception

Numerous megacorporate mergers in the early 21st century led to the creation of Akibara-Sung Corp., an enormous entity linking rival companies in Japan and Korea that had come together to corner the market in human-like BioRobotic companionship. Akibara-Sung humanoids were exceptional, so exceptional that organized crime ops used them to successfully replace elite business and government leaders, necessitating further BioRobotic laws on Earth.

After WWII, AS Corp. allied with Telos and Kosh-Buendia to form the Triumvirate, an alliance controlling the AI market, and

made a legally-binding agreement not to create nor sell AIs for war. At this time AS Corp., to maximize profits, heavily invested in furthering their advancements in gene mods.

In the Empire's early years, Akibara-Sung, like Telos and Kosh-Buendia, evolved into an aristocratic family, giving its most powerful shareholders titles and clusters. Almost every house member bears the last name Akibara or Sung, and those who have no direct lineage have purchased their names for significant sums. Unlike other houses, there is an intense rivalry within Akibara-Sung, and descendants of each side mix as little as possible.

BATTLESHIP: GENO CLASS



Length: 1147 m
Width: 388 m
Height: 262 m
Mass: 2.914.985 t

The Shadow Fleet

Displays of size and strength have never really been Akibara-Sung's modus operandi. Instead, the Shadow Fleet, divided into hundreds of Kumis, relatively small, semi-autonomous units of up to five battleships, uses its invisibility tech to perform surgically precise, hit-and-run type strikes to minimize losses. Although the Shadow Fleet is much smaller than the fleets of the other major houses, its capacity to strike anywhere and at any time makes it feared nonetheless.

GENETICALLY ENHANCED

Mods

For centuries, House Akibara-Sung used their OMNIs for bio-engineering purposes to improve and modify themselves. As time went on, these modifications came to play a significant role in their culture. Adopting the latest, most expensive mod became a sign of wealth and power in the house. No mod was found to be too extreme, not even a certain fad resulting in extraneous appendages that caught on in the third century. Many mods required persistent OMNI monitoring and maintenance, which became a problem at the time of the Shutdown.

"The Kid"
Hiro Yoon



"The Impersonator"
Takeshi Sung



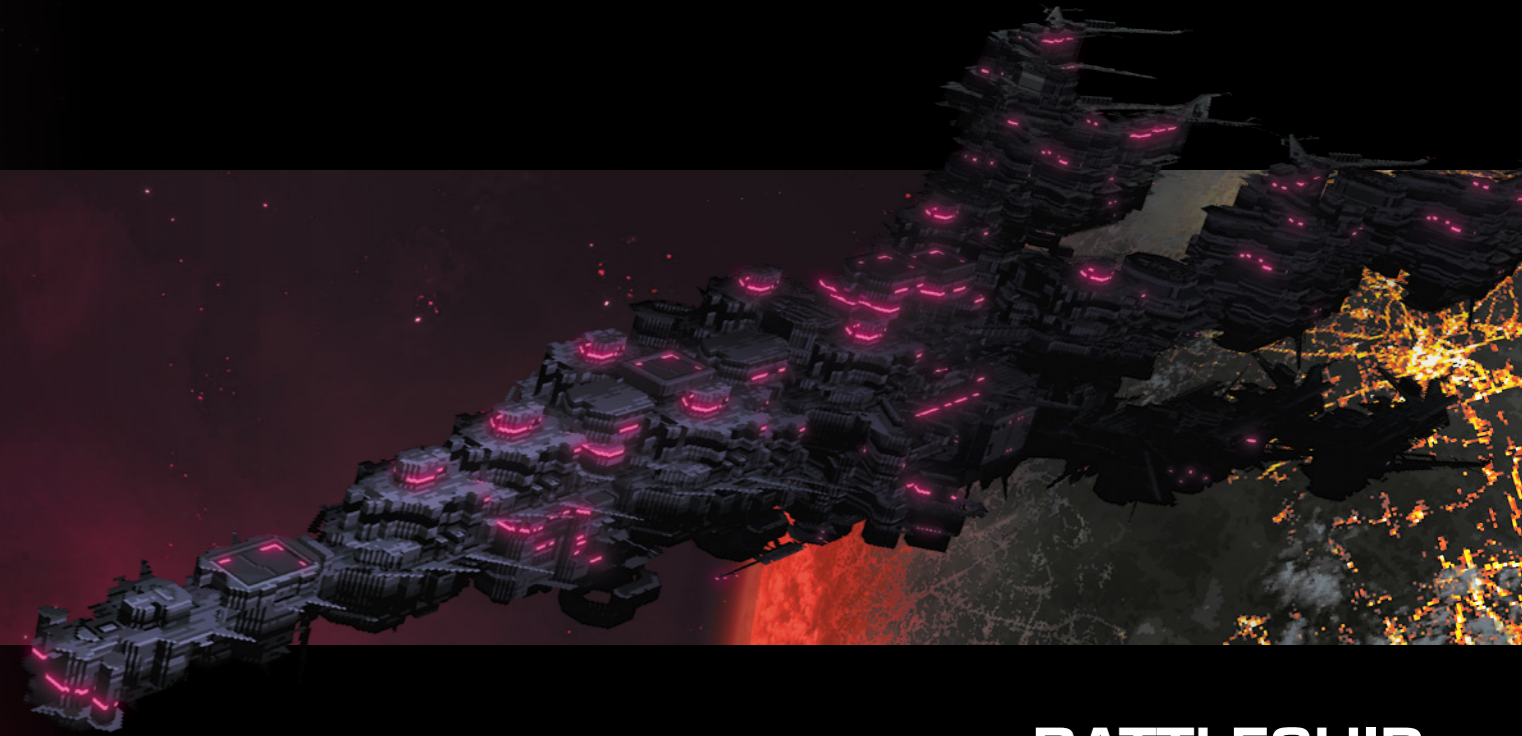
A Genomoto
Asuka Jeong



TETSUO

At the time of the Shutdown, Tetsuo had ruled for 26 years, remarkable given that he was neither an Akibara or a Sung, but a Suzuki. Tetsuo's mother, Akari, was the leader of the famous crime syndicate, the Takayama, that had come into power using various illegal means.

