



Space Fantasy Roleplaying

Revised Second Edition

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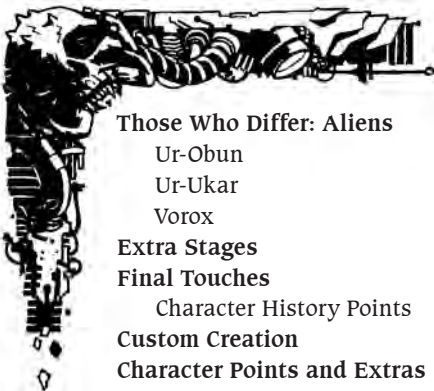




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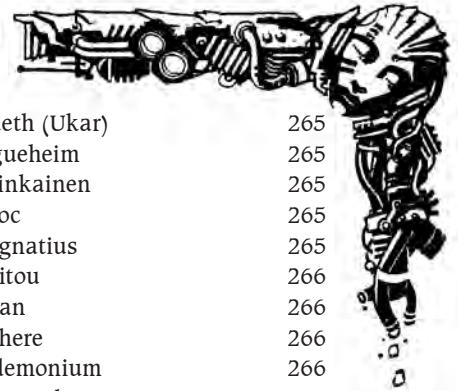
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Prologue: Alustro's Quest

*To: Archbishop Marcus Aurelius Palamon,
Cathedral of Saint Maya, Holy City, Galatea,
Byzantium Secundus*

Dearest Uncle,

It has been long since I last wrote you. I apologize for not doing so sooner, but the dangers involved were too great. I'm sure you will scoff at such a remark, but I tell you it is true. How dangerous, I hear you ask, to write to the Archbishop of Byzantium Secundus? No one would dare delay delivery of such a missive, and none would dare break its seal to read it.

As you know, trusts and confidences can be betrayed under intact seals. My liege, Erian Li Halan, has many enemies, not the least of which is her brother, a hateful man bent on destroying her. To that end, he has enflamed many of his allies against her, some of whom are involved in the highest levels of information gathering. I could not risk even a letter to you, lest it reveal our whereabouts before we had moved on.

Such cloak and dagger lives disgust you, I know. I wish I could live otherwise. I yearn for the life of simple contemplation I left behind on Midian when I eagerly joined Erian on her mission to the stars. My hunger for new sites and experiences could not be sated, and the cold walls of the monastery seemed a prison. Ironic that it now seems a warm den of rest and safety, after so many years on the roads between the stars.

But I am not writing for pity or justification. I simply explain my situation so that you understand the long years between correspondence. I wish so much to speak with you in person, to walk the corridors of your great cathedral and hear you orate the virtues of the Prophet's disciples again, in your commanding voice that was once a pillar of faith for me. It matters little that I betrayed your own faith by joining the Eskatonic Order rather than the Orthodoxy—the words of the Prophet are shared by both our sects.

I digress. I must put aside reflection and state the matter about which I write. My liege readies to travel again, this time on a new path, one full of possibility and danger. I am to go with her, for our fates are one. I am her confessor, and spiritual guide besides. No longer is this role just in her service, however—it is also in mine, for I have been gifted

with dreams and visions leading me toward an uncertain but important future.

I wrote of the Gargoyle of Nowhere in my last letter, that monolithic relic left behind by the Anunnaki, they who wrought the jumpgates and tamed the heavens before our kind was raised from the muck by the hand of the Pancreator. The vision it gifted us then—the maddeningly vague clues which lead us from world to world in search of ever more clues—only now begins to take shape.

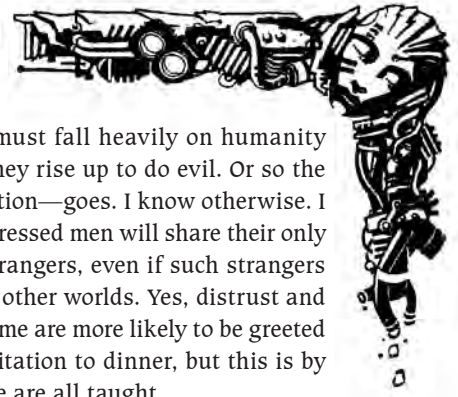
To explain this shape, I must first explain where we have been and what we have seen. The Known Worlds are huge, sprawling across the nightscape of the dimming stars forty worlds strong. While this is a paltrey sum compared to the hundreds of worlds once known to the Second Republic, it is still a testament to humankind's unity that even so many worlds as these have stayed together, connected through the jumpweb now under the rule of Emperor Alexius.

