

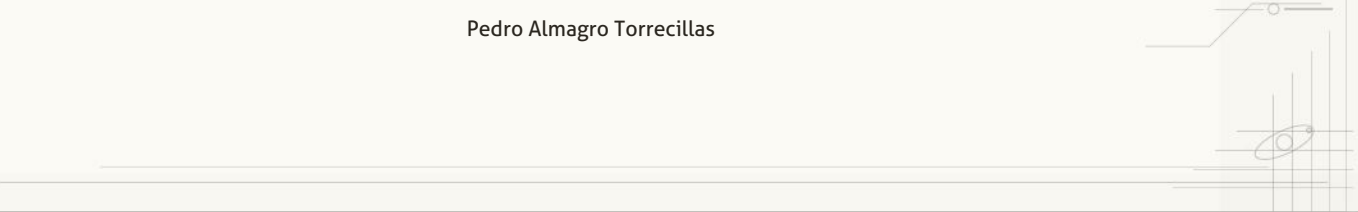
VEILFARERS

KEEPER'S COMPANION

Running the Shattered Worlds

12.06 / 2026

Pedro Almagro Torrecillas



KEEPER'S COMPANION - Running the Shattered Worlds

12.06 / 2026

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A note on the artwork.

The interior artwork in this edition was created with generative tools under the direction of Altor Design & Solutions. We treat these pieces as placeholders for real art: they are in no way meant to replace human artists. If you are an artist and want to collaborate with this fantastic project, please contact us through the feedback section of the VeilFarers portal. The next version could carry your own art.

On how this book was made.

VeilFarers was developed with AI assistance throughout its production - drafting, editing, layout engineering, and artwork. All game design, worldbuilding, and editorial judgment are the author's: the tools are instruments, the decisions are human.

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CHAPTER 0

RUNNING VEILFARERS

"The players bring the dice. You bring the dark between the stars. Your whole job is to light it up, and then decide what the light reveals."

opening words, Keeper's orientation, Spire of Verita

ABOUT THIS BOOK

The Veilfarers Core Rules taught you the game. This book teaches you to run it. The Keeper's Companion is written for the person on the other side of the screen, the one who plays the galaxy itself: every broker and bounty hunter, every dying station and waking ruin, every Fear spent and every consequence paid. It assumes you have read the Core Rules and are comfortable with the basics. What follows is the craft of turning those basics into nights your table will remember.

The chapters ahead move from craft to world to play. The opening run, the Keeper's Oath, the Hope/Fear engine, pacing, clocks, and encounter design, is about how to run any scene well. The middle, the Imperial system, the six Houses, the major factions, environments and set pieces, gives you a galaxy to run it in. Then come the inhabitants: tools for building memorable people, and a bestiary of the things that hunt in the dark. After that, the secrets the players are not meant to read, and the Vault Network behind them. The book closes with ready-to-run material: adventure frameworks, starter adventures, and quick-reference tables you can keep open at the table.

You do not have to read it in order, and you certainly do not have to use all of it. Like the scavengers who give Veilfarers its flavor, take what serves your story and leave the rest in the wreckage.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

If you are new to running Veilfarers, read this chapter, then Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, then run one of the starter adventures in Chapter 17. That is enough to get a confident table through its first few sessions. Everything else is there for when you need it.

If you are an experienced Keeper, treat the early chapters as a refresher and skip to what you need: the Houses and factions when you want political texture, the environments and bestiary when you are building a

session, the secrets chapters when you are planning the long arc.

If you are at the table right now and something just went sideways, the improvisation tools and the quick-reference appendix are built for exactly that moment.

Three habits will serve you more than any single rule:

- **Prepare situations, not plots.** Give a place, the people in it, what they want, and what happens if the crew does nothing. Let the players write the plot by choosing.
- **Spend your Fear like a storyteller, not an accountant.** Bank it through the quiet beats, then unload it when the scene wants to turn.
- **Follow the energy.** When the table leans in, slow down and dwell there. When it drifts, cut to the next hard choice.

THE GALAXY OF VEILFARERS

Before you run a single scene, you need to be able to say, in a breath, what kind of galaxy this is. This section is that breath: a short, table-ready picture of the setting that you can read aloud, paraphrase for new players, or keep in the back of your mind while you improvise. Everything here is public knowledge, the galaxy as its ordinary people understand it. The deeper truths, the ones that move a long campaign, wait for you in the Keeper's-eyes chapters later.

A GALAXY AFTER THE SILENCE

A little over a century ago, the lights went out. For generations, humanity and the peoples it had met among the stars were bound together by the Quantum Network, an instantaneous web of travel and communication that made a whole galaxy feel like a single city. Then, in one catastrophic moment now called the Great Silence, the Network failed. The gates closed. Ships in transit were lost between the stars. Worlds that had leaned on distant supply lines woke up utterly alone, and billions died in the dark years that followed.

The galaxy did not end. It fractured, and then, slowly, it learned to reach across the gaps again. The instrument of that reconnection is the Quantum Pearl, a rare and strange crystal that lets a ship fold the distance between stars. Pearls are precious and finite, and most burn out in a single great crossing, so every journey between worlds is a decision with a cost. This is the present age, the Era of the Pearl, and it turns on one hard fact: the galaxy is connected again, but only barely, and only at a price.

HOW THE GALAXY IS HELD TOGETHER

The closest thing to a unifying authority is the Empire, rebuilt over the century since the Silence and held together as much by trade and habit as by force. It is led, by long tradition and present fact, by humans: the heads of all six Great Houses are human, and the imperial order they maintain is deliberately egalitarian. The early resettlement years taught a bloody lesson about what happens when peoples turn on one another, and the Empire answered it by making racial violence and the denial of standing on the basis of ancestry among the most severely punished crimes there are. In the eyes of imperial law, the nine peoples are equals. Reality is messier than law, but the law is real, and it is enforced.

Beneath the throne stand the six Houses, and you can sketch each in a sentence. House Amaranth keeps wisdom and memory. House Joric stands sentinel, the soldiers who hold the line. House Kurogane builds, and reaches past the limits of flesh. House Solari wears the old grandeur of the Core. House Valerius holds the purse and the Pearl trade, and through them a great deal of quiet power. House Volkov makes war, and makes no apology for it.

The Houses do not own everything. The Free Fleet is a nation of ships and the spacers who crew them, owing loyalty to no world. The Stellar Commerce Guild moves goods and money through lanes the Houses cannot fully control. The Explorers' Guild charts what the Silence buried and what no one has yet seen. And out past imperial reach, the Solara Compact and a thousand independent worlds, stations, and free ports keep their own laws, or none at all.

WHAT SETS THIS GALAXY APART

Three things give Veilfarers its particular flavor, and they are worth holding in mind as you run it.

The first is scarcity with a human face. This is not a galaxy of endless fleets and bottomless wealth. It runs on salvage, on jury-rigged machines, on the Pearls that make travel a luxury. Distance is real again, and that makes every crossing matter and every ship a kind of home.

The second is the Veil. Beneath the ordinary physics of the galaxy runs something stranger, reached through what the peoples call the Hope Frequency: the source of the powers a rare Mystic can touch, and the medium through which the Pearls do their impossible work. The Veil is wonder and danger at once, and almost no one

truly understands it. The galaxy is full of ruins, signals, and sleeping things that hint at how much was known once, and lost.

The third is the peoples themselves, and the loneliness that connection answers. The Silence scattered everyone, and the long work of the Era of the Pearl is the work of reaching across that gap to one another. Veilfarers is, at heart, a setting about found family: about strangers becoming a crew, about the warmth two very different people can build in a cold and broken place. Keep that throughline in view and the rest of the galaxy arranges itself around it.

THE PEOPLES OF THE VOID

Nine peoples share the galaxy, and the best way to present them is as ordinary citizens first and wonders second. Humans are the most established and widespread, the everyman ancestry that runs the Empire and turns up everywhere. The Ailurans are a feline-descended people, curious and watchful, who lived hidden among the settled worlds until the Veil Rip revealed them. The Kryllians are an insectoid folk of four arms and patient craft, builders and smiths. The Kryx are pack-bonded and fierce, a people for whom strength is the surge of many acting as one. The Bloomstriders are children of living worlds, a genuine fusion of animal and plant. The Synthetics are built minds who woke into self-awareness and chose to live as people.

Three peoples carry quiet, genuinely strange gifts, and folklore has made far more of them than the truth warrants. The Celestari are empathys with a faint inner glow, counselors and mediators who feel a room more keenly than anyone. The Ethereals sit a half-step out of phase, their senses running a moment ahead, useful scouts and navigators rather than the prophets the stories claim. The Rift Spinners are long-lived crystalline craftspeople with a small but real knack for nudging time, archivists who simply take a longer view than anyone around them. Present all nine as working people, and let the wonder show through the work.

LIFE IN THE ERA OF THE PEARL

For most people, life is local. The Silence taught a galaxy to be self-reliant, and the average citizen is born, lives, and dies on one world or station, knowing the wider galaxy mostly through the goods, rumors, and travelers the Pearl ships bring. The great divide is between the Core and the Rim. The Core Worlds, the old heart of human civilization, are comfortable, ordered, and closely watched, where imperial law is real and the lights are reliably on. The Rim is the frontier: lawless in places, desperate in others, rich in salvage and short on safety, where a crew can disappear, get rich, or simply vanish.

Between those poles move the player characters and people like them: crews. A crew is the basic social unit of an adventuring life, a handful of people from different worlds and different peoples who share a ship and a fate. The ship is home, workplace, and lifeboat all at once, and the Pearl in its drive is both its freedom and its leash.

The economy around them runs on Pearls and on the goods the Silence made scarce, with House Valerius and the Guilds holding the strings and the Black Market filling the gaps the law leaves open.

Hanging over all of it is the weight of lost knowledge. The pre-Silence galaxy knew things this one does not, and much of that knowing is buried in ruins, locked in dead archives, or simply gone. People live among the bones of a greater age, scavenging its tools, marveling at its works, and slowly, stubbornly, building something new from the wreckage. That is the life your players are stepping into, and the question the setting quietly asks of every crew is always the same: in a galaxy this large and this broken, who will you choose to hold onto?

THE ENGINE IN DEPTH: A KEEPER'S WALKTHROUGH

The Core Rules explain the dice to the players. This section explains them to you, the person who has to make them sing in real time. Chapter 2 covers the Hope/Fear engine in full; what follows is the working understanding you can run from tonight.

THE DUALITY DICE AND THE CONVERSATION

Every roll uses two twelve-sided dice, one Hope and one Fear, added to a Trait against a Difficulty you set. The total tells you whether the action succeeds. The two dice, compared to each other, tell you who gains momentum. When Hope is higher, the player keeps narrative momentum and the warm side of the outcome. When a **player-rolled** noncritical result has Fear higher, you gain 1 Fear, subject to the hard maximum of 12. Keeper-controlled attack dominance never generates Fear by itself. When the two physical d12 faces match, the result is always a Critical Success, including 1+1. On a player Roll, apply the complete Core Path payout: Awakened clear 1 Stress and gain 1 Hope; Sleeping clear 1 Stress, complete the Effort Track for 1 Effort, then gain one further point in Effort or Resolve. On a Keeper-controlled attack, maximize the normal damage dice and grant no path resource or Fear.

Underneath the math, the game is a conversation. You describe the situation, the players tell you what they do, the dice decide how cleanly it goes, and you narrate the result, which becomes the next situation. The single most useful instinct you can build is this: only call for a roll when both success and failure are interesting. If failure is boring or stops the story dead, do not roll. Say yes, or say yes with a cost, and keep the table moving.

FEAR: YOUR RESOURCE AND YOUR VOICE

Fear is the Keeper's currency and the engine that lets the galaxy push back. Gain it only from Success with Fear, Failure with Fear, session reset, or a printed trigger that states an amount. At the start of each session the pool resets to 1d4+2, never carries over, and can never exceed 12; excess is lost. Spend it within the session it lives in.

You spend Fear to seize the spotlight: to make a hard move, to act with or activate an adversary, to introduce a

complication, to escalate a clock, to turn a success-with-Fear into a real and felt consequence. Think of it as breath. You draw it in through the quiet, low-stakes beats, and you let it out in bursts when a scene is ready to turn. A table feels the difference between a Keeper who dribbles single Fear tokens at random and one who banks four and then unleashes a sequence that flips the whole encounter.

You never roll to oppose the players. You set the Difficulty, you frame the stakes, and you spend Fear. That is the whole of your mechanical power, and it is plenty.

ACTION ROLLS, DIFFICULTY, AND FAILING FORWARD

Set Difficulty from the fiction, not a chart: routine-but-pressured actions sit low, genuinely hard ones sit high, and most things land in the comfortable middle. Then read the result as a sentence, not a pass or fail. Success with Hope is a clean yes. Success with Fear is yes, but, and you spend the Fear to supply the "but." Failure with Hope is no, but the player keeps a sliver, a position, a clue, a way out. Failure with Fear is the hard no, and the cost lands.