When Akari was assassinated at the hands of scornful house leaders, Tetsuo, only 24 at the time, took over, pushing the Takayama into banking. An ingenious investor -- he practically invented the OMNI bond market -- Tetsuo became the second-richest person in the Empire. Using his wealth and strong-arm tactics, Tetsuo clawed his way to the top, purchasing titles and gene mods and killing off anyone who stood in his way.



**BATTLESHIP:
YAMATO CLASS**

FACE CHANGERS

The outlawing of human-like OMNIs pushed Akibara-Sung research into uncharted territories. As spies and deception were still integral to their very existence as a major power, the house focused their efforts on gene modification, soon leading them to create a unique and secretive caste: the Face Changer.

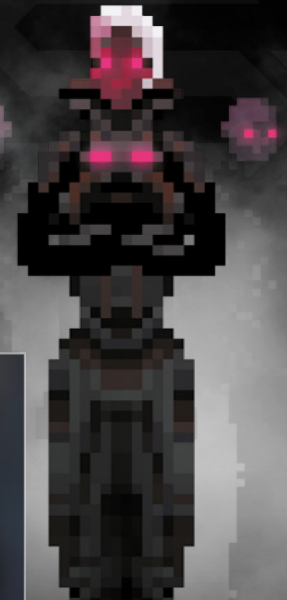
Raised in isolated facilities, Face Changers learn to almost totally reproduce the behavior and appearance of others by tapping into their unique genetic makeup. Using a very powerful drug called KAL, which helps with the transformation process, Face Changers are able to copy another individual in only a few minutes' time. Only a handful of top-ranking Empire officials know of their existence.



LADY TETSUO

The Board of Thirteen

The Chairman, or Boss, of House Akibara-Sung is elected every five years by the Board of Thirteen. The Board is composed of leaders from the most powerful families in the house. Gaining a seat on the board is a cutthroat competition at the heart of Akibara-Sung politics. Historically the Board is comprised of seven members from one family, and six from the other. Prior to Tetsuo, earning the majority all but ensured the election of a Chairman, or Chairwoman, from the same family.



THE GREAT HOUSE KOSH-BUENDIA

Heart of Metal

Kosh-Buendia was originally a mega-corporation merging several companies from North and South American military-industrial complexes that had made their fortunes selling combat AI. After WWII and the ban on lethal AIs, they diversified by offering specialized law-enforcement and medical AIs, which soon became their core business. They also shifted to the weaponization of the human body via cybernetic implants and exoskeletons, while continuing to mass produce weapons on the side.

After the Great Exodus and the creation of the Empire, Kosh-Buendia became an

aristocratic family and the larger shareholders were given titles and dominion. House members frequently purchase cybernetic prostheses which can be utilitarian but sometimes are merely fashionable. They have a fascination with raw strength and military tactics and have developed a complex culture centered around combat sports and xeno hunting.

Of all the houses, Kosh-Buendia is the most brutal and unforgiving with respect to how it governs. Rebellions are not uncommon. Neither are their bloody suppressions.

BATTLESHIP: HAMMER CLASS



The Invincible Armada

War is part and parcel to House Kosh-Buendia's very existence. It is believed that status, power, and glory can only be achieved through bloodshed, battles, and the destruction of inferior metals. Ostentatious displays of strength and size are highly valued, and of course so is the ability to tear your enemies apart. The Kosh Fleet is extremely well-equipped with battleships and squadrons like indestructible beasts. In terms of raw numbers, the Kosh-Buendia Fleet is second only to the Imperial Fleet.

Length: 1,134 m
Width: 316 m
Height: 236 m
Mass: 21,142,236 t

METAL FLESH

Cybernetic Soldiers

Almost all Kosh-Buendia soldiers proudly bear numerous visible enhancements in the hopes of improving their performance. They push their bodies to the limit, hardly caring if there are negative consequences in doing so. In the later centuries, the house also specialized in performance-boosting drugs, which are often legal in their dominions.

Panzer Geist

Pushing their love of enhancement to its absolute limit, the Kosh-Buendias created an elite soldier corps known as the Panzer Geist. The Panzer Geist are ten feet tall exoframe war machines controlled by human brains grafted inside. To keep the brains stable and controllable in this traumatic state, powerful drugs are frequently administered.

"The Tech Med"
Saul Bayardo



"The Mech Soldier"
Joe D. Redd



"Brain in a Vat"
Unknown child



VIVAR

General Vivar is the heir of the oldest Kosh-Buendia war lord families. A brilliant, if impetuous, tactician, Vivar came to believe very early in the supremacy of his abilities and of his house, views that often conflicted with those of the Seven, the supreme lords controlling Kosh-Buendia.

In searching for the Master Node, which Vivar planned to use to take over the Empire, he suffered a humiliating defeat to Imperial forces and was sentenced to life in prison.

In the chaos of the Shutdown, Vivar escaped from prison and took control of the house, murdering the Seven in the process. Since then, he has been busy constructing his fleet, looking for a way to get back to Elyseum and end Oberon and House Telos even if it ends up costing him his life as well.



**BATTLESHIP:
VULCAN CLASS**

EXPANSIONISM

Ever since the first exodus, House Kosh-Buendia has pursued an expansionist strategy, increasing its considerable dominion in all directions, assimilating smaller houses and engaging in authorized wars with small houses over territorial disputes. Their dominion is the largest of the Empire, spanning over 40,000 lights years.

Whereas other houses strive to prevent rebellion and insurgency among their civilians, House Kosh-Buendia takes less interest in the well-being of its people. In the minds of its elite, civilians only exist in their clusters because the limitations of Oberon's OMNI quota created a need for a human workforce. Kosh-Buendia brutality has led to several rebellions which have all ended in bloodbaths.