I have been to many of these worlds—nearly all of them, in fact. How many people can claim that? Most never leave their hovels, let alone their provinces—and to leave one's very planet is a momentous step indeed. From there to travel to more than three worlds is a jaunt even most Charioteer star-pilots never achieve. But to travel like Erian and her entourage—unimaginable.

And yet we have done so. We have broken all bonds of place and come and go from hither to yon as birds migrate through the seasons or as leaves travel the aether or float along the stream. What's more—we are not alone. More and more people of brave will and good constitution awaken from a long night of captivity on their homeworlds to escape gravity and go outwards, to worlds once known only to their grandparents or more distant ancestors in the past. The Emperor Wars kept everyone penned in, trapped behind enemy lines in their own homes.

But that dark time is over at last. Alexius is ascendant and the jumproads are open once more. The cage is broken and the beasts have slipped through the bars.

Yes, I mean beasts. For every man and woman of good heart and purpose who now travel between the worlds of the Empire, two or three scoundrels of black heart and base desire also go forth. For this reason, only a fool travels alone, and those of good intent are best served by their own kind. I do not follow Erian because feudal duties alone decree it—



I do so because in her service I am among others of good heart, some with strong arm and hand to defend us bodily from the harm others intend. I can attempt to sooth a soul with words of scripture, or even seal a wound with prayer, but I can do little to prevent injury in the face of evil.

Cardanzo, Erian's bodyguard, is a capable man and goodly tactician. Of even greater might is Onggangarak, our Vorox friend who has elected us members of his *angerak*—his blood pack. No better soldiers could one ask in the quest for right.

And no better pilot than Julia Abrams. Although her demeanor is caustic, her heart is strong and deeply tied to ours. She is the engine of our escape and a hearty companion on the road—a true follower of the first disciple, Paulus the Traveler, he who guided the Prophet on his sojourns.

In your response to my last letter, you warned me against associating too closely with the Ur-Ukar aliens, whom you, like many, distrust for their seemingly primitive, clannish ways. I have learned to look beyond the expected, and seen the truth that lies in people's hearts. Sanjuk oj Kaval is a woman of supreme courage. Her travails on her harsh homeworld of Kordeth, in the subterranean caverns of her clan, have only strengthened her bravery. While she is as yet largely ignorant of scripture, I have made a pact with her—for every legend she tells me of Ukari culture, I read to her verse from the Omega Gospels. In such a way does understanding between two different peoples grow. It is just such an interchange that must take place on a galactic scale, to overcome the centuries of ignorance and hate fostered between fiefs and territories.

The Church teaches us of the good in our souls, and yet acts as if people are mean and evil unless taught other-

wise. The rod of rulership must fall heavily on humanity and its alien brethren lest they rise up to do evil. Or so the widespread belief—justification—goes. I know otherwise. I know that even the most oppressed men will share their only foodstores with suffering strangers, even if such strangers be from strange locales and other worlds. Yes, distrust and suspicion is rampant, and some are more likely to be greeted by a lynch mob than an invitation to dinner, but this is by no means as universal as we are all taught.

Perhaps during the Emperor Wars and its aftermath, distrust was the lot of humankind. But with each new starship that comes from afar bringing goods undreamed of before; with each new person who comes bearing news of distant and long-forgotten family on other worlds; with each new knight that comes from the Emperor bringing law to the lawless regions, understanding and hope grows.

When men have hope, they begin to cherish their dreams once more. No matter how dark the suns may fade, the light of hope cannot be fully extinguished.

The fading suns. I have tried often to forget them, for their dimming light fails to show the way forward, only the way back. I no longer want to look back. I want only to go forward, to solve the dilemma of our impending ruin, to reject the stars that have for so long only portended our doom. Heresy? To hope to change what the Pancreator has wrought? But you yourself preach that it is not the Pancreator that darkens the day, but the demons who haunt us and hover before the light, casting their mournful shadows over our stars.

Why not act against them? Why simply sit and wait for the end, assured that judgment will come swift to all. What if that judgement depends on our acting? If we fail in this, how will we be judged then?

Go back to the Prophet's words and read them afresh. I believe with the deepest sincerity that he was not speaking for the people then, but for now. He spoke of a "dark between the stars," and the demons that dwell therein. He spoke of the evil which would descend on us and the ways that we might fight it. Yet when he said these things, were not the stars shining bright? Did not humankind have its greatest moments yet before it, in the founding of the Second Republic that was to come?

Then why was he so ill at ease and dark of heart? Why in an Age of Miracles did he alone see danger? I tell you he did not see with the eyes of the present but with the future—to our present, to our time and its rising darkness. He set down words which we would need now to survive against the chill end of time.