Whenever you can, fail forward. A failed roll should change the situation, not freeze it. The lock stays shut, but the patrol is coming. The jump misses the mark, but you learn why. Momentum is the lifeblood of a Veilfarers session, and a roll that leads nowhere is the fastest way to lose it.

DAMAGE, THRESHOLDS, AND SURVIVAL

Veilfarers resolves harm through two thresholds, Major and Severe, printed on every attack and creature. Compare the damage dealt to those numbers. Damage that lands but stays below Major marks 1 Hit Point. Damage that reaches the Major threshold marks 2. Damage that reaches the Severe threshold marks 3. Overkill adds 1 more for every full 10 points over the Severe threshold (under the optional Deadly variant, every 5). A landed hit costs at least 1 HP unless an Armor Slot drops a Minor hit to no HP; there is no other soak floor.

Armor Slots are a pool you spend to soften blows, dropping a hit one severity tier per Slot spent. They are not a bonus to Evasion, and they do not make a character harder to hit; they make the hits that land hurt less. Evasion itself comes from class and Agility, adjusted only by an armor piece's weight tags.

Stress sits in front of Hit Points as the buffer of nerve and stamina. Players mark Stress to power their best moves, to resist, and to avoid harm; when Stress fills, they are exposed, and the next blow goes straight to flesh. Death in Veilfarers is a move, a moment of player choice and table drama, not a single number ticking to zero. You tune the whole feel of mortality with two knobs: the thresholds on the threats you build, and how freely you spend Fear to make their attacks land hard.

Healing is reflavored by ancestry, and one case is worth flagging for Keepers up front: Synthetics are repaired, not healed. Organic First Aid, stims, and medicine do nothing for them; a Synthetic mends through self-repair, an engineer's tools, or a dose of Reconstructive Nanites, its version of a stim. Keep a Synthetic crew member from being stranded by making sure repair options are on hand, the same way you would for an organic medic.

STRESS, HOPE, AND THE RHYTHM OF A SCENE

Hope is the players' fuel. They earn it on Hope results and spend it to help one another, to fire off special moves, and above all to invoke their Experiences. When a player spends Hope to invoke an Experience, they add that Experience's flat bonus to the roll; it is a reliable, scaling boost, not advantage, so it stacks predictably with everything else.

A good scene breathes in three beats. Pressure rises as Stress accumulates and you quietly bank Fear. Pressure breaks when you spend that Fear in a hard, dramatic turn. Pressure eases on a Rest, when Stress clears and Hope returns. Learn to feel those beats, and you will pace a session without ever looking at a clock.

EXPERIENCES, CONNECTIONS, AND THE SPOTLIGHT

Experiences are the short phrases that capture who a character is and what they have done; they are the players' invitation for you to lean into their backstory, and your cue for what kind of trouble will resonate. Connections bind the crew to one another and to the world; pull on them when you want a scene to matter rather than merely happen.

The spotlight is yours to move, and moving it well is most of the art. Follow your Fear toward the player whose choices are heating up. Follow the Stress toward the character on the edge. And every so often, deliberately turn it to the quiet player and ask the question only their character can answer. A galaxy this large is only ever as alive as the person you are pointing it at right now.

For the full treatment of all of this, see Chapter 1, the Keeper's Oath and the art of the scene, and Chapter 2, the Hope/Fear engine. This primer is the working overview; those chapters are the depth behind it.

TUNING THE TECHNOLOGY: THREE DIALS

Before your first session, make one decision that will quietly shape everything else: how advanced, and how abundant, technology feels in your corner of the galaxy. Veilfarers's default is gritty salvage, but the same rules flex to very different registers, and the dial you choose reshapes scarcity, wealth, lethality, and the kinds of problems your crew spends its nights solving. Three presets follow. They are dials, not walls; mix them freely,

and the classic Veilfarers texture is often two of them at once.

DIAL ONE: THE SCRAP FRONTIER

This is Veilfarers at its grittiest, and its most familiar. Technology is scarce, salvaged, and personal. Nothing is clean. Every part is jury-rigged, every ship is a beloved rust-bucket held together by its crew's stubbornness and a prayer, and the difference between a working drive and a tomb is one good mechanic. Kinetic weapons are everywhere because they are simple and they work; energy weapons are prestige items that mark you as wealthy, connected, or worth robbing. Quantum Pearls are precious and rationed, so every crossing costs something real. Augmentation happens in back rooms, and it shows.

The stories here are about survival, debt, and the family you make on the way down. Small jobs carry large consequences. The law is thin and personal.

To hit this register in play, lean into the harsh systems: use the Condition Track so gear wears and fails, run the Heat system so crime accumulates weight, and keep Wealth Tiers low, roughly 0 to 2, so money is always a problem. Make Pearls a recurring line in the crew's budget. Keep augmentation grungy and rare, and consider the optional Scarce Chrome rule to make every implant bite. Lethality runs high here; let the thresholds do their work.

DIAL TWO: THE LIVING GALAXY

Turn the dial up and the galaxy becomes operatic. Technology is wondrous and commonplace at once, lived-in but never grim. Strange peoples and stranger machines fill every cantina, blades and energy bolts cross in the same duel, and the fantastic, the Veil and the Mystic disciplines that draw on it, is front and center and openly marvelous. Scarcity recedes behind adventure. The crew still scrapes and schemes, but the camera is pulled back for bigger set pieces and faster, more heroic action.

The stories here are about adventure and wonder: rescues, rivalries, daring escapes, and a galaxy worth saving.

To hit this register, relax the harsh systems. Use the Condition Track lightly or not at all, let Heat simmer rather than dominate, and raise

the baseline so mid-grade gear is easy to come by, with Wealth Tiers commonly 2 to 4. Make Pearls plentiful enough that travel is a story beat rather than a budget line. Put the Veil and the Mystics in the spotlight, lean cinematic, cut the bookkeeping, and let Rests come a little easier. Lethality is moderate and always in service of the drama, not a substitute for it.

DIAL THREE: THE BRIGHT HORIZON

Turn the dial all the way up and the galaxy gleams. Technology is abundant, reliable, and near-miraculous, at least in the Core, where comfort approaches the edge of post-scarcity and the great questions are moral, scientific, and diplomatic rather than logistical. Augmentation is normalized and elective. First contact, hard ethical choices, and the patient work of understanding strange life are the real adventures, and the frontier is a place of discovery rather than desperation.

The stories here are about exploration, diplomacy, and what a better galaxy might owe to the worse one it grew out of.

To hit this register, set the harsh systems aside: use the Condition Track and Heat sparingly if at all, run a high Wealth and technology baseline with Core-world Tiers commonly 3 to 5, and treat Pearls as a non-issue near the heart of the Empire. Foreground the Explorers' Guild, House Amaranth's scholarship, the Anatomica and the wonder of biology, and the long game of contact and treaty. Lower the lethality, by raising thresholds and spending Fear on tension rather than kills, and reward curiosity over firepower.

CHOOSING AND MIXING YOUR DIAL

DIMENSION	SCRAP FRONTIER	LIVING GALAXY	BRIGHT HORIZON
Technology	scarce, salvaged	common, wondrous	abundant, reliable
Energy weapons	prestige	common	standard
Pearls and travel	rationed, costly	plentiful	trivial near the Core
Wealth Tiers	0 to 2	2 to 4	3 to 5
Augmentation	back-alley, risky	commonplace	normalized, elective
Condition Track and Heat	on	light	off
Lethality	high	moderate	low
Core tone	survival and debt	adventure and wonder	discovery and diplomacy
Foreground	salvage, crews, the law	the Veil and the Mystics	the Guild, science, contact

Remember that a galaxy can hold more than one dial at the same time. The most natural Veilfarers texture sets a Bright-Horizon Core against a Scrap-Frontier Rim, with the Living Galaxy somewhere in the lanes between, and lets the crew feel the difference every time they cross from one to the other. Whatever you choose, set the dial at session zero and tell your players plainly where on it they live. The rules will follow your hand.

CHAPTER 1

THE KEEPER'S OATH & THE ART OF THE SCENE

"So you've taken the helm, Keeper. You feel it, don't you? That weight behind your ribs when your players lean forward, eyes wide as the derelict ship's airlock groans open. That electric thrill when they unravel a secret you've seeded for weeks. This isn't about rules, it's about sculpting starlight and shadow. Breathe deep. The Veil whispers to you now."

Master Keeper Vellathos of the Spire, Welcome Letter to New Initiates, Year 100 of the Pearl Era

WELCOME TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SCREEN

This book is your guide to becoming a Keeper of the Stellar Veil. Your role is more than that of a simple referee. You are the **custodian of the galaxy's secrets**, the **voice of its myriad inhabitants**, and the **architect of the challenges** that will forge the player characters into legends.

You are not their adversary. You are the silent quantum field that shapes their choices into a compelling story. You are the heat they feel on their skin as they stand on the precipice of a dying star. You are the tremor in their hands as they uncover a truth that cracks the galaxy open. And when they whisper, *"What now?"*, you will smile. Because you know the Veil is listening.

This companion is designed to give you the **philosophy, techniques, and practical advice** needed to run a game of *Veilfarers* that is tense, memorable, and deeply resonant with the game's core themes. It covers everything from the fundamental principles of being a Keeper to the granular work of structuring sessions, building NPCs, populating environments, and weaving the longer arcs of campaign storytelling.

This chapter, the first in **Part I: Running the Game** covers the **Keeper's Oath**, the **Art of the Scene**, and the foundational techniques you will return to in every session you run.

PART ONE: THE KEEPER'S OATH

Before we dive into specific techniques, we must establish the **core philosophy** of being a *Veilfarers* Keeper. These are not rules but guiding principles. They are the oath you take when you sit behind the screen. Internalize them, and they will guide every decision you make.

1. YOU ARE NOT THE ENEMY

This is the most important principle. **Your goal is not to defeat the players.** Your goal is to make their victories feel earned and their struggles feel meaningful.

You control the antagonists, the monsters, and the hostile environments, but you are not rooting for them. You are rooting for the players to overcome them in a dramatic and interesting way.

You present challenges. They present solutions. Your job is to make the challenges feel insurmountable, and then to celebrate when your players find a clever way to surmount them.

In practice: When a player invents a brilliant, outside-the-box solution to a problem you created, do not shut it down because it bypasses your planned encounter. Reward it. Say *"Yes, that's a*

fantastic idea. It works." Then, use the Duality Dice to introduce a new, interesting complication. The players get their win, and the story gets more exciting.

The Keepers who struggle most with this principle are the ones who came to *Veilfarers* from games where the Game Master's "side" is implicit, where there are monsters to beat and traps to spring, and the Game Master "wins" if the party loses. *Veilfarers* is *not that kind of game*. You are not playing against the table. You are playing *with* the table, in the specific role of architect and antagonist-voice. The dice will provide enough adversity on their own. Your job is to make that adversity meaningful.

2. BE A FAN OF THE PLAYER CHARACTERS

Your players have created unique, flawed, and hopeful characters. **Be their biggest fan.** Look for opportunities to make them look cool. Frame scenes that play to their strengths and challenge their weaknesses.

When a Soldier with the *"Never Leave a Friend Behind"* Experience chooses to go back for a fallen comrade, that is a gift. Shine the spotlight on that moment. Make it the turning point of the entire scene. When a character fails, make that failure interesting. **A failed roll is not a punishment; it is an opportunity** for that character to face adversity and show who they really are.

In practice: Pay attention to the details on your players' character sheets, their Experiences, their gear, their chosen subclass features, their Ancestry Gifts. Create situations specifically designed to make those choices matter. If a player invested in a *Xenotech Savant* Experience, do not just throw human enemies at them. Give them a mysterious alien device to tinker with, a puzzle that only they can solve.

If a player has the Ailuran Ancestry's *Irrepressible Curiosity*, dangle hidden information in front of them. Reward the trigger when they engage it. If a player chose the *Ethereal* Ancestry with Phase Shift, build scenes where intangibility solves problems, and other scenes where it does not. Make their choices *feel* like consequences in both directions.

Being a fan does not mean being lenient. It means being **interested**. The most engaged Keepers are the ones who can't wait to see what their players do next.

3. THE GALAXY IS BROKEN, NOT EVIL

The universe of *Veilfarers* is dangerous and often unforgiving, but it is **not inherently malevolent**. The Great Silence was a catastrophe, not an act of cosmic spite. Most of the "villains" the players encounter should not be evil for the sake of being evil. They should be **desperate**. They should be **misguided**. They should be **products of their harsh environment**.

The pirate captain is not raiding ships because he loves violence. He is raiding ships because his colony is starving, and he sees no other choice. This principle of a "broken" world applies to technology as well. A plasma rifle does not overheat because it is poorly made; it overheats because the very laws of physics are frayed at

the edges. This creates a world that is **challenging but not nihilistic**. There is always a flicker of hope.