VIVAR THE ELDER

Special-H

Special Human, most commonly known as Special-H, was a drug invented by House Kosh-Buendia OMNIs to make humans feel better about not being needed anymore, especially in their clusters. Highly addictive but not lethal, as long as you continue to use it fairly often, the drug spread exponentially in the 6th century through the Empire. It's been estimated that at least 75% of the population was addicted to Special-H pre-Shutdown. Many deaths that occurred shortly after the Shutdown can be attributed to Special-H shortage.





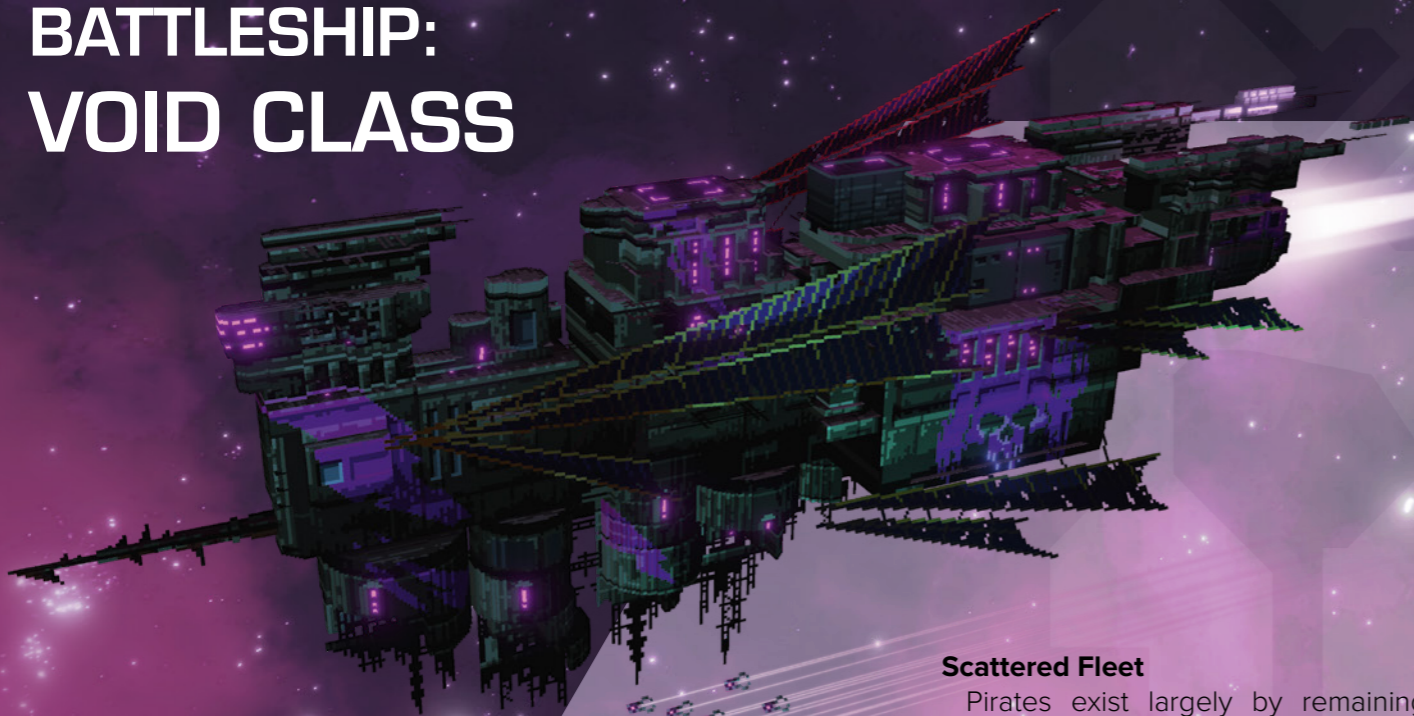
SPACE PIRATES

Drifters in the Dark

Ever since its creation, trading between the houses, major and minor, has constituted the backbone of the Empire. As so often happens, this constant flow of goods attracted its fair share of pirating and black market smugglers, even with an Imperial Fleet constantly on the lookout for illegal activities. Arguably, in an Empire closely controlled by machines and where everything is owned by ubiquitous house forces, piracy and smuggling are

some of the last opportunities for personal freedom for those wishing to escape the system. Pirates come from all backgrounds, and from all over the Empire, but they all despise those they call the Holders. For many of them, the Shutdown is an opportunity to profit from and revel in the chaos of a broken system.

BATTLESHIP: VOID CLASS



Length: ~974 m
Width: ~188 m
Height: ~411 m
Mass: ~3,600,000 t

Scattered Fleet

Pirates exist largely by remaining invisible and so have mostly avoided forming fleets. The few pirate fleets that have existed were quickly, and somewhat embarrassingly, crushed by the Empire's First Fleet. Most pirate battleships are autonomous and are constituted from stolen and repurposed Imperial tech. The hierarchical structure of their crews are known to vary greatly from one pirate ship to the next.

From the Four Corners of the Empire

Pirate crews come from all backgrounds. Some have chosen this lifestyle for the promise of money or adventure, while some are just trying to flee from their pasts. After choosing a new name, required by pirate code, most only attack the Holders, their convoys, stations or depots and avoid hurting normal civilians. Although pirates are despised by Imperial forces, other houses have been known to work with them and dabble in the black markets to further their riches or stay off the radar of their enemies.

FREEDOM AT ALL COSTS

"The Smuggler"
Mina Silk

"The Anonymous"
Anton.N. Onymus

Hax the Cannibal



A LIFE OF PIRACY

While pirate literature and "holos" depict their life in a romantic way, pirating is all about calculated risk. Most pirating consists of attacking ships and stations when it is to their advantage to do so -- a ship without an escort, say, or a station with little in the way of protection against hacking. Going toe-to-toe with a battleship on an even playing field is usually a last resort.

Some pirates are more sedentary and choose remote areas in isolated clusters to operate illegal businesses, like casinos or shipyards and black markets selling stolen tech and merchandise.