All his deeds, all his acts and words that enriched us, did so in the hope that we would not simply look to them as artifacts of a better past, but as examples of a greater future. It is for us now to become as his disciples and follow their steps toward the stars, to Quest, Defend the Faith, Right Wrongs, Seek Justice, Heal the Injured, Aid the Needy, Seek Wisdom and Look Within.

If Paulus could do so, why not we? If Mantius and Lextius, Maya, Amalthea, Hombor, Horace and Ven Lohji—why not we?



I know your answer. Heresy. We are not saints, and we dare not elect ourselves so. I agree. I am no saint. But I can try to be. I can muster all my will and faith toward walking as one who can make a difference, one who can change fate for the better.

Worry not that the Inquisition will hunt us for such hubris; they already have. I have dodged more flameguns and brown-robed fanatics over the past years than I thought could possibly exist. There are so very many who desire to punish others for reaping benefits they themselves fear to ask for.

We have surely sinned in that we travel in a starship. Is not this the sort of technology they spew sermons against? I am not ignorant of the dangers of such tech, for the Second Republic proved what science without faith can produce, and its mewling horrors are not easily forgotten. But I will not stand against all technology because some of it was misused.

I digress again. I meant to tell you of our travels, of the sights I have seen since last I wrote. I have sent you in separate letters copies of my journals of the past three years. While they tell of my deepest thoughts and our entourage's trials on many worlds, I want here to tell of the things I could not enter into those journals, because the hectic pace of our lives prevented it. I want to impress upon you what I found, how things are not as we are told, and why I seek to go even farther.

My thoughts first turn to Malignatius, that frozen hell of a world, gulag for so many suffering under the whip of House Decados. No better served were the people, however, when House Li Halan ruled the world before the Emperor Wars. I know the Li Halan well, having lived in their service all my life, and I believe I can thus see their faults clearly. Never are the common folk under them allowed to rise, no matter how they prove themselves otherwise. But the virtue of the Li Halan is that neither do they mistreat their charges, unlike the Decados. While surely even the lowliest Decados peasant may rise to better status for committing any number of heinous deeds that please their lords, most are trampled under foot.

This world is renowned for its religious schisms and the many charismatics who have risen to guide people onto often bizarre spiritual paths. Such loud men and women have branded the world fanatic, and this is surely how the Orthodoxy sees it. But what if I were to tell you that, hidden in the ice caves under the surface, there are many monks of astonishing enlightenment? I met one, a Friar Ged, who treated me to such a dialogue of scriptural questioning that I had not had since my first exposure to Magister Tarsus, my Eskatonic examiner. I came to realize that no matter the political situation in a place or the tenure of its people as a whole, there are always unique individuals worthy of encountering.

And there are wonders, too, visions of beauty and natural awe. I can never forget my undersea swim on the world of Madoc, a planet whose surface is mainly ocean and achepeligo. Using breathing suits provided us by a wealthy guildswoman—technology of which I'm sure many in the

Church disapprove—our entourage swam deep down to examine the ruins of that planet's previous culture, a civilization that had fallen even before humans left Holy Terra.

Off in the far distance, fearful to come near us, I saw shadowy figures flit in and out of the coral ruins, watching us with their large eyes. One wore sparkling armor of sea shells and another bore a luminous staff—these were no simple sea creatures. They were Oro'ym, the fabled amphibian sentients of that world. I wished so much to approach them and speak with them, hoping they knew our language, but they fled whenever I drew near.

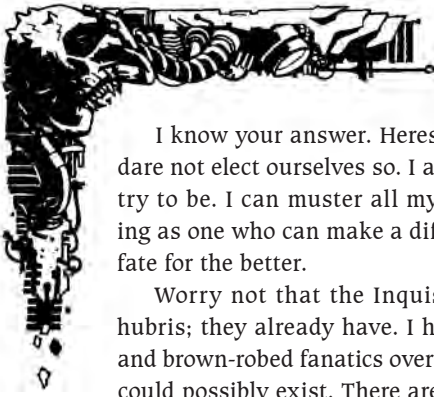
Even more enigmatic than the Oro'ym, however, were the Vau. Ah, I wish I could see the look of shock and indignation on your face when I tell you that I have met a Vau. I even shook its hand, although it seemed bemused by the gesture. It was on Manitou, that border world where the Church itself treads only lightly for fear of raising the ire of the Vau rulers. Here many of the outlaw dregs of humanity have collected—not its pirates and murderers so much as its thought criminals, those who follow different gods or indulge in pastimes harmful only to themselves but which are punishable by death in the courts of the Known Worlds.