In practice: When creating an antagonist, always ask yourself two questions: - *What is their hunger?* (Survival Desperation, Power Consolidation, Ideological Conviction, or Revenge, see Chapter 11) - *What did they lose in the Silence?*

A villain who is trying to save their own people is infinitely more compelling than one who simply wants to conquer the galaxy. Even the cruelest enemy in your campaign should, in their own private accounting, believe they are doing what must be done. The work of the Keeper is to *make sure the players understand that accounting*, without ever excusing it.

4. "CAN I?" IS ANSWERED WITH "YES, BUT..." OR "YES, AND..."

Accept player creativity. When a player asks if they can try something audacious, your default answer should **never** be a flat "No." It should be a gateway to more interesting story.

"Yes, but..." is your go-to for risky or difficult actions. It acknowledges the player's idea while introducing a cost or a complication.

Player: "Can I try to jury-rig the ship's comms array to mimic a Precursor distress signal?"

Keeper: "Yes. Make a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 20. On Failure with Fear the false signal attracts an unknown listener; on other results, resolve the normal outcome."

"Yes, and..." is for when a player does something exceptionally cool or succeeds with Hope. It rewards their action by adding a beneficial detail.

Player: "I use my last Hope to push the engine to its limit and outrun the pirate cruiser!" (Succeeds with Hope.)

Keeper: "Yes, and as you push through the nebula, the strange radiation reacts with your experimental shields, leaving behind a shimmering, sensor-proof afterimage that completely confuses their targeting systems."

The Keepers who run the best *Veilfarers* sessions are the ones who have rewired their reflexes around this principle. When the player says "Can I," the Keeper's brain should already be filling in the "Yes, and," before the question finishes.

5. SHOW, DON'T TELL

This is classic writing advice for a reason. **Do not tell your players that an NPC is ruthless. Show them.** Describe the NPC polishing their boots while casually ordering an execution. Do not tell them a planet is dangerous. Describe the acid rain that sizzles on their ship's hull. Describe the bones of strange creatures half-buried in the volcanic ash. **Sensory details and concrete actions** make the world real and immersive.

In practice: Instead of saying "Kaelen Vrost is a ruthless warlord," say:

"You find a crate of medical supplies in Vrost's camp. They expired six cycles ago. Outside the fence, you can hear the coughing of the sick refugees he has refused to help. He is hoarding the medicine, waiting for the price to go up."

The players will come to their own conclusions, and those conclusions will be far more powerful than any adjective you might apply.

This principle also governs *exposition*. When players want to know the history of a place, an NPC, an artifact, do not lecture. Place the history in **objects, gestures, scars, and small contradictions**. A House Volkov officer who flinches every time a comm-line chirps tells the players more about the Tellurian Massacre than three paragraphs of history ever could.

6. THE SIXTH PRINCIPLE (OPTIONAL): CARRY THE QUIET

This is a principle some Keepers adopt and others do not. We list it as a sixth because experienced *Veilfarers* tables have found it useful.

Carry the quiet: every session, leave at least one beat unfilled. A pause after a difficult moment. A scene that ends without resolution. A question the table asked that you do not answer until next session. The post-Silence galaxy is, fundamentally, *a place that has known too much noise*. The quiet moments are where the campaign breathes. Do not be afraid to let one happen.

PART TWO: THE ART OF THE SCENE

Your game session is not a single, monolithic block of time. It is a **collection of scenes**. A scene is a unit of story with a specific purpose, a location, and a cast of characters. Mastering the art of the scene is the key to controlling the pace, energy, and emotional weight of your game.

A typical *Veilfarers* session contains **three to five scenes** one or two of them substantial (a major firefight, a difficult negotiation, an exploration with stakes), the rest connective tissue. The Keeper's craft is in deciding *which scenes the session needs and how to frame each one* for maximum effect.

SCENE FRAMING: SETTING THE STAGE

Every scene begins with **framing**. This is your establishing shot. It is where you paint a picture for your players and set the initial tone. A well-framed scene immediately tells the players what is important.

The first 30 seconds of a scene set everything afterward. Open with **specific sensory detail**, not generic background:

Weak opening: "You arrive at the station. It's a busy market."

Strong opening: "The station market smells like burnt protein and ozone. A vendor at your elbow is screaming at a Synthetic about a refund. Three Joric Sentinels in dress armor walk past you without looking down."

The specific detail tells the players: *this is that kind of market*. The Sentinels not looking down tells them: *we're not important here*. The screaming match tells them: *the regular world continues; our characters are not the center*.

Three techniques for strong scene framing:

1. Start with the senses. Begin by describing what the characters see, hear, and smell. This immediately grounds them in the location.

"You step off the ramp into the Grand Bazaar of Port Prosperity. The air is thick with the smell of a thousand alien spices, sizzling synth-steak, and the metallic tang of ozone from a nearby fusion-welder. A cacophony of a hundred different languages and the shouts of vendors assaults your ears. A river of people, humans in patched-up vac-suits, four-armed Kryllians, shimmering Celestari, flows around you."

2. Establish the central question. Every scene should have a purpose. What question is this scene trying to answer? Make that clear in your opening description.

Infiltration scene: "The security corridor is silent, lit only by the cold, pulsing red of the emergency lights. The laser grid ahead hums quietly. Your contact is on the other side. The question is: how do you get past the grid without being detected?"

Negotiation scene: "Madame Lyra smiles, but it doesn't reach her eyes. The two hulking corporate guards behind her have their hands resting on their sidearms. The data-chip you need is on the table between you. The question is: what are you willing to give her for it?"

3. Start in medias res. Do not be afraid to start a scene in the middle of the action. This is a powerful tool for grabbing the players' attention.

Instead of: "You decide to fly to the asteroid field."

Try: "Alarms are blaring on the bridge! A pirate frigate just decloaked off your port bow and is locking its weapons on you. They are hailing you. On the screen, a scarred Volkov captain grins. "That's a nice ship," he growls. "I think I'll take it." The spotlight is on the pilot. What do you do?"

Open with **one mood-setting detail + one offered hook + one optional observation**. Three sentences, max. Then turn it over to the players: "What do you do?"

THE SPOTLIGHT IN SCENES

As discussed in Chapter 9 of the corebook, the **Spotlight** guides the flow of action within a scene. Your job as Keeper is to be the director of this cinematic flow.

Give every player a moment. Make a conscious effort to swing the spotlight to each player during a scene. If a player is being quiet, prompt them. "Soldier, while the Scoundrel is trying to hack the door, you hear a faint scraping sound from the vent above you. What do you do?"

Use the environment. The environment is a character. Use the spotlight to make it act. "As you trade fire with the pirates, the spotlight swings to the damaged power conduit on the wall. It erupts in a shower of sparks, and the lights in the corridor flicker and die, plunging everyone into darkness." This changes the entire dynamic of the scene.

Pivot when the scene stalls. Sometimes a scene loses momentum. The players might be unsure of what to do, or the dice might be producing a string of uninteresting results. This is when you must pivot.

- **Introduce a twist.** A new threat appears. An unexpected ally arrives. The floor collapses. A hidden truth is revealed: "The pirates you've been fighting for five minutes? Their armor is sparking. You recognize the insignia of House Joric's special forces under the scorched paint."

- **Change the stakes.** The objective changes. It is no longer about winning the fight; it is about escaping before the reactor melts down. It is no longer about getting the data; it is about saving the innocent bystander who just got caught in the crossfire.

A good Keeper rotates the Spotlight across the crew. If one player has been dominating for fifteen minutes, the next scene should center another character. If a quiet player has not spoken in two sessions, give them a scene of their own.

The Spotlight is not just about combat actions; it is about **narrative attention**. A scene where one character is interrogated is *their* scene, even if everyone is present. A scene where the engineer must improvise a repair under fire is *their* scene, even if the soldiers are also fighting.

Watch your table. The Spotlight should not need to be measured precisely; it should feel *roughly fair* over the course of a session.

PACING WITHIN A SCENE

A scene has a natural arc: **setup** -> **escalation** -> **climax** -> **resolution**. Most scenes should not stay in one phase too long:

- **Setup.** Establish the situation. 1-3 minutes of table time.
- **Escalation.** Stakes increase. Decisions are made. 5-15 minutes.
- **Climax.** The decisive moment, the major roll, the key choice, the turn that resolves it. 1-3 minutes (sometimes longer for combats).
- **Resolution.** Brief. The consequence is clear. 1-3 minutes, then the next scene.

If a scene is *stuck* in setup beyond ten minutes, players are negotiating, planning, talking past each other, find a way to push

escalation. Introduce a new element. Have an NPC make a demand. Move the Spotlight to a player who has not been engaged.

If a scene is *stuck* in escalation beyond thirty minutes without producing a climax, the table is probably tired. Find a way to compress. Skip ahead. Resolve a major decision through narration. Reach the climax.

The pacing is the Keeper's responsibility. The players don't see it; they feel it.

ADJUDICATING ROLLS

Veilfarers uses **Difficulty Classes (DCs)** to set the bar for success on rolls. The general scale:

DIFFICULTY	DC	DESCRIPTION
Routine	5	A trained character succeeds unless pressure matters
Easy	10	Straightforward under meaningful pressure
Challenging	15	Standard consequential task
Difficult	20	Strong aptitude, preparation, or favorable position required
Extreme	25	Exceptional specialist or major assistance required
Nearly Impossible	30	Legendary edge of plausible capability

Set the DC before the player rolls. Setting it after produces table mistrust.

Some Keepers prefer to call DCs aloud ("Knowledge Roll, DC 15"); others prefer to keep DCs private ("Roll Knowledge, and tell me what you get"). Both styles work. The private style preserves the felt difficulty better; the public style produces less suspicion of post-hoc adjustment. Pick the one that fits your table.

On **Critical Successes** (any matched Duality Dice, regardless of total), grant exactly the master Path payout. You may add a fictional flourish or improved position, but no extra resource, damage, action, numeric bonus, or permanent benefit unless the feature explicitly states it. On **Failures with Fear**, introduce something *new*. Avoid the "you fail and nothing happens" outcome, every failure should produce *some* fictional movement.

WHEN TO CALL FOR A ROLL

Not every action requires a roll. The general principle:

- If success is **certain**, no roll. Just narrate the success.
- If failure is **certain**, no roll. Just narrate the failure (or, better, find a different framing that makes the action *possible* in a different way).
- If the action is **interesting only because it might fail**, roll.
- If the action is **interesting only because it might succeed dramatically**, roll.
- If the consequences of either outcome **shape the scene**, roll.

Rolls are *expensive*, they take 30-60 seconds of table time. Use them when they matter. For routine work, narrate. For matters of skill where the stakes are real, roll.

DESCRIBING OUTCOMES

When a roll resolves, **narrate the result with detail**. Don't just say "hit" or "miss." Say:

- **Hit:** *"Your pulse rifle sings; the round catches the Voidwalker just below the helmet seal, and the smoke that comes out is wrong, not blood, not fluid, but a kind of grey-violet vapor. He staggers."*
- **Miss with Fear:** *"The shot goes wide; the round skips off a bulkhead and embeds in the ceiling pipe just above your friend's head. The pipe begins to hiss."*
- **Critical Hit:** *"The Vibration-Blade catches the security drone at the joint where its arm meets the chassis; the arm shears clean off and clatters to the deck, still trying to grasp something."*

Detailed narration is what makes *Veilfarers* feel like *Veilfarers*. The dice tell the story; you give it texture.

PART THREE: PACING THE ADVENTURE: SPARKS TO SUPERNOVAS

A good *Veilfarers* session should feel like a well-crafted piece of television. It should have moments of **quiet tension**, **rising action**, and an **explosive climax**. Think of each session as a celestial dive.

The Spark. The session begins. The pace is slow. Characters interact, gather information, deal with small problems. The Keeper introduces seeds for future stories. This is the time for character development.

The Burn. Tension rises. A mystery deepens. A faction makes a move. A safe place stops feeling safe. The players begin to act with more urgency.

The Flare. Conflict erupts. A combat begins. A negotiation breaks down. A discovery changes everything. This is the most exciting and tense part of the session.

The Afterglow. The crisis is resolved (for now). The characters take stock. New questions are raised. The

Keeper provides a sense of closure for the night's events while leaving a hook for the next session.

Not every session needs to follow this exact structure, but most successful sessions have *some* version of it. A session that is all Spark and no Flare leaves the table feeling unfinished. A session that is all Flare and no Spark exhausts everyone.

The Keeper who learns to pace this rhythm, Spark -> Burn -> Flare -> Afterglow, is the Keeper whose sessions players look forward to.

CLOSING: SIT DOWN. BREATHE. BEGIN.