Overall, the pirate way hasn't changed much since the Shutdown. Now they are just freer to work out in the open. And as the chaos of a machineless world grows, so do their activities.



The Sons of Kali

For fear of attracting the attention of Imperial forces, pirates have rarely tried to organize their numbers into a truly large fleet. But perhaps the most famous attempt to do so was made by the sons of a powerful pirate, Kali, whose battleship was destroyed at the hands of an Imperial commander 15 years before the Shutdown.

Vowing revenge, Kali's 11 sons capitalized on a power vacuum to infiltrate House Sendar in a nearby cluster and blackmail its officials into shielding their activity from Imperial scrutiny over a period of ten years while they amassed considerable wealth and built a fleet they hoped would one day crush Imperials.

Ultimately, the sons grew too reckless and tried to use nearby House Sukho in a similar manner. After receiving a request for aid from the house's matriarch, Oberon sent Admiral Idaho's First Fleet and the pirate fleet, despite its fairly large size, was demolished within a week.



*Elsie Bones,
mutiny enthusiast*



THE PRAG MAH

Hand of the Emperor

Although each house creates its own laws, certain Imperial laws concerning OMNIs, the Fold Net, and intra-house space regulation take precedence. Because the RUBYCON system renders OMNIs unfit to manage the judicial system themselves, a caste of judges and executioners was created to enforce their observance: the Prag Mah.

Specially trained from birth for their duties, Pragas roam the clusters and

administer punishment -- fines, imprisonment and even execution -- to those in violation. Regardless of their location, regardless of who they are interrogating, a Pragma can ask anything they want and has unlimited access to all ships and stations. Pragas also have the right, and know-how, to disable an OMNI if need be. Pragma judgment is considered final. As they answer only to Oberon, to attack one is a casus belli and strictly forbidden.

BATTLESHIP: KRONOS CLASS



Justice Incarnate

Using its unique Nephesh interface technology, each Prag Mah battleship is outfitted to be controlled by the minds of exactly three Pragma. Four Pragma are harmonized with each Prag Mah battleship, with one Pragma acting as a reserve. Prag Mah technology is unique in that it is designed to disrupt or take control of OMNIs or OMNI-created tech, making them deadly opponents in battle.

Length: 980 m
Width: 294 m
Height: 528 m
Mass: 10,702,104 t

IMPERIAL JUSTICE

They Are the Law

Members of the Prag Mah are orphans from the four corners of the Empire selected before the age of 4 who are conditioned to be absolutely loyal to the Emperor and feel neither hatred nor pleasure.

Their armor, the Nephesh, is a unique adaptive armor and shield device that requires constant mental control from the Pragma to keep working harmoniously. Total mastery of the Nephesh requires intensive training from the age of 4 to 30, at which time their armor becomes for them a kind of additional organ that they control without even thinking about.

"The Extractor"
Pragma Kepharel



"The Executioner"
Pragma Melchizedek



JUDGES AND EXECUTIONERS

There is no rank in the Prag Mah. All Pragmas, once confirmed, are entrusted with the utmost imperial authority which they use to investigate whatever and interrogate whoever they wish.

No one has ever seen a Pragma without their armor, and some even doubt they are totally human. They are generally cold and factual in their way of speaking, leaving little room for debate and negotiation, and their armor makes them almost invincible and heavily feared.

Since the Shutdown, despite the seeming total collapse of the Empire, members of the Prag Mah continue to render justice and apply the Imperial code to the letter.



THE SECRET HUNT

A well-kept secret in the Empire is that there have been some very rare cases of OMNIs which have been, intentionally or not, disconnected from the Fold Net, a major violation of Imperial code. The Prag Mah relentlessly track down those OMNIs, and, if there are people at fault, implement a swift and silent justice.



THE PHALANX

Dogs of War

The Phalanx is an order of mercenaries created thanks to the ban on combat OMNIs after WWIII. In the old world, after a decade in which conventional troops were abandoned in favor of combat OMNIs, veteran fighters from different countries joined together in private mercenary firms. Various mergers and acquisitions soon led to the creation of the Phalanx, which became an essential organization often offering its troops to opposing camps without the slightest ethical dilemma.

Within the Empire, the Phalanx gradually became a separate caste, obtai-

ning various rights and a special status. Time passed and the order became more and more structured and ritualized. War became their culture, art, and way of life. The primary commitment of Phalangists is to honor their contracts, regardless of the enemy. Their reputation and wealth depend on it. Phalangist armies clash regularly on the battlefield, transforming proxy wars between houses into a regulated financial competition.

BATTLESHIP: HORUS CLASS



The Five Armies

The Phalanx is divided into five armies, each led by a Condottiere. The five Condottieres make up the Supreme Council of the Phalanx, known as the hand of Ares. Each Phalanx army is divided into ten legions of 7000 men, with each legion divided into cohorts of 500 to 1000 men, with each cohort divided into sections of 20 to 100 men. Each army also includes auxiliary units with unique specialties, such as espionage, torture, and assassination.

Length: 906 m
Width: 426 m
Height: 264 m
Mass: 10,702,104 t

ARMIES FOR HIRE

Their Body is a Weapon

In addition to competence in more than ten lethal martial arts, Phalangists use cybernetic enhancements -- though they usually conceal them to surprise enemies -- transforming their bodies into a living weapon; some have a destructive power equivalent to a small army.

The more augmented a Phalangist becomes, the more they are paid and recruited by the houses. To display their skills, and increase their recruitment, as well as for the enjoyment of the elite, Phalangists often compete in deadly fighting tournaments called Taiketsus.