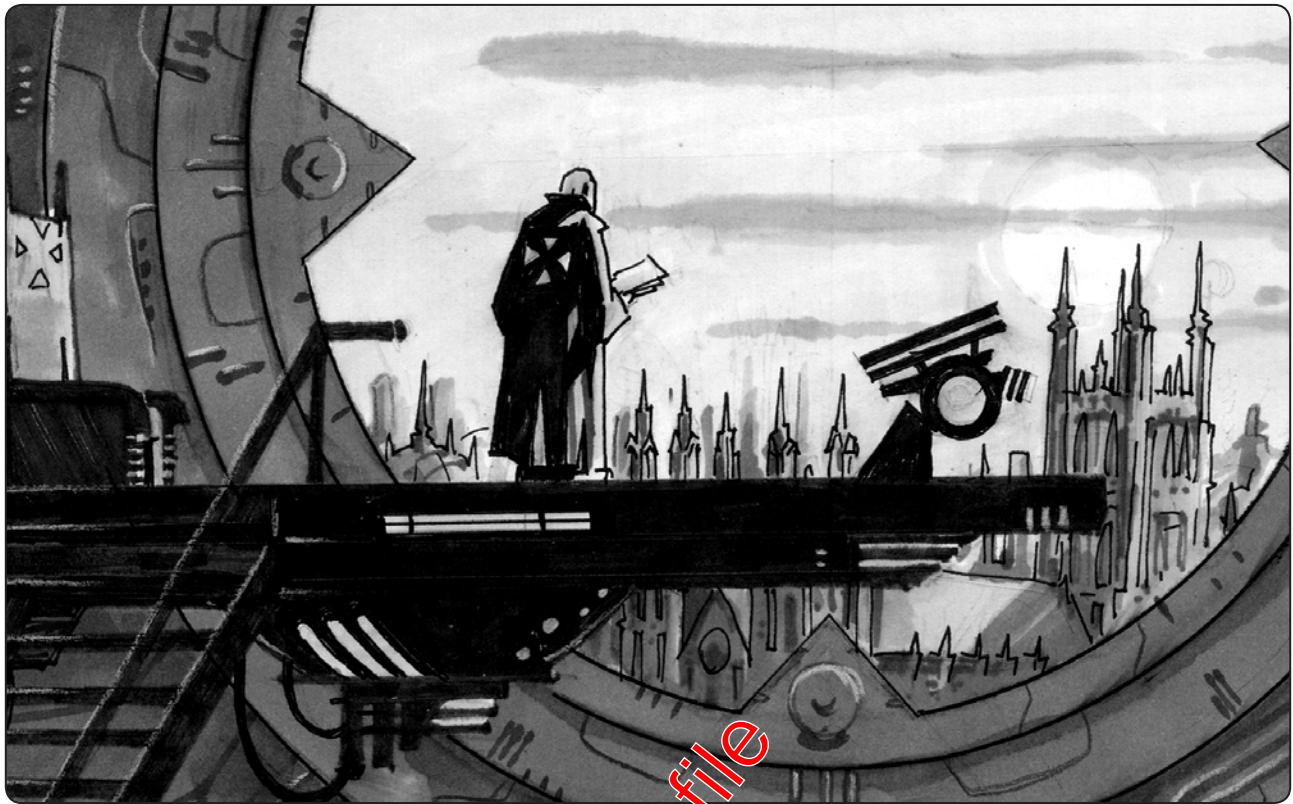
I will not tell you why we were there, for you would greatly disapprove. I will simply say that, while wandering the agora and marveling at the wealth of black market goods, an emissary from the local Vau mandarin approached us. He appeared to be of their worker caste, a lowly position among his kind but still far and away more prestigious than our serf class. He seemed curious about us, but afraid to show it. Nonetheless, he came up to Erian and smiled, a gesture alien to his kind but one which he had obviously practised for our sake. She greeted him, unsure what to say or do, and I offered my hand. He took it. And then he left, as if he had already gone further than he was allowed.

I still don't understand the matter, but I am impressed nonetheless. Perhaps my leige is destined for greatness, and the Vau somehow know of this. It is said that they have machines that foretell that future, and ancient prophecies given to them by the Anunnaki. Who can say for sure? They remain removed from humankind, protected by their superior technology.

