

# WAR IN THE HEAVENS: HEGEMONY

## The Enigmatic Vau

Ever since the Vau gave humanity its first setback among the stars, their space has been shut to prying eyes. For a brief moment, however, it has opened — long enough for the most daring to catch a glimpse. But the daring need as much wisdom as courage, for encounters with the Vau teach that things are not always what they seem....

Included in this volume:

- **Book One: Inception** — A sourcebook explaining the histories and cultures of the Vau and the other sentient alien races of the Hegemony.
- **Book Two: Elabi** — The Vau are inviting select groups of Known Worlders to visit Vau worlds and open a dialogue between cultures. Inevitably, the question arises: What do they really want?

The previous installment in the War in the Heavens trilogy, *Lifeweb*, featured the shapechanging Symbiots. It is not necessary to own *Lifeweb* to use and enjoy *Hegemony*. The final installment will delve into the mystery of the Anunnaki.



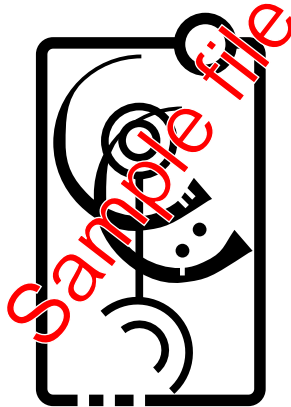
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*Val'eni* (High Script) glyph:  
War in the Heavens

by  
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## Pilgrims:

And Hombor said unto Maya: "There be chains shackled to your wrists and feet, and so you bemoan your servitude and rage against the bars of your cage. But in such bindings I see opportunity, for do not chains invoke pity? Pity in turn invokes charity."

"Fool!" Maya replied. "What good is charity without the freedom to use it?"

"Ah, but you do not understand," Hombor replied, rubbing his sores. "It is not the charity of Humanity I seek, but that of the Pancreator. What chains can hold against His grace? In this darkened universe, liberty is not a right but a gift."

— *Omega Gospels* (Hombor 13:7)



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Sample file



# Alustro's Journal: Approbations

Never did I conceive such wonders as I have seen of late. Amidst the violent cruelties of barbarian space I witnessed strange beings and saw that, even far removed from the core worlds, humanity survives and thrives in manners all its own. Though my ribs still hurt when I draw breath and my leg shall ever walk with a limp from the wounds I sustained there, these maimings have been more than paid for by our patron's gratitude. Our mission — whose aim and ends must still remain secret — held importance for this nameless lord.

And yet wonders still present themselves, one greater than any that occurred on that long star sojourn into barbarian space from which my companions and I only just returned. On Byzantium Secundus we finally came to rest, three days ago, delivering the prize we had sought, found, and fought hard to retain on the perilous journey back to the Known Worlds. My wounds are still too fresh, even weeks after their delivery, to write overmuch of their getting — or the woundings I delivered in return. My soul still bleeds with sorrow from the deeds I committed in that far place, the dark void of space where bandits prowl heedless of all threat.

As I write, my Lady and her bodyguard meet with our quest liege, and surely great shall be the honor gained in his eyes, although she must wear it cloaked and silent. Julia, Sanjuk and Ong traveled to the Port Authority, hoping to immerse themselves in its cosmopolitan goings-on, so long denied them in those places from which we lately came. Lt. Gosado sought old friends at the Li Halan garrison, where she can reveal her newly won scars and tell the tales of our glory among Vuldrok pirates.

But I sought only solace and healing, and so wandered to the Holy City to rest in its chapels and meditate in the incense scents of sandalwood and jasmine. Walking unsteadily from circle to circle, borne on the cane I still find unfamiliar and damnable, I stopped at whatever shrine or cathedral took my fancy, and there prayed again and again, hoping in such wise to purge my guilt.

Finally I came to the Pelunia Gardens, in Corona Secundus, over which looms St. Maya's Cathedral, on its perch on the upper and final circle of the city. I sat by a willow tree on a stone bench placed by Patriarch Halvor during my service as Regent of the Known Worlds. A simple carving, now forgotten by most priests, it brought me solace with the memory that here, in times of trouble, Chia Wen, the Patriarch's sister, would come and watch the gentle spring that runs past, delivering the fallen blossoms from the far end of the garden to a pond around the bend, hidden by trees. Here I sat for a number of hours, working over and over in my mind how I might have performed my actions differently, and thus saved men their lives. A useless exercise.

So deep in thought I was that I failed to notice the complete stillness that fell over the gardens, for no passersby had come for some time, as if barred from the place. When I noticed the strangeness of its complete silence, I stood and looked about, wondering the cause.

Then I saw the Mandarin. On the broad lawn from the front entrance the Vau came toward me, his (her?) robes flowing about him as the wind gently swept through the trees, causing them to shiver and stir. We were alone but for his guards — Vau Soldiers bearing short staves — which I could now see at the gateway, keeping all others from entry.

He came near and stopped, nodding slightly, a faint smile on his face. I was too stunned to act at first, but then remembered my manners, and so bowed to him. His smile grew larger, and he watched me as one would a friend long sundered.

For many a long moment we stood thus, simply watching each other. I noted the intricate carvings of his head-dress, which extended over his shoulders and part of his chest, decorated with strange, indecipherable glyphs. Colored a dark brown, it looked more like a piece of wondrously shaped driftwood than the result of a technology beyond human ken.