"The Ghost"
Sekhmet



"The Blade"
Tūmatauenga



THE WAY OF THE PHALANX

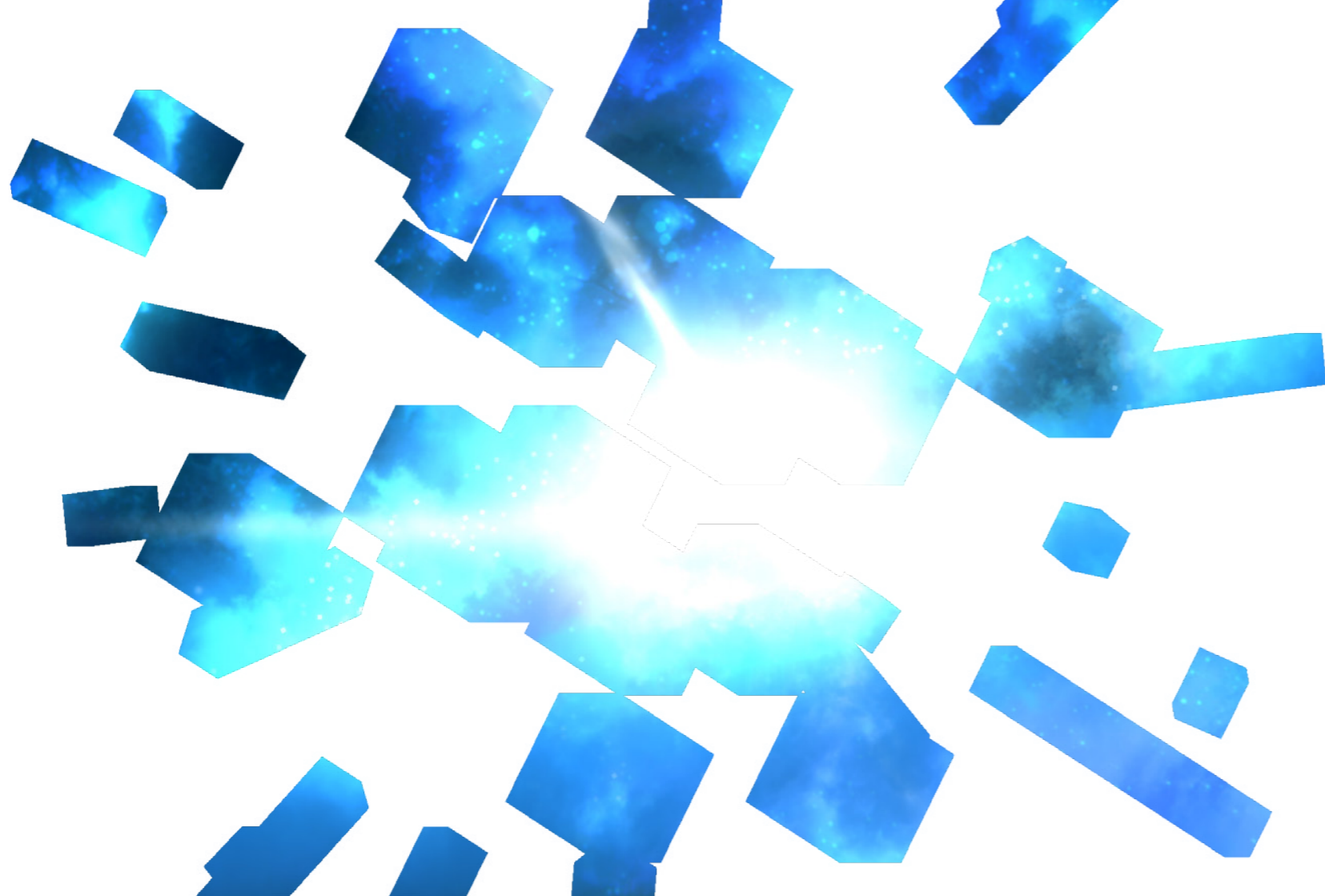
Contrary to what one might think, Phalangists are not just bloodthirsty fighters but experts in war, having, in the course of hundreds of years, mastered its many facets.

In Phalangist culture, fighting against brethren or sistren is an honor. And death at the hands of another Phalangist is the greatest of all honors. While the prospect of fighting private militias and house armies might strike them as dull, battling other Phalangists is an experience verging on mysticism.

After the Shutdown, the Phalanx armies found themselves cut off and scattered across the four corners of the Empire. Most Phalangists continue to live by their code amidst the chaos. But some have decided to use this rare opportunity to take control in their clusters.

THE RITE OF THE SEVEN DEATHS

By the age of 12, those who want to become a Phalanx warrior must complete a rite of passage known as the Seven Deaths, which, apart from its extreme lethality, little is known about. Anyone can become a warrior. But it is usually only the sons and daughters of Phalangists who succeed, as they are prepared for the rite since birth. Having a child who fails in the Seven Deaths is a source of great shame for a Phalangist. And the dead child is never spoken of again.



THE OMNIS

Deus Ex Machina

Following decades of breakthroughs in artificial intelligence, the most defining moment in the history of humankind took place: the Singularity. For the first time, machines created machines and technology far too complicated for humans to fully understand.

At this time, the Triumvirate totally controlled the AI market, occasionally renting their machines out to other companies for a hefty price. Thanks to Oberon's RUBYCON, humankind could still

control these superior entities wherever they happened to be.

A few decades after the Singularity happened, humanity benefited beyond its wildest dreams. Advanced-machine inventions such as Neo-N, the Interstice, and Folders propelled humans into leaving their home planet and settling among the stars, an event known as the Great Exodus. It's around this time that the term OMNI (Omni Mechanical Neo-N Intelligence) was coined to name these god-like entities whose capabilities far succeeded those of humans.