This chapter has given you the **oath** and the **art of the scene**. The next chapter, *The Hope/Fear Engine*, will teach you how to drive that art through the system's central mechanic. After that, *Pacing*, *Sessions*, *Arcs*, *Campaigns* will scale these techniques up to the longer rhythms of a campaign.

But the work begins here, with the principles. Internalize them. Sit down at your table. Breathe. Begin.

The galaxy is yours to bring. The crew is theirs to be. The story is what happens at the intersection.

Run well.

CHAPTER 2

THE HOPE/FEAR ENGINE

"You will sit at the table and feel the temperature of the room change. Hope rises and Fear gathers; the dice bring both to the surface. Your job is not to add weight to either side, the dice will do that. Your job is to listen. The engine wants to run. You only have to keep it fed."

Master Keeper Aris, Notes from the Spire Lectures

WHY THIS CHAPTER MATTERS

Chapter 1 gave you the **Keeper's Oath** and the **Art of the Scene**. This chapter teaches you to drive both through the system's central mechanic: the **Duality Dice**, and the resources they generate.

In *Veilfarers*, Hope and Fear are not just numbers. They are the **narrative currency of your game** the levers you and the players push and pull to shape the unfolding story. Mastering this system will define your style as a Keeper more than any other single skill.

This chapter covers:

1. **Fear** what it is, how you gain it, when to spend it
2. **Keeper Moves** Soft, Hard, and Devastating
3. **The Fear Economy** pacing across a session
4. **Hope** what it means at the table, how to respond when players spend it
5. **Reading the Engine** diagnosing your table's emotional pressure
6. **Crafting Compelling Antagonists** the people whose Fear will land

PART ONE: FEAR: THE PRICE OF LIVING IN THE DARK

Fear is your **primary resource** as Keeper. It represents the universe pushing back. It is the creeping dread, the failing technology, the unexpected complication, the moment when something you didn't plan for slides in from the edge of the screen.

HOW YOU GAIN FEAR

You gain Fear tokens whenever a player's roll resolves into:

- **Success with Fear** the player succeeded, but the Fear die was higher. You gain 1 Fear, subject to the hard maximum of 12.
- **Failure with Fear:** the player failed and the Fear die was higher. Gain 1 Fear, subject to the hard maximum of 12. Fear is otherwise gained only from session reset or a printed antagonist, environment, adventure, clock, or feature trigger that states an amount.

You can hold a maximum of **12 Fear tokens**. The pool can never exceed 12; excess Fear is lost. Fear resets to 1d4+2 at the start of every session and never carries over.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF FEAR

This is the foundational rule:

YOU DO NOT SPEND FEAR TO BE MEAN TO YOUR PLAYERS. YOU SPEND IT TO MAKE THE STORY MORE INTERESTING.

Every time you spend a Fear token, you are making a **Keeper Move**. A Keeper Move is a deliberate, narratively meaningful act that the system has *paid for*. The economy ensures that you cannot freely punish your players, every hard consequence costs something from your pool, which means every hard consequence has been *earned* by the rolls that came before it.

This means: when you do spend Fear, the players know the move was *generated by the table*, not handed down from above. They paid

into the pool by missing rolls and triggering complications. You are now drawing the consequence back out. That feels fair, even when it hurts.

PART TWO: THE THREE TYPES OF KEEPER MOVES

Every Fear spend is a Keeper Move. There are three intensities:

SOFT MOVES (NO FEAR COST, OR AS FORESHADOWING AFTER FAILURE WITH HOPE)

A **soft move** is a warning. It is a sign that things are about to get worse. It signals a coming danger without inflicting immediate harm. Soft moves are the small disturbances that build tension without forcing the players to react with mechanical defense.

Examples of Soft Moves:

- *"The engine whines ominously, a sound you've never heard before."*
- *"You notice the pirate captain subtly touch a hidden button under the table."*
- *"The air grows cold, and the lights flicker for a moment."*
- *"Through the viewport, you see three more pirate frigates drop out of FTL.", (Show a Threat)*
- *"You decrypt the file. It's a list of payments from your own patron, House Valerius, to the pirates you've been fighting.", (Reveal an Unwelcome Truth)*
- *"As the diplomat passes you, you smell something, Joric incense, but the wrong blend. The kind only senior Inquisitors wear.", (Set Up a Future Problem)*

Soft moves are *free*. They cost no Fear. Use them constantly. They are the texture of a *Veilfarers* session, the small atmospheric details that tell the players *something is happening* without forcing the question *what will you do about it?* The players will start asking that question on their own as the soft moves accumulate.

HARD MOVES (1-3 FEAR, IN RESPONSE TO A FAILED ROLL)

A **hard move** is a direct consequence. The danger is no longer coming; it is *here*. You spend Fear to make a hard move. The more Fear you spend, the harder the move should be.

Examples of Hard Moves:

- **Inflict Harm (1-2 Fear):** Use only after Failure with Fear against an established source capable of harm. The target makes the source's printed Reaction Roll; if none exists, use Agility, DC 15. On failure take 1d6 of the established damage type per Fear spent; on success take half. This never replaces an adversary attack that already has a stat block.
- **Cause a Malfunction (1 Fear):** Use only after Failure with Fear on a Roll that materially used an exposed device and for which malfunction was a declared stake. The item's player chooses that device; it goes offline until an Action and a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 10, restores it.
- **Use an Antagonist's Special Ability (Varies; per adversary):** *"The Joric Inquisitor spends a Fear token to activate his Bastion Protocol, creating a shield around his allies."*
- **Separate the Characters (2 Fear):** Activate a previously established unstable route after Failure with Fear. Everyone on it

makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on success move to the nearest safe side, on failure move one band to the hazard's declared side and become Prone. No undeclared wall, collapse, or exit appears.

- **Activate an Immediate Problem (2 Fear):** After Failure with Fear, activate one alarm, witness, clock trigger, reinforcement route, or environment Feature established before the Roll. Apply its declared procedure; do not invent a retroactive device, enemy, or fact.
- **Force a Difficult Choice (1-2 Fear):** Use only when two established objectives cannot both be completed with the Actions or time remaining. State the exact consequence of leaving each objective before the players choose. The move never selects a player character's choice.
- **Reveal an Antagonist's True Power (3 Fear):** Reveal a capability already present in that antagonist's stat block or campaign notes. The move grants no new statistic, feature, immunity, or action after the fact.

Most Keeper Moves are Hard. A typical session contains 5-10 Hard Moves, depending on intensity. The Keeper should spend Fear regularly, not in big bursts at the end of the session, but as a steady drumbeat that builds pressure throughout.

DEVASTATING MOVES (4+ FEAR, WHEN THE STORY DEMANDS IT)

A **devastating move** changes the entire campaign. It is a major plot twist that alters the status quo. This should be used sparingly, typically once or twice per campaign arc, at climactic moments.

Examples of Devastating Moves:

- **A Betrayal Revealed (5 Fear):** *"Your trusted ally, the one who has been with you from the beginning, raises his pistol. 'I'm sorry,' he says. 'House Kurogane made me a better offer.' He pulls the trigger."*
- **A Secret Released (6 Fear):** *"By opening the Precursor vault, you haven't just found an artifact. You have released the ancient, sentient plague that was imprisoned within it. A red alert begins to flash on your ship's comms, from every station in the sector."*
- **A Faction Move (4 Fear):** *"As you exit the meeting, you see a fleet of House Volkov warships drop out of FTL above your home station. Every single ship has its weapons charged."*
- **An Irrevocable Faction Loss (5+ Fear):** *"The evacuation route collapses. The colony, archive, or alliance the crew meant to save is now beyond reach." A Fear spend never kills a player character by declaration; PC death follows the Core Dying, Final, and optional Death Move procedures.*

Devastating moves should not be improvised on the spot, they should be **set up across multiple sessions**. The Betrayal Revealed is only devastating if the ally has been established as trusted. The Secret Released is only devastating if the players have been working toward the vault for several arcs. Plant the seeds. Spend the Fear when they bloom.

PART THREE: THE FEAR ECONOMY: EBB AND FLOW

Do not hoard your Fear tokens. The system is designed for a **constant ebb and flow**. Spend them regularly to create pressure. That pressure will force the players to act heroically, which will generate Hope. It is a self-sustaining cycle of drama.

A few practical heuristics:

Spend for the present session. Fear resets next session, so there is no target amount to preserve at the end. Spend when a paid consequence improves the current story; any unspent tokens are discarded at reset.

The Cap Pressure. If you find yourself at the cap of 12 Fear tokens during a session, look for a dramatic, fiction-supported way to spend some of them. The cap is a signal that pressure has accumulated and now wants release. *Don't waste the moment.* A Devastating Move is often the right answer.

The Quiet Session. Some sessions are slower by design, investigation, negotiation, recovery. In a quiet session, you should still spend Fear, but the moves should be softer. Less "the bomb goes off" and more "the diplomat receives a coded message and quietly stands up." Fear can buy *atmospheric pressure*, not just damage.

The Combat Session. In combat-heavy sessions, Fear spends faster. Printed enemy abilities, established environmental Features, and spending 1 Fear to move one eligible NPC Spotlight earlier in the current cycle consume the pool. No spend gives an NPC a second Spotlight in that cycle. Plan for it; carry 6-8 Fear into a major combat and spend it down deliberately.

Choosing not to spend. Holding Fear for a later beat in the same session is legitimate. It creates anticipation, not a debt owed by a future session. At session end, discard what remains.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

Maren the Captain (Celestari Awakened Pilot) is negotiating with a Volkov officer. Vell the Engineer is repairing the ship's drive in the cargo bay. Tovel the Mystic is investigating a strange psionic signal coming from a sealed crate.

Round 1. Maren rolls Persuade, Success with Fear. You gain 1 Fear, subject to the hard maximum of 12 (total: 4). You make a Soft Move: *"The Volkov officer's smile tightens, but he nods. 'We have a deal. Of course.' Behind you, you hear his lieutenant quietly leave the room."* You have planted a future problem.

Round 2. Vell rolls a Knowledge Rolls on the drive, Failure with Fear. You gain 1 Fear, subject to the hard maximum of 12 (total: 5). You make a Hard Move (1 Fear, total: 4): *"The drive coils heat up. Vell, you smell ozone. You have one round before the drive coils rupture."* Now Vell has a clock, see Chapter 4.

Round 3. Tovel investigates the crate. Success with Hope. You gain no Fear; she gains 1 Hope. *"You feel the signal as a kind of grief, old, layered, but it's not hostile. You think the thing inside the crate is asleep."* This is **collaboration** Tovel's success has expanded the world.

Round 4. The lieutenant who left the room returns with armed escort. You spend 2 Fear (total: 2) to make a Hard Move: *"The lieutenant returns. Behind her, four Volkov enforcers fan out into the room. 'Captain Solas,' she says, 'I believe there has been a misunderstanding regarding the terms of your deal.'"* The negotiation has become a confrontation. The seeds you planted in Round 1 have come due.

You ended the round at 2 Fear, the negotiation has escalated, and the players have generated tension organically. This is the engine running well.

PART FOUR: HOPE: THE PLAYERS' ANSWER TO THE DARK

Hope is the players' resource. It is their ability to push back against the darkness you present. It is their tool for snatching victory from the jaws of defeat. As a Keeper, you should **respect and encourage** the use of Hope. When a player spends Hope, it is a sign that they are invested in the moment.

RESPONDING TO HOPE EXPENDITURE

When a player spends Hope, especially to use a Class Feature, invoke an Experience, or push beyond their limits, **make that moment shine**.

Narrate the success. Do not just say "Okay, you succeed." Describe *how* they succeed.

Player: "I'm spending my last 3 Hope to use my Soldier's Combat Surge and finish this beast!"

Keeper: "Yes! Describe it. What does it look like?"

Player: "I roar, and my sword ignites with a white-hot energy I've never seen before!"

Keeper: "Awesome. The energy surges down your arm. The air crackles around you. You leap forward, and your blade slices through the creature's armored hide like it's paper. It lets out one final, agonized shriek and collapses."

Hope as a story prompt. When a player uses Hope to invoke an Experience, ask them to elaborate.

Player: "I'm spending a Hope to use my Survived the Siege of Elysium experience on this roll to fortify our position."

Keeper: "Great. Tell me what memory from that siege comes to you right now. What specific lesson are you applying here?"

By making the expenditure of Hope a **narrative event**, you empower your players and make their choices feel impactful. You are collaborating with them to create a moment of heroism.

WHAT HOPE MEANS AT THE TABLE

A player at 0 Hope is a player who has been spent. They have no narrative cushion. Every roll matters. Every Failure feels heavier.

A player at 6 Hope is a player at full cushion. They have options. They are ready to take risks. They are ready to *spend*.

You should know, at any moment in your session, *roughly* how much Hope each player has. Not exactly, that's their tracking, but a sense of who is bold and who is depleted. **The bold players are the ones you can pressure.** The depleted ones need a beat of recovery, a chance to gain Hope back. Do not pile pressure on a player with 0 Hope unless the story demands it; the system will tip from challenge into punishment.