The Ur-Obun also seemed to favor my leige, and believe she is destined for something, although Julia opines that they were simply "sucking up" to a human noble. Our stay on Velisimil was short, but most relaxing. While Erian made alliance with many Umo'rin members, I spent a meditation retreat in a humble Voavenlohjun temple. I was the only human, but they welcomed me as if I were one of their own. They do not separate involvement in the Church into sects as we do; all who follow the Prophet's teachings are sacred to them. Of course, they see all religious system as sacred in a way, although they certainly do not honor them equally. They recognize prereflective faith and postreflective grace, fear not.

I will shock you again with an admission concerning the Ur-Ukar—I have sat in a cavedark ceremony on Istakhr. It was not a true cave like on Kordeth, but a deep basement. Nonetheless, it was pitchblack. I joined the others, Sanjuk





and her family, in reading the deed carvings of their ancestors on the wall. I only know a little Ukarish, and missed much of what was written, but Sanjuk's recitation aided me.

A barbaric practice? How so? It brought them together and united them in blood and a shared past. That Sanjuk allowed me to join in was a great honor and a sign that she considers me as trustworthy as family—a powerful trust for an Ukari.

What I found most enlightening about the reading, however, was the history of the Ukari gods. While Sanjuk sneers when I mention the common human belief about the truth of their gods, I still believe it so. How can any deny, after hearing the legends of the Ur-Obun and Ur-Ukar, that their deities were any other than the ancient Anunnaki? That this powerful race grandfathered these younger races in their early days hints that perhaps they did the same for us, on old Urth.

The xenoarchaeologists of the Second Republic thought so. Is this not why they named the Anunnaki after the old gods of Urth? What if these gods of our prereflective ancestors were from the stars? And what if they took our ancestors with them on their journeys? What would have become of such humans? Do they still exist among the stars?

These questions are impossible to answer as yet. I hope to do so one day, however.

But let me not leave out opinions on the Merchant League and noble class. You'd surely be most disgruntled at my omission—if you've bothered to read this far. I know you have been to Leagueheim, for your disapproval of its "Republican sympathies" was most apparent to me even at a young age. But even you were somewhat awed at its spires and cities, one of the few worlds that still resembles the Second Republic

at its height. I have walked those spires, and ambled the sky lanes from building to building, traveling leagues without ever touching ground.

As I walked, flitters would hover near me with guildmembers offering me rides, confused that I would willingly choose to walk when I could ride for free. But I knew their kind offers were not truly free, for I would surely be subject to a sales pitch of one kind or another should I choose to ride in their gravity-defying chariots. It is indeed true that everything is for sale on Leagueheim, including allegiances.

How refreshing then, to meet those for whom allegiance is a matter of honor, not firebirds. I mean the Hazat—those nobles of a most martial bent whose hot-headed fury has shaken up the Empire on many occasions. Erian has allies in the house, and we have visited them often. On one occasion, on Aragon, we were witness to that most famous of noble pastimes: the duel.

Erian was to be Baron Alejandro Campeiro Justin de Justus's second in a fight. This means that, while she would not fight herself, she would hand him his weapon and watch for treachery from the baron's opponent. We all gathered to watch, and I was ready to mend any wounds taken by either side.

It was a short but vicious fight, with terms of surrender alone. Whomever gave in first would be the loser. Such a duel between Hazat nobles is usually to the death, but the baron's opponent was an al-Malik dandy, Sir Jacob Saladin al-Malik, whom we all doubted would choose death before honor. He was an expert swordsman, though, and had first blood on the baron in mere seconds. But our friend ran him through moments later, thanks only to a malfunction in Sir Jacob's energy shield.



Nobles rely on these shields to protect them from the worst harm, although they don't stop relatively harmless blows from landing. It is these small wounds which add up over the course of a duel, however. In this case, the shield failed, and a mortal wound was delivered—or would have been mortal if not for the miracles of faith. My Eskatonic training allowed me to call upon the Pancreator's mercy to heal his wound, thus saving his life.

Instead of triumph, the baron was mortified, for he had no intention of winning a duel in such a way. Sir Jacob, who had been his enemy at the start of the day, became his friend by the end, for so gracious and generous was Baron Alejandro to his wronged opponent that he spared no expense in making things right. He invited the lord to recuperate at his mansion, in as much opulence as he could withstand. For his part, Sir Jacob was more than relieved at being brought back from death's door, and he pledged to tithe heavily to my order when next the chance arose.