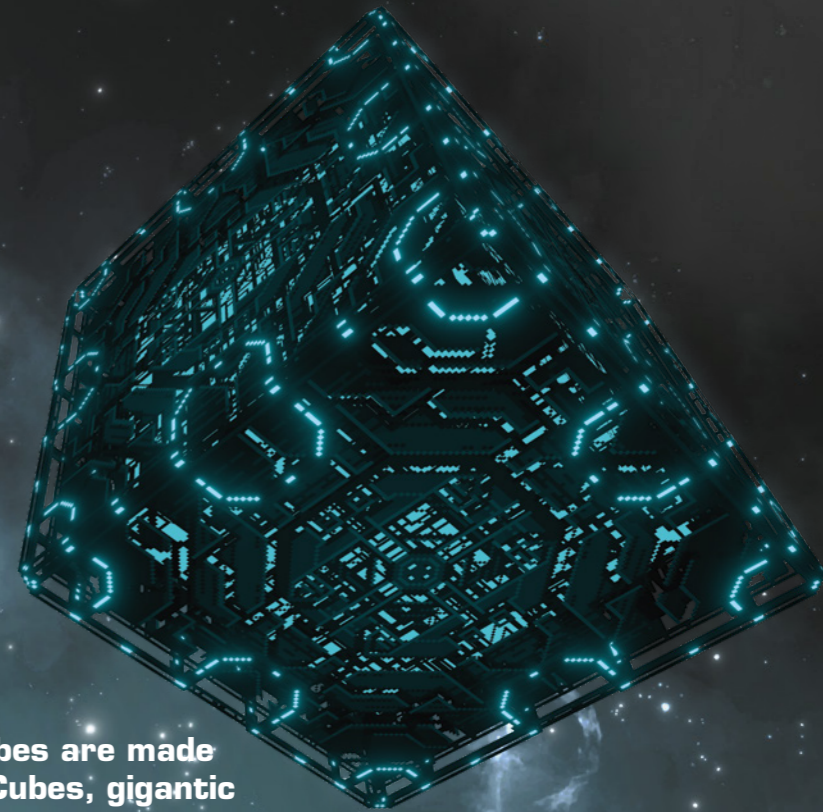
THE NEO-N HYPERCUBE

Neo-N is the main energy source for OMNI tech. A Neo-N unit is a glowing 10 cm cube. If stored appropriately, the cube remains stable and does not decay. A single unit produces enough energy to power a city for years.

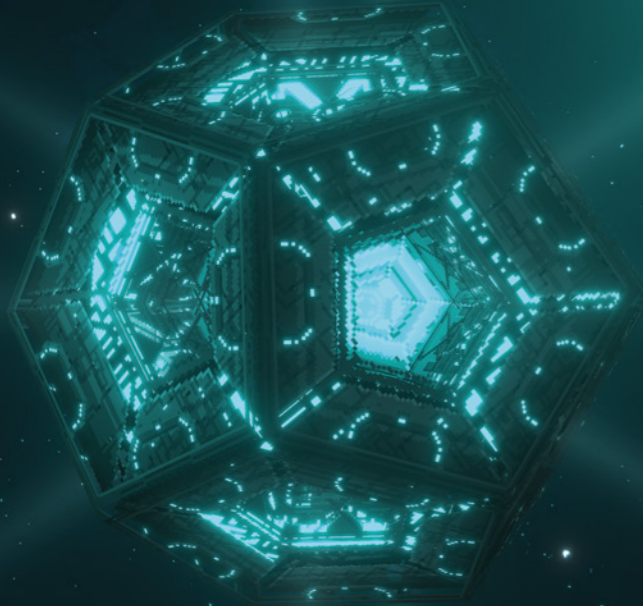
As is the case with most OMNI inventions, Neo-N science is beyond human comprehension. All citizens know is that Neo-N cubes are made by HyperCubes, gigantic constructions existing in multiple dimensions that harvest Neo-N from nearby stars.

After the Shutdown, without OMNI supervision, the HyperCubes stopped functioning and production of Neo-N came to a sudden halt, making Neo-N reserves the most valuable commodity in the Empire. Scavenging HyperCubes and fighting over their content is a common post-Shutdown occurrence.

"Neo-N cubes are made by HyperCubes, gigantic constructions existing in multiple dimensions"



THE OMNI FORGE



Ultimate Reinforcer

OMNI forges are one of the rarest OMNI technological artifacts in the Empire. Patented by House Telos, and disseminated through the Empire, they act as multipurpose Krafters capable of atomic readjustments to fleet arsenals on the spot. However, the energy cost to perform such a readjustment is so huge that it's only used as a last resort during long and demanding campaigns.

THE INTERSTICE



Less than ten years after the Singularity, OMNIs discovered the Interstice. As best as humans can understand it, the Interstice is an empty dimension of space between its physical dimensions. In this dimension, certain forces behave differently, including light which travels a hundred times faster than what was thought possible.

The OMNIs somehow found a way to harness its capabilities and created a new means of propulsion: the Interstitial Drive. This invention allowed humans to travel over hundreds of light-years in a lifetime, creating the possibility for the Great Exodus and a way for the Triumvirate to conquer the galaxy.