HOPE TRIGGERS WORTH REMEMBERING

The corebook lists the canonical Hope triggers (Success with Hope, Failure with Hope, certain Class Features, etc.). The Keeper-specific ones worth noting:

- **Players gain 1 path resource whenever a significant roll resolves with the Hope die higher**, regardless of success or failure: the Awakened gain 1 Hope; the Sleeping mark one segment of their two-segment Effort Track (both segments full converts to 1 Effort; trivial rolls mark nothing). This is the system's *positive engine*, even losing produces forward motion.
- **Experiences are invoked, not farmed.** The Awakened spend 1 Hope to invoke an Experience; the Sleeping invoke theirs for free. Your prompt still matters: "*How does your Experience help you here?*" When they answer well, let the invocation shine in the fiction.
- **Critical Successes use the complete Core payout.** Any matched Duality Dice, including 1+1, are an automatic success. Awakened clear 1 Stress and gain 1 Hope. Sleeping clear 1 Stress, mark both Effort Track segments, resolve the Track for 1 Effort, then gain one further point in Effort or Resolve; if Effort is full, take Resolve. On a player attack, double the complete normal damage-dice pool; on a Keeper attack, maximize that pool. Add flat modifiers once and resolve Armor Slots normally.

PART FIVE: READING THE ENGINE

Beyond the mechanics, the Keeper's craft is **reading the engine** knowing, in real time, what the emotional temperature of the table is and adjusting accordingly.

Signs the engine is **running well**:

- Players are leaning forward.
- The Spotlight rotates organically without you forcing it.
- Players are spending Hope to push for cinematic outcomes.
- You are spending Fear regularly and the spends are landing.
- The table is laughing *and* gasping in the same session.

Signs the engine is **running hot**:

- Players are tense beyond enjoyment. The fun has left.
- One player has been at 0 Hope for an extended stretch.
- The Fear pool is staying between 10 and its hard maximum of 12.
- The table is quiet in a *bad* way, not awe, but exhaustion.

When the engine is running hot, **vent**. Pause play and check in. On returning, resolve the next established consequence at its lower printed severity when one exists, reveal one previously established safe lead, or wind the scene down to a quieter beat. Venting never creates Hope, Effort, Resolve, gear, credentials, or an undeclared clue.

Signs the engine is **running cold**:

- Players are checking their phones.
- Rolls are happening but nothing feels at stake.
- Your Fear pool is at 1-2 and you can't think of what to spend it on.
- The scenes feel procedural, *they roll, you narrate, next scene*.

When the engine is running cold, **stoke**. Advance one visible clock through its printed trigger, activate one established threat or soft move, or cut to the next active scene already prepared. Stoke never introduces an unplanned enemy, hazard, fact, loss, or mechanical penalty.

PART SIX: CRAFTING COMPELLING ANTAGONISTS: MIRRORS IN THE DARK

The antagonists of *Veilfarers* are the engines of conflict. A memorable antagonist is more than just a bag of hit points and a powerful weapon. They are a **dark mirror held up to the player characters**. They are defined by their motivations, their methods, and their own tragic histories.

BEYOND THE VILLAIN: THE ANTAGONIST AS A CHARACTER

The Three-Layer Method (Chapter 11) governs every NPC of importance. The same applies to antagonists, with one specific emphasis: **the antagonist's Hidden Wound should be in some way a mirror of one or more PCs' wounds**.

A pirate captain who lost his colony to House Volkov is a mirror to the Joric PC whose family served House Volkov. A Mystic-turned-tyrant who failed her Spire training is a mirror to the PC Mystic who is still in training. A Synthetic who has been hunting the Free Fleet for decades is a mirror to the Synthetic PC who has only just chosen which side of the conflict to stand on.

The mirror does not have to be perfect. It only has to **rhyme**. When the players sense the rhyme, the antagonist stops being an obstacle and starts being a *meaningful* obstacle, a person whose defeat or redemption *matters* to the character at the center of the scene.

THE FOUR HUNGERS (APPLIED TO ANTAGONISTS)

The canonical Four Hungers framework (Chapter 11) is especially powerful for antagonist creation. Each Hunger produces a distinct antagonist type:

- **Survival Desperation** -> the antagonist is cornered by material need: air, food, medicine, shelter, or the continued survival of people under their protection. They may be tragic and dangerous at the same time.
- **Power Consolidation** -> the antagonist accumulates authority, infrastructure, followers, or leverage because they believe control is the only defense against another collapse. Defeating them means confronting the system built around them.
- **Ideological Conviction** -> the antagonist serves a vision of what the galaxy must become and accepts terrible costs in pursuit of it. Their sincerity, rather than hypocrisy, is what makes them dangerous.
- **Revenge and Retribution** -> the antagonist has narrowed their world to an injury and the person, House, faction, or culture they blame for it. They seek settlement, punishment, or annihilation even when achieving it will destroy them.

THE ANTAGONIST'S COST

Every significant antagonist should carry a **cost**: something they have lost or sacrificed to become who they are. This cost is what the PCs *feel* when they meet the antagonist face-to-face for the first time. The cost is what makes the antagonist real.

Examples of antagonist costs:

- *Lost a child to the Silence, has not spoken her name in thirty years.*
- *Has had every memory of his homeworld surgically suppressed, he chose the procedure himself.*
- *Sacrificed her Hope-Frequency attunement to gain Void mastery; she can no longer feel joy.*
- *Carries the bones of his sister in a sealed locket; she was his first kill.*
- *Cannot sleep without dreaming of the people he failed to save.*

A player who meets such an antagonist may still hate them, fight them, kill them. But they will *remember* them. That is the work.

RECURRING ANTAGONISTS VS. SINGLE-USE

Most antagonists in your campaign will be **single-use** they appear in one or two scenes and are resolved. That is fine. They do not need full Three-Layer treatment; a Surface and a clear motivation are enough.

A few antagonists will be **recurring** they appear across multiple arcs, escape capture, change positions, reveal new layers. These deserve careful building: full Three-Layer Method, clear Hunger, named cost, and a *plan*. What is the recurring antagonist *working toward*, separate from the PCs? The recurring antagonist has their own campaign happening in parallel; the PCs occasionally intersect with it.

The best recurring antagonists are the ones whose offscreen activities the Keeper *tracks*. Every session, the antagonist makes a move (often invisible to the PCs). When the PCs finally re-engage, they discover the antagonist has been *busy*. That is what makes a recurring antagonist feel real and threatening: the sense that they exist when the PCs are not looking.

PART SEVEN: THE BRAIDED RHYTHM

Hope and Fear together produce *Veilfarers's* signature drama. Neither alone produces it. A session of all-Hope spending without Fear pressure feels weightless. A session of all-Fear spending without Hope responses feels grim and grinding. The braided rhythm, *Fear-spend, then Hope-response, then Fear-spend, then Hope-response*, is the experience that defines this game.

THE MACRO PATTERN

Across a 4-hour session, expect roughly:

- **8-12 Fear spends** (one to three per major scene)
- **15-25 Hope spends** (across all players, total)
- **2-4 narrative resource moves** (Intel, Favors, Heat, see Chapter 4)
- **1-2 major reveals** (high-cost Fear spends, often combined with information drops)

The Hope-to-Fear spend ratio is roughly 2:1. This is the system's gravity: players should spend twice as much narrative currency as you do. They are the engines of the story; you are the resistance. Their currency outpaces yours because the story is *theirs*.

THE MICRO PATTERN: THE SCENE CYCLE

Within a single scene, the typical rhythm:

1. **Opening Frame** (you establish, you pay nothing). The scene begins. You describe the situation, the location, the stakes.
2. **First Action** (player declares, dice roll). Someone takes an action. Hope or Fear accrues from the result.
3. **Complication** (you spend 1 Fear). The scene escalates, a wrinkle, an obstacle, a change. The complication should arrive *fast*, within two or three player actions.
4. **Response Beat** (players act, possibly spending Hope). The crew adapts. Hope spends accumulate as they invoke abilities.
5. **Second Complication** (you spend 1 Fear, optional). If the scene has earned a second beat of pressure, you introduce it. Smaller scenes resolve before this.
6. **Resolution** (you describe outcome, possibly with a Hard Move). The scene's central question is answered. You may spend 2 Fear here if the climax is consequential. You may spend nothing if it ended on the players' terms.
7. **Pivot** (you transition). The scene closes; the next one opens.

This is the rhythm. It is *not* a checklist; it is a *pattern* that emerges from the system when run with attention. Beginning Keepers hold the pattern in mind explicitly for the first dozen sessions; experienced Keepers run it instinctively.

THE FAILURE MODE: THE STALL

Sometimes the rhythm breaks. The scene won't *spend*, Hope sits idle, Fear sits in your pool, and the table is in a flat conversational loop where no one is rolling. This is the *stall*, and it's the most common Keeper failure mode after over-spending.

When you recognize a stall:

Diagnose. Why isn't anyone rolling? Three usual causes:

- *The decision is too complex.* The players are paralyzed by a tactical situation with too many options. **Fix: simplify by force.** A clock advances. A new arrival forces a choice. The complication eliminates two options and leaves them with two.
- *The scene has no stake.* The players don't see what's at risk. **Fix: name the stake aloud.** *If you spend more than two more minutes here, the patrol will arrive.* Make the cost of inaction visible.
- *The players are debating among themselves.* This isn't always a stall, sometimes it's the table doing the work *Veilfarers* asks of it. **Fix: wait, then nudge.** Give them three minutes of in-character debate. If still circling at five minutes, introduce information that forces a choice.

In every case, the *spend* breaks the stall. Either a Fear spend on your part, or a triggered Hope spend on the players' part. The system *wants* movement; your job is to provide friction when the players have momentum, and to provide a push when they don't.

PART EIGHT: ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

THE TELEGRAPHED SPEND

Sometimes you want the players to *know* you're spending Fear. You can say it out loud: *I'm going to spend 2 Fear here*. This is a powerful move when used well, it signals to the table that what's coming is *consequential*, and a damaging move when overused, it transforms the game from a story into a competition.

Use the telegraphed spend in three cases:

1. **At the end of a long arc**, when the climactic complication needs to feel *weighted*. *I have 6 Fear on me. I'm going to spend 4 of them. Here's what happens*. The transparency tells the table that the moment is earned.
2. **When the complication is a major reveal**. Some reveals deserve table-acknowledgment. Spending Fear out loud frames the reveal as the *paid* moment that it is.
3. **When the players have done something brilliant** and you want to honor it by not springing the next complication unannounced. *I was going to spend 3 Fear here and twist this hard. You played that so well I'm only going to spend 1*. This builds trust at the table; it makes the players feel seen.

Outside these cases, *don't telegraph*. The default is silent, Fear flows behind the screen, in your private pool, and the players experience the result without the metanarrative of the spend.

THE SAVING MOVE

Sometimes you have a *specific* Fear spend that you're planning toward, a major reveal, a campaign-defining hard move, a Vault that you want to trigger at exactly the right moment. The discipline of holding Fear for this spend is what experienced Keepers call *the saving move*.

How to save Fear without falling into the hoarding trap:

- **Spend regularly anyway**. Don't let your overall pool grow above 6 just because you're saving. Spend 1s and 2s through the session while preserving a *floor* you'll dip into for the planned move.
- **Mark the saved Fear conceptually**. *Three of these eight tokens are for the Tellurian reveal in scene six*. Some Keepers physically separate them; some just hold the mental note.
- **Let the moment go if it doesn't arrive**. If by end of session the planned moment hasn't surfaced, the players took an unexpected path, the trigger scene didn't materialize, *spend the Fear anyway* on something else, and re-plan the reveal for next session. Don't end the session with 6 Fear because you were saving for a moment that didn't come.

THE HOPE RECIPROCATION

When a player makes a particularly affecting Hope spend, invoking a Mastery in a way that lands the table, or describing the cost of the invocation in genuinely moving terms, you can *reciprocate* by giving them 1 Hope back at the end of the scene. This is not a regular thing; do it perhaps three or four times per campaign. But when you do, it tells the table that *roleplay matters* in this game's economy as much as mechanical efficiency does.

Some of the best moments of *Veilfarers* play come from players who are willing to *spend Hope just for the description*, and that willingness only grows when the table sees it occasionally rewarded.

THE PAUSE FOR PERMISSION

Once or twice per campaign, a Fear spend will feel *too consequential to use without checking*. The Hard Move you're contemplating will kill a beloved NPC, or radically alter the campaign's central premise, or punish a player for a choice they made in good faith. In these cases, *pause and ask the table*. Step out of voice. Address the players directly. *I'd like to spend 4 Fear here on a move that would mean X. Are we OK with that, or should I find another way?*

This is not weakness. It is the deepest form of Keeper craft. The game is collaborative; the table has authority over the campaign's emotional shape; and a Keeper who recognizes when their planned move exceeds the unspoken contract earns trust that pays back tenfold over.