I tell this tale not to impress you that I move in the company of nobles, but to mention the odd sense of honor they display. Sometimes, that is; not everywhere universally. There are nobles who are far from honorable, those who shame their very class by becoming tyrants. I speak of Duke Granzil Hassan Keddah, a lord on Grail who mistreats his people terribly. Even the Etyri of his fiefs have fled, flown on to other territories in high eeries rather than suffer his decrees, even though it is illegal for them to have done so. He has called a hunt on these avian sentients, but one which has been thankfully ignored by fellow nobles of his house, who have denied these hunters entry onto their fiefs.

And so I come, through long digression, back to the heart of the matter: the shape of my destiny in Erian's company. My lady has taken a great step forward and allied herself to the greatest power in the Known Worlds: she has taken pledge as a Questing Knight, in fealty to the Emperor himself. She now places his needs over those of her own house, although we both pray they never come into conflict. By this act of fealty, she is empowered to Quest.

To such happy news I add this: I, too, have taken an oath, one which places me in even greater fealty to her and her lord. I have become an Imperial Cohort, the new office opened by Alexius for those who wish to aid the Questing Knights but for whom such rank is closed themselves. Since

I am not of noble blood or landed rank, this chance to aid my lady with the full support of her lord is a welcome opportunity. Cardanzo, Julia and Onggangarak have also pledged themselves as Cohorts, and so we all form a knightly company now in Alexius's service. We, too, can now Quest with the full support of a great lord—our destiny nears completion. The riddles posed years ago the Ur can begin to be answered.

I hope that this act of mine pleases you more than my previous decisions. My refusal of orthodoxy hurt you, but perhaps my new fealty to the shining star of your diocese on Byzantium Secundus will assure that my deeds will from now forwards be in the name of universal justice and law.

I know that you did not fully approve of the emperor at first, but his regular appearance in your cathedral for services has warmed you to him. I know this because I saw it myself. You and he, his Imperial Eminence, chatting together like old friends after the service, surrounded by bodyguards on all sides.

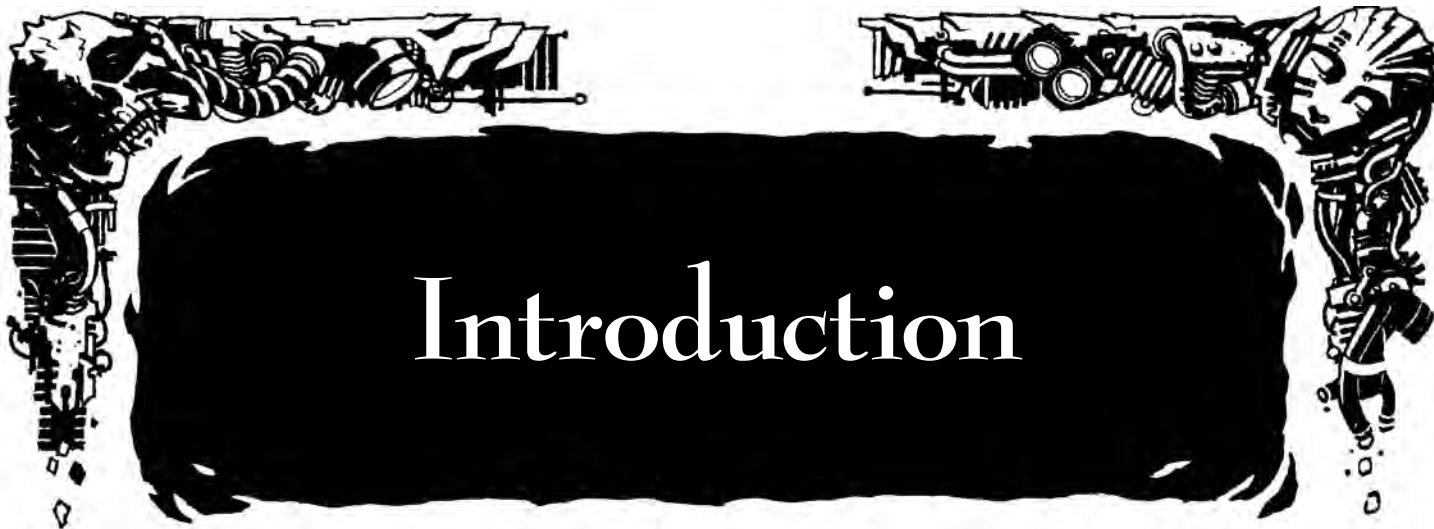
Yes, I saw this, for I was in your cathedral yesterday, witnessing your service from the high balcony. I so wanted to come down and greet you, to pray in the first pews before you. But I did not dare. Too many eyes are upon you, and your reaction to my presence would have alerted Erian's enemies, even if word took time to reach them.