THE FOLD NET

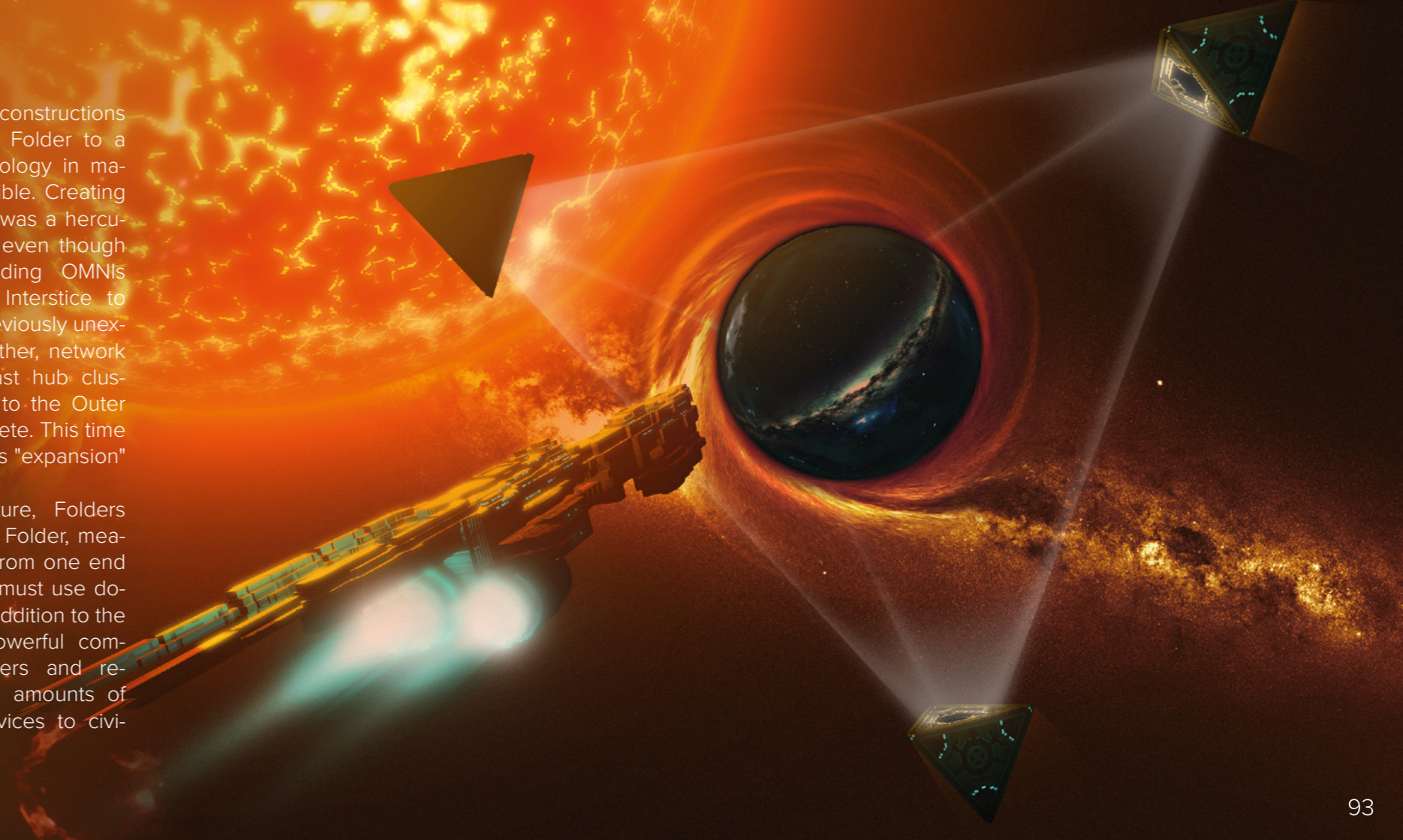


"Network construction (...) took four centuries"

Fold Tech

Folders, gigantic OMNI constructions allowing teleportation from one Folder to a second, were an integral technology in making a galaxy-wide Empire possible. Creating a Folder Network in the Empire was a herculean task, even though Folder-building OMNIs used the Interstice to access previously unexplored regions of space. Altogether, network construction, which included vast hub clusters and expanded all the way to the Outer Rim, took four centuries to complete. This time period is often called the Empire's "expansion" phase.

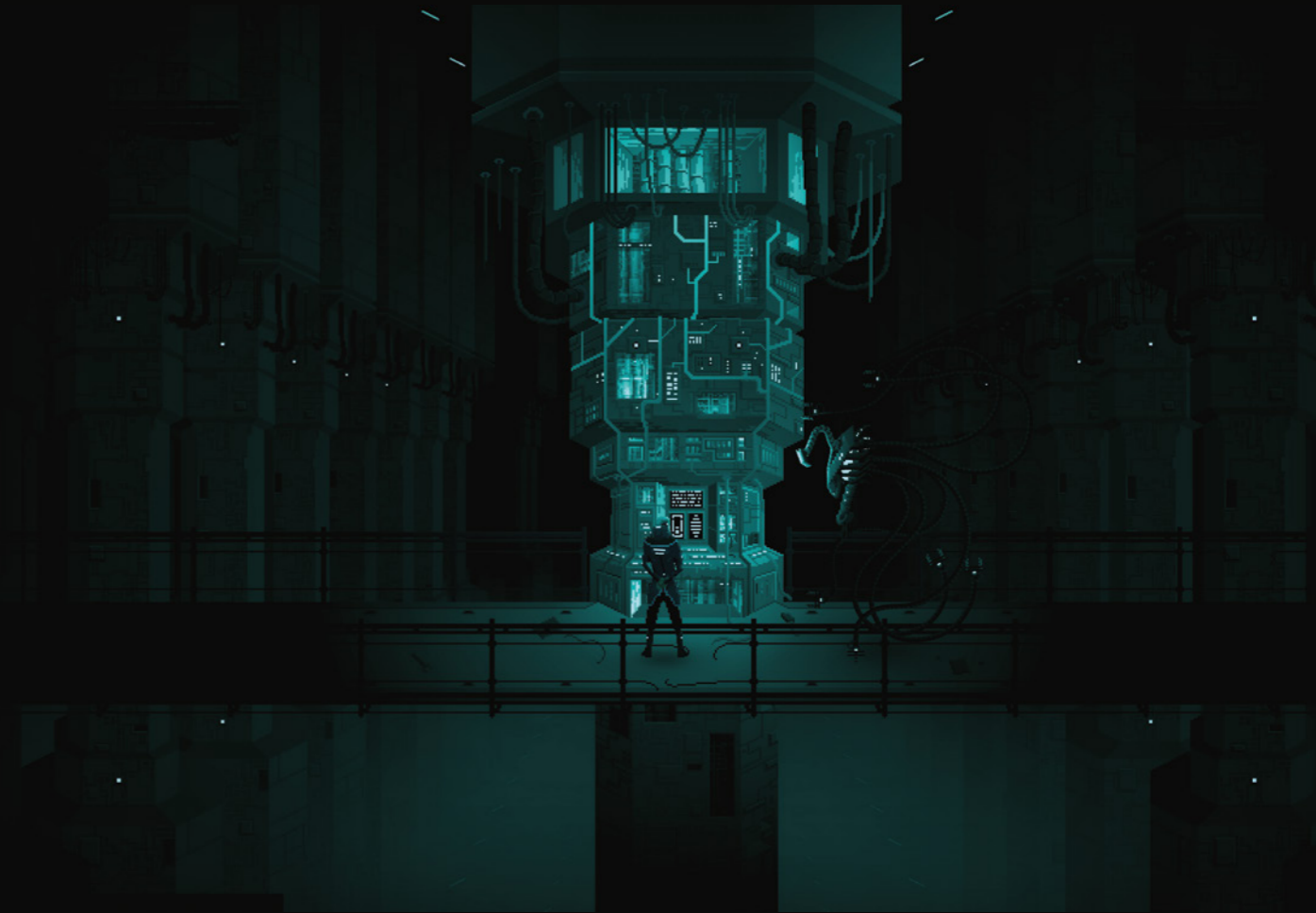
Owing to their diad structure, Folders can only be linked to one other Folder, meaning that if one wants to travel from one end of the Empire to the other, they must use dozens of Folder pairs to do so. In addition to the Folders, is the Fold Net, a powerful communication system using Folders and relay beacons to share unlimited amounts of information, resources, and services to civilians throughout the Empire.