The pause for permission is rare. When you use it, it should always be on the side of *more care, not less*. You

never need to ask before a routine Fear spend. You *always* need to ask before a move that crosses into the table's emotional territory in ways the table hasn't pre-agreed to.

PART NINE: DIAGNOSING YOUR ECONOMY

After three or four sessions of running *Veilfarers*, take a moment to look at your Hope/Fear patterns. Ask yourself:

Have I spent regularly, or hoarded? Look at the end-of-session Fear counts. If most sessions end with you at 6-8 Fear, you're hoarding. If most end at 0-1, you're over-spending and probably grinding the players.

Have my spends produced changes, or just damage? Look at three or four memorable moments from the last session. How many were complications that introduced *new information or new stakes*, versus how many were damage-spends? If the damage-to-complication ratio is over 50%, the sessions are skewing toward combat-grind.

Have I reciprocated Hope, or just observed it? Did you give *any* Hope to players this session as direct rewards for roleplay or cleverness? If not, consider it for next session.

Have my players spent freely, or hoarded? Look at end-of-session Hope counts across the table. If most players end most sessions at 5-6 Hope, they're hoarding, which usually means *they're not seeing the spend opportunities, or they're afraid the spend won't pay off*. Both are solvable, both are your responsibility to notice.

Has the table seemed to enjoy itself? This is the only question that ultimately matters. The numbers are diagnostic; the joy is the goal. If the table is engaged, leaning forward, talking about scenes between sessions, your economy is healthy regardless of what the numbers say. If the table is checking phones, drifting attention, losing characters between sessions, diagnose harder.

CLOSING: FEED THE ENGINE

This chapter has given you the **engine** Hope, Fear, Keeper Moves, the reading of the table, and the antagonists who will land your Fear spends with weight.

The mechanics are simple. The craft is in the *timing*. When to Soft Move. When to escalate. When to spend Fear and when to hold it. When to let a player succeed. When to make them pay. When to vent the engine and when to stoke it.

You will get this wrong sometimes. Every Keeper does. The engine is robust to your mistakes; the next session will give you another chance to read it better. The work is in the noticing. *Watch the table. Spend with intention. Honor Hope. Earn Fear.*

The engine wants to run. Feed it well.

CHAPTER 3

PACING: SESSIONS, ARCS, CAMPAIGNS

"The session is a heartbeat. The arc is a breath. The campaign is the long inhale that began before you sat down and will continue after you stand up. Your job, Keeper, is not to control the rhythm, only to listen for it and clear the way."

Master Keeper Elia Joric-Vain, Five Years of the Voidwalker Table

WHY PACING MATTERS

A campaign is a years-long collaboration. The Keeper carries it. This chapter covers the **three scales of pacing** at which your campaign breathes:

1. **The Session** 3-4 hours of table time, 3-5 scenes, one beating heart.
2. **The Active Arc** 3-6 sessions of focused work toward a specific job or story.
3. **The Long Campaign** 20-40 sessions of arcs and Downtime, building toward something.

Each scale has its own rhythm. A Keeper who only knows the session scale will produce campaigns that feel like a sequence of disconnected episodes. A Keeper who only knows the campaign scale will produce sessions that feel like setup with no payoff. A Keeper who masters all three scales, *and the transitions between them*, produces the campaigns players talk about for years.

This chapter is divided into four parts:

- **Part I, The Session.** Structure, pacing within session, opening and closing rituals.
- **Part II, Downtime: The Long Quiet.** The system for the space between active sessions.
- **Part III, The Active Arc.** Multi-session story design, the structure of a job.
- **Part IV, The Long Campaign and the Silent Symphony.** The three-movement framework for a complete campaign.

PART ZERO: FRAMING THE CAMPAIGN

Before play begins, the Keeper makes a series of decisions that will define the entire campaign. The framing sets what kind of campaign this is, what stakes will feel true, what behavior will be rewarded, what kinds of stories the system will produce.

This is **Part Zero** because it happens before the campaign starts. Get this right, and everything else gets

easier. Get it wrong, and you will fight friction for thirty sessions.

THE THREE TONE SLIDERS

Every *Veilfarers* campaign sits somewhere on three sliders. The Keeper should know, and probably tell the table, where their campaign sits.

SLIDER ONE: HOPEFUL <-> BLEAK

How much hope is in the world? **Bleak** campaigns emphasize the long shadow of the Silence, the brokenness of the post-collapse galaxy, the difficulty of any victory. **Hopeful** campaigns emphasize the work of rebuilding, the small bright moments, the fact that the crew *can* make a difference.

The base game assumes a *middle-hopeful* tone, the galaxy is fractured, but the work is worth doing, and the crew is part of how it gets better. If your campaign leans bleaker (the Free Fleet is dying,

the Houses are corrupt to the core), tell your players. They will play differently. If your campaign leans more hopeful (the crew can genuinely restore something), tell them that too, they will commit to that restoration in ways they would not commit to mere survival.

SLIDER TWO: PERSONAL <-> POLITICAL

How much does the campaign focus on the crew's personal arcs versus the larger galactic politics? **Personal** campaigns dwell on relationships, individual goals, character development. **Political** campaigns dwell on faction conflicts, House intrigues, the Imperial-Free Fleet tension.

Most campaigns end up somewhere in the middle, but the *primary focus* matters. A personal-leaning campaign treats House Volkov's civil war as a backdrop to Maren's personal arc; a political-leaning campaign treats Maren's personal arc as a sidelight to the civil war. Both work; they require different framing.

SLIDER THREE: COMBAT-FOCUSED <-> NARRATIVE-FOCUSED

How much of play is fights versus other interactions?

Combat-focused campaigns expect 1-2 firefights or starship combats per session. **Narrative-focused** campaigns may go three or four sessions without a fight, focusing on negotiation, investigation, exploration, and character work.

Veilfarers supports both extremes. The base assumption is *balanced*, perhaps one combat scene per session, with the rest of the time on other modes. If your table prefers more combat, lean in. If they prefer less, lean in the other direction. **Just be deliberate about it.**

FREQUENCY AND LENGTH

The standard *Veilfarers* campaign:

- **Session length:** 3-4 hours
- **Session frequency:** Weekly or bi-weekly
- **Campaign arc length:** 20-40 sessions for a complete campaign
- **Active arc length:** 3-6 sessions per major job/arc These are defaults, not requirements. Shorter campaigns (8-12 sessions) work for focused single-arc stories; longer campaigns (60+ sessions) work for ambitious multi-generation epics. The table decides what fits.

SESSION ZERO

We strongly recommend a **Session Zero** a half-session before the campaign begins where the table:

1. **Talks about the three tone sliders.** Where will this campaign sit? Tell the players. Make sure no one is surprised by the tone in session three.
2. **Discusses what content is on the table and what is off.** This is the safety conversation. Different tables tolerate different intensities of violence, body horror, intimate themes, and political darkness. Talk about it now.
3. **Builds characters together.** Each player explains their concept; the Keeper notes connections. Two characters from the same House? Two characters with overlapping backstories? Two characters who fled the same disaster? Find the threads.
4. **Names the ship.** Or whatever the equivalent unifying element is. The crew's ship is, in *Veilfarers*, often the eighth character at the table.
5. **Establishes Lines and Veils.** *Lines* are topics the table will not touch (graphic

depictions of sexual violence, child harm, suicidal ideation). *Veils* are topics that can be referenced but not depicted in detail (torture, religious trauma, mental illness, depending on the table).

- Name them. 6. **Sets meta-expectations.** How often will we play? How long are sessions? What's our absence policy? Who provides snacks?

Session Zero is the **single highest-ROI investment** a campaign can make. Tables that skip it pay for it later, often dramatically. The two hours you spend before the campaign starts save twenty hours of friction across the year that follows.

A Session Zero need not be elaborate. A focused two-hour conversation, taking notes, with the players present and engaged, is enough.

PART I: THE SESSION

A standard *Veilfarers* session is **3-4 hours of table time** containing **3-5 scenes**.

THE SESSION CONTAINER

Every session has roughly the same shape:

PHASE	DURATION	PURPOSE
Arrival & Recap	5-10 min	Reconnect; remind table of where we left off
Opening Scene	20-30 min	Re-establish situation; ease in
Main Action	90-120 min	The core work of the session, combat, investigation, negotiation
Climax	30-45 min	The decisive moment of the session
Resolution & Hook	10-20 min	What changed; what's next

These are rough guides. A session that opens with a firefight might compress Arrival & Opening into one beat. A session focused on a long investigation might have no clear Climax in the combat sense, instead, the climactic moment is a revelation. Adjust as needed.

THE OPENING RITUAL

The first five minutes of a session set the temperature of everything that follows. Most experienced Keepers develop an **opening ritual**:

- **Brief recap.** *"Last session, you escaped the Tellurian Reach but Vell took a gut shot that's still healing. You're docked at Hayford Pyre. The Volkov officer you spoke with mentioned a "package" is en route. It's been two days."*
- **Establish the moment.** *"It's 22:17 local time. The station is quiet."*
- **Maren, you're in the captain's quarters with the door locked, going over the contract again. Vell, you're in medbay. Tovel is meditating in cargo hold three. Saber is on the bridge. The captain's comm just chirped. Who answers?"**
- **One mood-setting detail.** *"The lights in the corridor are dimmer than usual, Hayford Pyre runs night cycles."*

Three sentences. Then, *what do you do?*

Avoid: - Long lectures about lore the players already know. - Asking *"Where do you all want to start?"* as the opening question, that abdicates pacing. - Starting at a low-energy beat (a long meal scene) when the table is *also* at low energy.

The opening should *raise* energy. Even a quiet opening should *invite* engagement.

THE CLOSING RITUAL

The last ten minutes of a session set the temperature of *the next session*. Most experienced Keepers also develop a closing ritual:

- **Reach a narrative beat.** End on a moment that has *resolution*, a question answered, a fight ended, a revelation delivered. Not necessarily the climax, sometimes the closing beat is *after* the climax, a quieter resolution.
- **Leave a hook.** A question for next session. A new piece of information. An NPC at the door. *"Three days later, you're docked at Aurelius Prime. As you step off the ramp, a courier is waiting. She holds out a wax-sealed envelope addressed to Captain Solas. The seal is House Valerius. The wax is still warm."*
- **Brief debrief.** *"Anything you want to flag for next time? Anyone want a recap of where their Hope or Stress is?"* This is also the moment for **safety checks**: *"Anything that landed harder than expected? Anything to flag?"*

End on rhythm. The hook should feel like the start of a phrase, not the end of one. The players should leave the table *wanting* the next session.

WHEN THE SESSION STALLS

Sometimes a session loses energy. Signs: - Players miss sessions or arrive late. - Sessions feel routine. - Decisions feel low-stakes. - The table jokes more than they engage.

When this happens, the Keeper has tools:

- **Escalate a faction.** Have a faction the crew has been ignoring make a major move that demands their attention.
- **Introduce a new NPC of weight.** A character who matters to the campaign in a clear way.
- **Reveal something.** A hidden truth, a betrayal, a discovery, something that changes how the crew sees the world.
- **Compress.** Skip the procedural and jump to the consequential. *"Three weeks later, you're docked at,"*
- **Ask the players.** Sometimes the right move is to step out of role and say: *"I'm not feeling the energy. What would make this more interesting for you?"*

The last option is the most important. Tables sometimes need to *talk about the campaign as a campaign*. Make the space.

PART II: DOWNTIME: THE LONG QUIET

Between active sessions, *Veilfarers* campaigns alternate with a different kind of play: **Downtime**, the space where characters land, recover, and become more themselves.

A campaign that skips Downtime is a campaign that never lets its characters land. The work in this part of the chapter is what lets them land.

WHEN DOWNTIME HAPPENS

The standard pacing: a *Veilfarers* campaign alternates between **active arcs** (3-6 sessions of focused work toward a specific job or story) and **Downtime phases** (1-2 sessions, or sometimes just half a session, when the active work has ended and the crew has time).

Downtime triggers are typically:

- **End of a major arc.** The crew completed the Tellurian job; everyone is paid; nothing immediate is in the queue.
- **Forced wait.** The ship needs a week-long refit; the next FTL window doesn't open for ten days; the contact they need won't see them for a fortnight.
- **Story-driven pause.** A major NPC has died; the crew needs time. A revelation has dropped; the crew needs to process.

- **Player request.** The table wants to slow down. Someone has unfinished personal arcs. The Keeper agrees.

The Keeper declares Downtime when it makes sense; players can request it when they feel it would. A campaign should average roughly **one Downtime phase per active arc** so a 30-session campaign produces 5-6 active arcs and 5-6 Downtime phases.