My lady prepares a mission of great import and I go with her, as always. I know not where or what our pledge leads us toward, for it is not yet revealed to us. We leave, however, tonight. I had hoped to visit you in your personal quarters, far from prying eyes, but it is too late. I delayed too long, and duty pulls me away to another world, perhaps even to barbarian space, for many Questing Knights have been dispatched there of late.

I will see you again, uncle. I will kiss your hand in recognition of your high station and because you are my mother's brother. Fear not for me or my liege. If I should die on the reaches far from home, the Pancreator's light will still find me and guide me back, as it will all of good heart and right hand.

Farewell.
Your nephew,
Provost Guissepe Alustro





Once the suns shone brightly, beacons in the vast night of space, calling humanity onward. The stars symbolized humanity's vast potential, a purpose and destiny revealed in progress, inciting an exodus of unlimited growth to the distant stars. Once people looked to the heavens with hope and longing in their eyes.

Then the suns—and hope—began to fade.

It is the beginning of the sixth millennium and history has come to an end. Humanity's greatest civilization has fallen, leaving ignorance and fear scattered among the ruins of many worlds. A new Dark Age is upon humanity and few believe in renewal and progress anymore. Now there is only waiting. Waiting for a slow death as the age-old stars fade to cinders and the souls of the sinful are called to final judgment.



But not all believe in this destiny. A leader has arisen, an emperor sworn to unite the worlds of Human Space together again under one banner. To ignite hope once more in their hearts.

It is a monumental task, for most people have already given up and fallen into the ways of the past, playing serfs to feudal lords. What is hope to them now but a falsehood which leads to pain? Better to leave the hard decisions to their masters and let the Church console their souls.

There are enemies everywhere, those who seek to selfishly profit from humanity's demise: vain nobles ruling far-flung worlds, power-hungry priests who seek dominion over the lives of men, the greedy merchant guilds growing rich from bartering humanity's needs and wants. They are not alone. Others are out there among the darkening stars, alien races angry with humankind for age-old slavery, and enigmatic alien empires with agendas too paradoxical to fathom.

It is in such a universe that individual men and women must live. Only a few of them will question. Fewer still will act on their questions and seek answers, ways to break the grip of custom and law. To free themselves and once more seize the stars—and their destiny.

Roleplaying Explained

If you're new to this artform and hobby, this book may seem strange to you. Don't worry; it will make more sense the further you read. **Fading Suns** is a roleplaying game, a highly imaginative activity which can provide hours of fun and a means of creative expression.

The hobby of roleplaying began in the early 1970s, growing out of miniature wargaming. People got a bit bored with sending historical armies against each other's forces; they wanted to mix it up with elves, orcs and wizards. Fantasy gaming was born. Then, some people stretched the boundaries further, by playing individual heroes rather than whole armies. Wargaming turned into roleplaying, where players not only fought enemies, but acted out the roles of their characters, creating dialogue for them and histories detailing the character's birthplace, upbringing and what her goals in life were.





The players of the games collaborated in creating whole worlds, environments for their characters to adventure in, usually inspired by the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and Robert E. Howard. Roleplaying game publishers provided premade worlds for gamers to use, and new supplements for the most popular of these worlds were eagerly awaited by avid gamers. Eventually, gamers began experimenting with new genres, such as science fiction, post-apocalypse, superheroes, horror and even Westerns.

The hobby has grown over the years to encompass a wide variety of gaming methods, from hack-and-slash combat with detailed rules for combat resolution, to intensive storytelling with broad rules designed to help move a story forward rather than slow it down with dice rolling. Different people prefer different methods.

Fading Suns is primarily a game about heroes and the dramatic conflicts they encounter, from palace intrigues to cliffhanging combats. It provides a framework for players to create games from any perspective they desire. If they want to play soldiers who fight evil with guns and fists, the rules are here. If they want to play merchants who prefer diplomacy to violence, or priests wrestling with a metaphysical crisis, rules and helpful dramatic hints are also provided. **Fading Suns** is whatever the players want it to be.

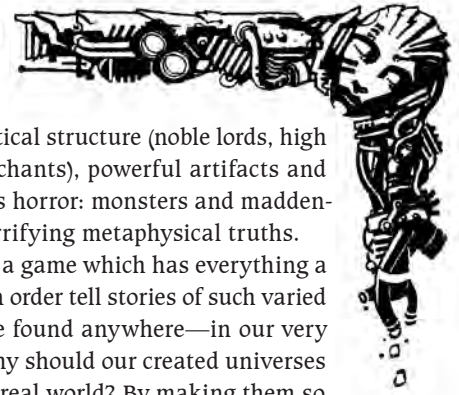
How to Roleplay

Just how do you play a roleplaying game, anyway? First, you get your friends together, because roleplaying games are rarely played alone (it is possible, but requires special rules for solo gaming). It takes at least two people, but is usually best with three to six players, including one special player: the gamemaster.