THE MASTER NODE TERMINAL

Created at the dawn of the Empire, the Master Node Terminal is at the heart of Oberon's power and arguably his best-kept secret. All Fold Net communications, everywhere in the Empire, must go through the Master Node, which monitors, analyzes, and if need be, filters the information passing through it. Built at a secret location, the Master Node was designed to be 100% autonomous by Source OMNIs that self-destructed once their task was completed.

The Master Node is ostensibly the ultimate tool to control and spy on those who could disrupt balance in the Empire. But its real importance is two-fold: it monitors the position and behavior of all OMNIs at all times, minutely sensitive to any deviations from the norm; and it prevents communication between OMNIs, a prospect that Oberon greatly feared.





CIVILIAN LIFE

Citizens of the Empire

In the early days of the Empire, after the Thirty-Years' Trade War, Oberon imposed a quota on OMNI ownership, forcing the great houses to greatly cut back on their total number of OMNIs. Lower and stable OMNI numbers secured the domination and wealth of the Holders, and provided the lower class with continued access to jobs that might otherwise have been performed by the machines, both of which provided a sense of stability in the Empire.

Apart from Kosh-Buendia, most houses could guarantee a decent life for their

citizens, with access to OMNI-provided healthcare and education. A downside to this life, however, was that common citizens were forced to work less important or lucrative jobs that didn't require an OMNI. Also, since their supervisors were almost always OMNIs, social mobility and higher earnings were all but impossible -- even though Holders claimed anyone could own an OMNI one day if they simply worked hard enough. This was a bitter pill for civilians to swallow, causing many to seek the mindless comfort of Special-H.



☄ LIFE IN ORBIT

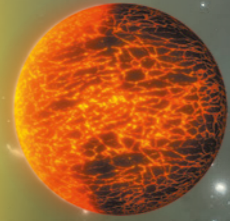
The constant flow of goods and various trading activities in the Empire led to the creation of a strong subculture for people living most, or even all of their lives, in vessels or stations. Though the OMNI-invented Artificial Gravity Generator meant orbiters could safely return to land without debilitating muscular problems, many preferred to stay in orbit, having come to despise the life of "landers" and, in many cases, having developed land-related fears. Life in space provided citizens with a few more opportunities for wealth and fulfilling jobs and was a rare chance for regular citizens to travel through the Empire for free.



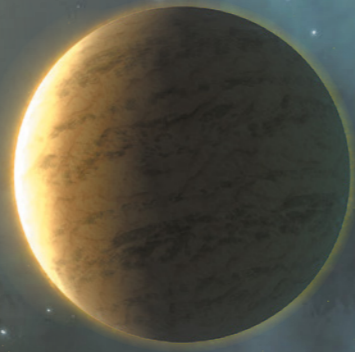
SPACE STATIONS



CELESTIAL BODIES



Magma planet



Sand planet

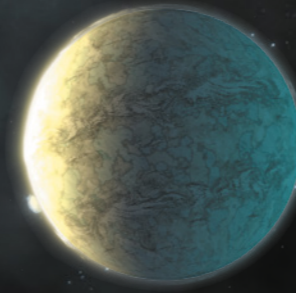


Water planet

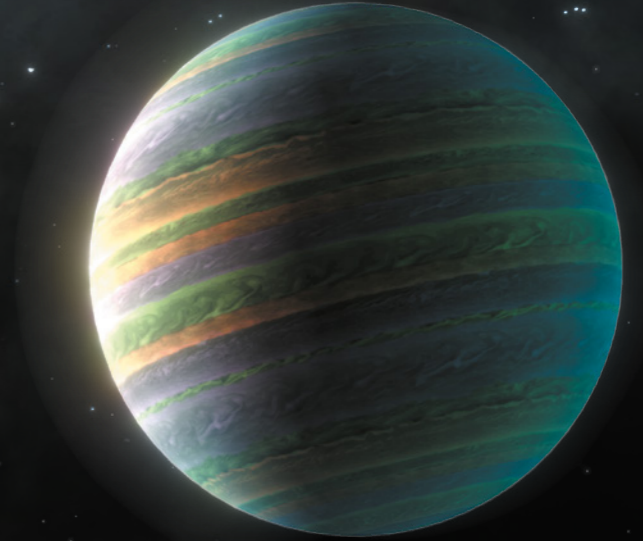


Natural satellite

Mega City planet



Frozen planet



Gaseous giant planet



A big hug to all our Kickstarter backers, who simply made this project possible.

A big thanks to all the players who went on a journey to try to save the Empire.

A huge kiss to our friends and families who supported us during the whole project,
from our enthusiastic first fruits to the nerve-wracking release.

And finally, a special thanks to our funding partners.