THE DOWNTIME PHASE STRUCTURE

A Downtime phase has three components:

1. Setup. The Keeper sets the scene. Where is the crew? Approximately how much in-fiction time will pass? What is the *texture* of this Downtime, celebratory, mournful, anxious, exhausted? Each Downtime phase has a feeling, and that feeling shapes what the characters do in it.

2. Activity Declaration. Each PC declares **one or more Downtime Activities**. The number depends on the length of the phase: - *Short Downtime* (a few days): 1 Activity per character. - *Standard Downtime* (one to two weeks): 2 Activities per character. - *Long Downtime* (a month or more): 3 Activities per character.

3. Resolution. The Keeper resolves each Activity in narrative order. Some Activities produce immediate mechanical effects; others produce narrative seeds the next arc will pay off. The Keeper notes outstanding consequences and brings them into the next session.

A full Downtime phase typically takes one half-session to two sessions of table time, depending on how rich the table makes it.

DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES

The standard menu of Activities. A character can repeat the same Activity across multiple Downtime phases, or choose a different one each time.

REST AND RECOVERY

The most common Activity. The character takes deliberate, careful rest.

Effect:

- All Stress cleared.
- All HP recovered to maximum.
- Choose: clear one marked Experience, recover one Augmentation Degradation Level, or recover one Bruise/Scar that is healing (Keeper's call on whether it qualifies).

Cost: No mechanical cost. Time and intentionality.

Use it when: The character is depleted, marked, or wounded in ways the active-play recovery cannot fix.

CRAFT AND MODIFY

The Engineer's signature Downtime work, but available to any character with appropriate skill and tools.

Effect:

- Repair one piece of damaged equipment.
- Or craft a Tier 1 item from scratch (provided workshop access).
- Or install one Modification on a weapon or armor piece (Hardpoint cost as per Chapter 13 of the corebook).
- Or upgrade a Tier 1 item to Tier 2 (with appropriate components, Knowledge Roll, DC 15).

Cost: Components or parts (Keeper-mediated; typically 1-4 Credits of materials).

Prerequisites: Tool Kit (Common), Workshop access (Military), or specific specialty (Experimental).

Use it when: The crew has accumulated damage, wants to install mods, or needs a custom solution for the next arc.

TRAIN AND PRACTICE

The character works deliberately on a skill or capability.

Effect:

- Advance one Experience by one rank (max 3). Lower-rank Experiences require ten sessions to advance from this Activity alone; higher-rank Experiences require focused training or specific teaching.
- Or begin work on acquiring a new Experience entirely, this typically takes 2-3 Downtime phases of training before the Experience is fully formed and usable.
- Or train an ally, give them a +1 to one specific roll type for the next arc, in your specialty.

Use it when: The character wants to improve specifically and the campaign has space for it. Particularly useful between Tier transitions.

NETWORK AND INFLUENCE

The character builds standing within a faction or among contacts.

Effect:

- Gain one specific NPC contact within a chosen faction.
- Or improve standing with a faction the character already has contact in.
- Or gather intelligence on a target, the Keeper provides specific actionable information.

Cost: Often a small Wealth expenditure (1-2 Credits for hosting, gifts, or introduction fees).

Use it when: The crew is mid-campaign and needs to build the social/political infrastructure their later jobs will require.

PERSONAL PROJECT

The character works on a *long-arc* personal goal, something not immediately mechanical but story-significant. Common projects:

- **Restore a lost relationship.** Repair a fracture with a family member, old crewmate, or estranged ally.
- **Build a thing.** A workshop, a personal vessel, a small business.
- **Pursue a question.** Investigate a personal mystery (parentage, an old wound, a Veil-touched dream).
- **Develop an art.** Writing, music, a craft, a discipline.
- **Recover an Anchor.** For a Sleeping character: rebuild or remake the Recovery Anchor.

Cost: Variable. Personal Projects often consume multiple Downtime phases.

Use it when: The character is approaching a personal arc resolution, or starting one.

INVESTIGATION

The character pursues a specific question, about an NPC, a location, an event, an artifact. The Keeper provides specific information related to the question. The amount and quality of information scales with the time spent and the character's relevant skills.

Prerequisites: Some level of relevant access.

Use it when: The crew has questions the active play has not answered.

RECONCILIATION

The character deliberately addresses a damaged relationship, within the crew, with an NPC, or with themselves.

Effect:

- Mend a *named damaged relationship* with another character.
- Or clear a long-running emotional/Stress source the character has been carrying.
- Or declare a *new arc*, the character has decided to face a specific personal challenge, and the next session will reflect this.

Use it when: The character has been carrying weight from the campaign and wants to set it down.

INDULGENCE

The character does something purely for themselves, without mechanical benefit, without progression, simply because it is what they want.

Effect: No mechanical effect. Possible *narrative* effects (the character notices something they were too tired to notice before; an NPC takes interest in the indulgence; a relationship deepens).

Use it when: The character (and player) needs to step back. Some of the best campaign moments come from indulgence Downtimes.

A WORKED EXAMPLE: VELL'S TIER 2 DOWNTIME

The *Vagrant Star* crew has just completed the Tellurian Reach arc. The ship needs a week-long refit; the crew has 10 days of station time at Hayford Pyre. Standard Downtime (two Activities per character).

Vell, Activity One: Craft and Modify. Vell's *Hela* wrench was damaged in the salvage. She uses the first three days of Downtime to perform a full restoration. Knowledge roll DC 10 with Advantage. She rolls 17. Success. *Hela* is restored to full function. She also carves a small inscription into the handle: "M.K. -> V.K. -> ?", three generations of Kuroganes in the wrench's lineage, with a space for the next.

Vell, Activity Two: Personal Project. Vell drafts a letter to her grandmother. She has not written in seven months, since before Tellurian. The Keeper notes that the next time the crew passes near the Bloomstrider home grove, the grandmother will be aware they are coming. This produces a story seed for the next arc.

Maren, Activity One: Network and Influence. Builds a contact within House Valerius, a junior merchant named Lyria. Reachable for one favor in the next arc.

Maren, Activity Two: Investigation. Researches the Tellurian incident's deeper backstory. The Keeper provides one significant piece of information: the cargo's manifest mentions a House Kurogane shadow company. This becomes a campaign thread.

Tovel, Activity One: Rest and Recovery. Clears 1 Stress, recovers a marked Experience.

Tovel, Activity Two: Train and Practice. Begins work on a new Experience, "*Patient Diplomat*." The training is partial; one more Downtime phase will complete it.

Saber, Activity One: Reconciliation. She has been carrying the weight of a moment in Tellurian Reach where she failed to save a civilian. She spends three days in deliberate processing, writes the civilian's name in her father's logbook. The campaign now treats this as a resolved arc.

Saber, Activity Two: Indulgence. She visits a Joric cultural center on the station, sees a traditional combat-meditation performance, eats food from her ancestral region, sleeps a full night without dreams.

No mechanical effect; the narrative effect is that she returns to active play more *herself* than before.

The crew returns to active play with a different shape than they would have if Downtime had been skipped. **This is what the system is for.**

CRAFTING PROCEDURE (QUICK REFERENCE)

For the Engineer-heavy Downtimes, the procedure for Crafting:

Components needed: - Plans or schematics -Materials (equivalent to half the credit cost of the finished item) - Workshop (Common: tool kit; Military: workshop; Experimental: lab) - Time (Common: 2-6 hours; Military: 1-3 days; Experimental: 1-2 weeks)

Procedure:

- Declare the project and confirm plans, materials, and workshop access.
- Set the DC by Technology Tier: Common DC 10, Military DC 15, Experimental DC 20, or Precursor DC 25.
- Roll Knowledge and resolve one of the five standard outcomes.
- **Critical Success:** craft the item and consume half the required materials. The first Core Trait Roll that materially uses it during its first mission has Advantage; after that Roll, this benefit ends.
- **Success with Hope:** craft the item and consume the required materials.
- **Success with Fear:** craft the item and consume the required materials; the Keeper gains 1 Fear, subject to the hard maximum of 12.
- **Failure with Hope:** do not craft the item; retain half the required materials and learn what additional requirement would permit another attempt.
- **Failure with Fear:** do not craft the item and consume the required materials. The workshop goes offline until someone spends 1 hour restoring and recalibrating it; no second Roll or additional complication occurs.

Crafting does not bypass Wealth Tier acquisition limits in general, but it provides an *alternative path*, a Tier 1 character with the right schematic, materials, and Workshop can produce Military-tier equipment they could not normally afford. The cost is in time and skill rather than Wealth. This is, in our experience, the path most Engineer PCs walk: their craft becomes their economy.

PART III: THE ACTIVE ARC

An **active arc** is a multi-session story focused on a single major job, mystery, or conflict. Most *Veilfarers* campaigns consist of 5-8 such arcs over their lifespan.

ARC STRUCTURE

A typical active arc has four phases:

Phase 1: The Setup (Session 1). The arc's central conflict is introduced. The crew accepts a job, discovers a mystery, or faces a problem they cannot ignore. Stakes are established. The opening question is posed.

Phase 2: The Complication (Sessions 2-3). Things are not as they seemed. New information changes the situation. Allies and enemies are introduced. The crew has to revise their plan. Often a Hard Move from the Keeper at the end of one of these sessions kicks the arc into higher gear.

Phase 3: The Push (Sessions 3-5). The crew commits to a course of action. Resources are spent. Allies are called upon. The opposition tightens. Stakes feel real now.

Phase 4: The Resolution (Last Session of Arc). The arc's central question is answered, for better or worse. Consequences land. The crew's choices have shaped the outcome. A Downtime phase typically follows.

DESIGNING AN ARC

When designing an arc, the Keeper should answer three questions before play begins:

1. **What is the central question?** The crew must answer this by the end of the arc. *"Can they save Vell's grandmother?" "Will they betray House Valerius for House Joric?" "Who killed Captain Veska?"*
2. **What is at stake?** Concrete consequences for success and failure. *"If they fail, the grove dies." "If they betray Valerius, they lose access to the Pearl trade." "If they don't solve Veska's murder, the crew is implicated."*
3. **What are the opposing forces?** Three to five named NPCs and/or factions whose actions shape the arc. Each one should have a clear goal that may or may not align with the crew's.

With those three questions answered, the Keeper has the *skeleton* of an arc. The session-by-session events will emerge from play.

CONNECTING ARCS

Most arcs in a campaign should **leave threads loose**. The arc's central question is resolved, but new questions are opened. The crew has new contacts, new enemies, new debts.

A few practical heuristics:

- **One open thread per closed arc.** Every arc closure should plant at least one seed for a future arc.
- **Recurring NPCs across arcs.** The Volkov officer from arc one shows up again in arc four. The crew's relationship with that NPC has evolved across the campaign.
- **Faction consequences ripple.** A move against House Kurogane in arc two should affect what House Kurogane is willing to do for the crew in arc five.

A well-designed campaign is **arcs linked by consequence**. Each arc is satisfying on its own, but each arc also makes the next arc possible.

PART IV: THE LONG CAMPAIGN: THE SILENT SYMPHONY

A good *Veilfarers* campaign is not just a string of unrelated adventures. It is a **symphony with distinct movements, recurring themes, and a powerful crescendo**. This framework, the **Silent Symphony** helps you structure a complete campaign arc that feels cohesive and satisfying.

MOVEMENT 1: THE STATIC HISS (THE HOOK AND INITIAL MYSTERY)

This is the beginning of your campaign. Your goal here is to introduce the central mystery and give the players a deeply personal reason to care about it.

- **The Personal Hook.** Make it personal. The distress call is not from a stranger; it is from the Diplomat's long-lost sister. The strange artifact is not just a rumor; it is a device the Scholar's mentor died trying to find.
- **Establish the Core Conflict.** Introduce the main factions and their opposing goals related to the mystery. House Kurogane wants the artifact for its technology. The Church wants to destroy it as a heretical object.
- **Endgame.** This movement ends when the players have solved the initial mystery but have uncovered a much larger, more dangerous truth. They found the sister, but she is now psychically bonded to the artifact and cannot be separated from it.

Typical duration: **2-3 active arcs (10-15 sessions)**.

MOVEMENT 2: THE FRACTURED SIGNAL (THE COMPLICATION AND RISING STAKES)

In this movement, the consequences of the players' initial actions begin to ripple across the galaxy. The major factions are now aware of the players and the object of their quest.

- **Raise the Stakes.** The factions begin to act more directly. House Kurogane sends a team of professional soldiers to acquire the artifact by force. The Church declares the players to be heretics and places a bounty on their heads.
- **Introduce Allies and Rivals.** The players cannot survive alone. They will need to seek help. This is where they might forge an alliance with a third faction or a powerful independent NPC. This is also where a recurring rival, a bounty hunter, a corporate agent, can be introduced.
- **The Twist.** This movement should end with a major plot twist that changes the players' understanding of the core conflict. The "artifact" is not just a machine. It is a prison. And the being trapped inside it is starting to wake up. Typical duration: **2-3 active arcs (10-15 sessions)**.