One person takes on the task of the gamemaster, devising dramas and challenges for the player characters to overcome. The gamemaster plays all the people the characters meet and introduces the plots that go on around the characters, drawing them into dramatic conflict. The gamemaster is like a playwright, an author and a movie director rolled into one. He is the “Greek chorus” when necessary, telling the players what’s going on as a narrator reveals a story element. He is also an actor, playing the wheedling informant the players’ characters hook up with on the black market, the vain baron who seeks the characters’ aid in rescuing his daughter, or the jolly innkeeper who is kind enough to extend the characters credit, because he likes their faces.

The gamemaster creates the plots that move the story forward, but it is the players who decide how their characters will react to the people and machinations active around them. Each player is like an actor taking on a role, but she is also a co-author of the drama, along with the gamemaster and the other characters. She decides who her character is and how that character reacts to the story.

Unlike a novel or film, a roleplaying game is a truly interactive experience, created from an interplay between the gamemaster and the players. The gamemaster introduces a conflict, the players react to it as they see fit (within the



guidelines of their character concepts and characters' knowledge), and the gamemaster, taking the players' reactions into account, adjusts his plot as needed and introduces the next conflict. Players speak their characters' dialogue, all spontaneously in reaction to the gamemaster's plot. Roleplaying is even more interactive than computer games touted for their interactivity; no computer can yet match the sheer variability introduced into roleplaying games by clever players. It's an adage that you can never guess what a player will do in a roleplaying game, and it's a true one.

One important rule to remember is that roleplaying games are not won or lost like traditional board or video games. There are no scores to tally up. Regardless of whether the characters win or lose their struggles, it is the playing of the game itself—the flow of imagination and interaction—that determines whether or not a game succeeds.

The first step in learning to play **Fading Suns** is reading this book. Each chapter reveals more information about the setting and the rules of the game. The Example of Play provided at the end of Chapter Six shows how the rules are used by gamemasters and players to run a **Fading Suns** roleplaying drama.

Tools

All you need to play **Fading Suns** is one 20-sided die, at least one six-sided die (although more are helpful), paper, pencils or pens, and—most importantly—imagination. The 20-sided die can be found in most hobby gaming stores that sell roleplaying games.

A Futuristic Passion Play

Fading Suns is primarily a science fiction game, which means that there are starships, blasters, powered armor, alien races, and weird science. But there are also many elements of traditional fantasy gaming: heroic characters and

struggles, a feudal sociopolitical structure (noble lords, high priests and headstrong merchants), powerful artifacts and great mysteries. And there is horror: monsters and maddening discoveries revealing terrifying metaphysical truths.

In short, **Fading Suns** is a game which has everything a roleplaying universe needs in order to tell stories of such varied and exotic themes as can be found anywhere—in our very own world here and now. Why should our created universes be more restrictive than the real world? By making them so, we only rob ourselves of the enriching heritage of stories left to us by previous generations from all corners of the earth. We owe it to ourselves to make our worlds as rich, vivid and complex (even maddeningly so) as that outside our doors.

Like all games, **Fading Suns** should be entertaining and fun to play. But roleplaying games can be more than mere pastimes. The players can strive for the same artistic goals as the author of a novel, a film or a play. **Fading Suns** is a passion play of sorts, a story about the triumphs and even tragedies of its characters that takes place in an imagined future. Many possible stories can be told here, from galaxy-spanning epics to the most personal of tales.

Like medieval passion plays, **Fading Suns** deals with grand themes universal to human experience. Its main theme is the Seeking. This is the mythological role all heroes play: the knight on quest, seeking power to vanquish his enemies or the secrets of self-discovery. Success or failure on this quest is not as important as the insights learned while on it.

The atmosphere of the dramas played out in **Fading Suns** is one of tragic ignorance. Civilization is in decline, and superstition and fear are everywhere. New ideas and frontiers are spurned by a nervous populace, fearful of change for the harm it brings. But it is just this sort of willful ignorance that keeps civilization from rising again. It is such fear that keeps hope buried and great challenges from being met. The player characters represent the heroes who can break the bonds of this ignorance and bring something new and great to their culture, to reawaken and invigorate life.

Without further ado, we give you a glimpse into the tumultuous fate of humankind four millennia from now ...