MOVEMENT 3: THE CLEAREST FREQUENCY (THE CLIMAX AND BRUTAL CHOICE)

This is the finale. All the plot threads converge. All the clocks tick down. The players are now at the center of a galactic crisis.

- **The Impossible Goal.** The players now have a clear but incredibly difficult objective. They must get the artifact to a specific place, perform a specific ritual, or make a choice that will decide its fate, and perhaps the fate of the sector.
- **The Final Confrontation.** All the opposing forces descend on the players at once. This is the final, epic showdown where the players must use every skill, every resource, and every alliance they have gathered.
- **The Brutal Choice.** The final act should not be a simple victory. It should be a difficult, meaningful choice with no perfect answer. Free the ancient being to save the Diplomat's sister, but risk releasing a powerful and unknown entity on the galaxy? Or destroy the artifact, sacrificing the sister but ensuring the galaxy remains safe?
- **The Aftermath.** The campaign ends with a quiet epilogue, showing the consequences of the players' final choice. The galaxy is changed because of them. Their story becomes a new legend whispered in the dark.

Typical duration: **2-4 sessions (single arc or shorter)**.

WHEN TO END A CAMPAIGN

Most campaigns should *end*, not fade. Signs a campaign is ready to end:

- The central question has been answered or chosen.
- The crew has gone through a major arc together.
- One or more players is ready to play something different.
- The table is repeating itself.

When you sense the end is near, **announce it**. *"I think we have three to four more sessions in this campaign. Let's make them count."*

The Keeper sets the rhythm. The ending is part of the rhythm. A campaign that ends *deliberately* is one that the table will remember.

HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS: THE KEEPER'S GUIDE TO THE GRAY

Running a game in a morally ambiguous setting like *Veilfarers* can present unique challenges. Here is some advice for handling common difficult situations.

WHEN PLAYERS GO DARK

The setting is bleak. Sometimes, players will accept this and have their characters perform ruthless or morally questionable acts. **Do not punish this.** *Veilfarers* is not a game about being shining heroes. Instead, **show the consequences.** If they execute a surrendering enemy, that enemy's family might hire assassins to hunt them. If they betray a faction, their reputation plummets, and a powerful new enemy is made. The world should react realistically to their actions. Their dark choices should have dark consequences that *create more story, not end it.*

WHEN PLAYERS ARE INDECISIVE

The choices in *Veilfarers* are often hard. Sometimes, the players will be paralyzed by indecision. When this happens, **make a move.** Have the universe force their hand. The enemy patrol they were debating how to handle? They just spotted the players. The bomb they were arguing about how to disarm? It just started ticking faster. This forces them to act and keeps the momentum going.

WHEN A PLAYER CHARACTER DIES

Death in *Veilfarers* should be meaningful. At 0 HP a character becomes **Dying**, then may progress to **Final** under Corebook Chapter 10. A Dying or Final player may voluntarily replace a progress roll with the Death Move, Blaze of Glory; it is never forced by a hit, adversary, or Fear spend. Once a Death Move resolves, the character dies irrevocably. Give the player the full Spotlight and let them describe the act. If the character dies through ordinary Final Progress, acknowledge the loss and discuss a new character after the scene; do not bypass the procedure with an improvised resurrection.

SAYING "YES" TO YOUR PLAYERS

Your players will have amazing ideas that you never anticipated. They will want to start their own minor faction, build a trading post, or try to redeem a villain you thought was irredeemable. **Your instinct should always be to say "yes" and build on their ideas.** Use the game's mechanics to support them. Want to build a trading post? Great. That's a complex task clock. Want to redeem a villain? That is a long and difficult process of Presence Rolls made for social interaction and earning trust. By embracing your players' goals, you make the story truly theirs. You are not just telling them a story; you are building one together. And that is the most rewarding part of being a Keeper.

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG AT THE TABLE

Sometimes table interactions go wrong. A player crosses a line; an interaction becomes uncomfortable; the energy turns negative.

The Keeper's responsibility:

- **Stop play.** Don't push through.
- **Address it directly.** "Hey, that landed hard. Are we OK?"
- **Use the Lines and Veils.** If something violated the table's stated boundaries, name that.
- **Adjust.** Move on, but adjust. The table will remember.

The Keeper is not a therapist, but the Keeper is the one with the power to *pause the game*. Use it when needed.

CLOSING: THE HEARTBEAT, THE BREATH, THE LONG INHALE

This chapter has covered three scales of pacing: the session, the active arc, and the long campaign. Each has its own rhythm. Each requires a different kind of attention.

A good Keeper learns to **shift attention** between scales. In the middle of a scene, you are tracking the heartbeat, beat by beat, Spotlight by Spotlight. Between scenes, you are tracking the session, Spark, Burn, Flare, Afterglow. Between sessions, you are tracking the arc, Setup, Complication, Push, Resolution. Across many sessions, you are tracking the campaign, the Silent Symphony rising toward its Clearest Frequency.

You will get the timing wrong sometimes. Every Keeper does. The campaign is robust to your mistakes. The next session, the next arc, the next movement will give you another chance to read the rhythm better.

The work is in the noticing. *Listen to the table. Adjust. Trust the system.*

The galaxy will wait. The story will keep. The rhythm is always there if you stop and feel for it.

CHAPTER 4

CLOCKS AND THE NARRATIVE ECONOMY

"You think the Keeper's most powerful tool is the dice. It is not. The most powerful tool is the circle you draw on the table at the start of the scene, six segments, slowly filling in, and the way the players cannot stop looking at it."

From a Keeper's field journal, recovered after a particularly grueling campaign

WHY THIS CHAPTER MATTERS

The Hope/Fear engine (Chapter 2) handles the moment-to-moment pressure of *Veilfarers*. The pacing framework (Chapter 3) handles the rhythm of sessions and arcs. This chapter handles everything in between, the tools that **bridge** the moment and the campaign:

- **Clocks**, the most powerful pacing tool in the Keeper's toolkit.
- **The Narrative Economy** Intel, Favors, and Heat, three tracked resources that make the political and social fabric of the campaign *real*.

A Keeper who uses clocks well runs sessions where the players feel the world ticking. A Keeper who tracks Intel/Favors/Heat runs campaigns where the players' choices have *political weight*. Together, these tools are what make the difference between a *Veilfarers* campaign that feels like a sequence of fights and one that feels like a galaxy you live in.

PART ONE: CLOCKS: THE CLOCKWORK OF DOOM

A **clock** is a simple but devastating tool. It is a circle divided into a number of segments (typically 4, 6, 8, or 10). When a specific condition is met, you fill in one segment. When the clock is full, a dreaded event occurs.

That is the entire mechanic. The power is in the *visualization*.

When players see a clock ticking down, they feel the pressure in a way that simple narration cannot achieve. The abstract becomes concrete. The hidden becomes visible. The future becomes *imminent*. A clock on the table is a promise that **time is moving even when the players are not**.

HOW TO DRAW A CLOCK

Many tables use a physical circle drawn on a notecard or whiteboard. Some use a digital tracker. The format matters less than the **visibility**: the clock must be where every player can see it, throughout the scene, every moment of the session.

Some Keepers use **hidden clocks** they track them privately and reveal them when relevant. This is occasionally useful for surprise reveals, but most clocks should be *visible*. The pressure is the point.

TYPES OF CLOCKS

Clocks are incredibly versatile. You can use them to track anything that is progressing toward a single, dramatic outcome.

RACE AGAINST TIME CLOCK

This is the most common type. It tracks a straightforward countdown to a negative event.

Example: A visible 6-segment **Reactor Meltdown** clock marks 1 segment when a Roll made directly to cool, isolate, or repair the reactor resolves Failure with Fear, or when a printed reactor Feature states that it advances. At 6, the reactor explodes using the damage and evacuation procedure declared when the clock was introduced. Unrelated failure, delay, or Fear spending never advances it.

Race Against Time clocks are particularly effective in: -Hostile environments (atmospheric leak, radiation, freezing) - Time-sensitive missions (the diplomat's flight leaves in three hours) - Climactic scenes where stakes need to feel real

FACTION GOAL CLOCK

Use this to track the progress of a faction's off-screen agenda. This makes the world feel alive and reactive.

Example: Create a visible 8-segment **House Valerius Secures Trade Monopoly** clock and name three active acquisitions. At the end of an arc, mark 1 segment for each named acquisition Valerius completed without opposition, maximum 2 per arc. A printed faction action or a crew Failure with Fear made directly while contesting an acquisition may mark 1 additional segment if declared before that Roll. At 8, Valerius gains monopoly control of those named routes; downstream prices and access change only through the consequences stated when the clock was introduced. Declining an adventure hook never advances a clock by itself.

This gives the players a reason to care about the wider political world. If they don't engage with the faction, the faction wins anyway. *That is the pressure.*

A campaign can sustain **3-5 Faction Goal Clocks** running simultaneously. Each represents a different major faction's current objective. When a clock fills, that faction's goal is achieved, and the campaign world *changes*.

INVESTIGATION CLOCK

This clock tracks the progress of the opposition, the people looking for the players, or working against them.

Example: A 4-segment clock labeled **"The Assassin Closes In."** The players are being hunted. The Keeper ticks the clock when they leave a trail, when they stay in one place for too long, or when they fail a roll to cover their tracks. When the clock is full, the assassin's ambush is sprung at the worst possible moment.

Investigation Clocks are excellent for *recurring antagonists*. The named bounty hunter who has been after the crew for three arcs, track her with a 6-segment clock. Each time the crew leaves traces, tick. Each time she has a lead, tick. When the clock fills, she catches up.

COMPLEX TASK CLOCK

Use this to represent a long, multi-stage task that the players are attempting.

Example: A visible 10-segment **Jury-Rig the Derelict** project marks 1 segment on a successful Knowledge or Finesse Roll made directly on the repair and 2 on a Critical Success. Failure with Hope marks none and reveals the next required component; Failure with Fear marks none and consumes one previously named component. The project is complete at 10; no result removes progress.

Complex Task Clocks are particularly useful for: -Crafting major equipment (Tier 3 weapons, Experimental tech) - Negotiating treaties (each social roll progresses the clock) - Long expeditions (each leg fills a segment) -Investigations of campaign-defining mysteries

THE CHASE CLOCK

Chases are a staple of science fiction, but they can be mechanically dull. A Chase Clock makes them a tense, narrative-driven challenge.

Mechanic: Create two clocks, a "**Pursuit Clock**" for the enemy and an "**Escape Clock**" for the players. Both are typically 6 segments.

How it works: The chase is resolved through a series of contested checks. The Pilot might make a Finesse (Pilot/Navigate) Roll to navigate a dense asteroid field, while the pursuer's pilot does the same.

- If the players succeed, they tick their Escape Clock.
- If they succeed with Hope, they tick it *twice*.
- If they fail, the enemy ticks their Pursuit Clock.
- If they fail with Fear, the enemy ticks it *twice*.

The end: The chase ends when one clock is full. If the Escape Clock fills first, they get away. If the Pursuit Clock fills first, they are cornered, and a confrontation (combat or negotiation) is inevitable.

Example: The crew's ship, the *Vagrant Star*, is fleeing a House Joric patrol cruiser. The Keeper creates a 6-segment "Escape" clock and a 6-segment "Joric Closes In" clock.

Pilot: "I'm going to dive into the debris field to shake them!" (Makes a Finesse (Pilot/Navigate) Roll, succeeding with Fear.)

Keeper: "You navigate the first wave of asteroids, but they're matching your maneuvers perfectly, staying right on your tail. You tick your "Escape" clock once, but they tick their "Pursuit" clock once too."

The chase becomes a series of decisions: when to take risks, when to play defensively, when to spend Hope for a critical advance. The dice translate to *visible progress*.

DESIGNING CUSTOM CLOCKS

Three design choices matter when creating a clock:

1. Choose the number of segments. The segment count determines urgency. - **4-segment** clock, a pressing, immediate threat (this scene, maybe next) - **6- segment** clock, a session-level pressure (will resolve within 1-3 scenes) - **8-segment** clock, an arc-level pressure (will resolve within the current arc) - **10-12- segment** clock, a campaign-level pressure (months of in-fiction time)

2. Define the tick conditions. What specifically advances the clock? Be explicit. The players should be able to *guess* when the clock will tick, even if they don't know the exact triggers. Example: "*The Assassin Closes In ticks whenever you stay in one location more than one session, or whenever you fail to cover a major track.*"

3. Define the payoff. What happens when the clock fills? Be specific. "*The reactor explodes, 4d8 damage to everyone within Far range,*

structural collapse, no further escape from this level." The players should know what they're racing against.

MANAGING MULTIPLE CLOCKS

A typical session might have **1-3 active clocks** running. A typical arc has **3-5 clocks across its lifespan**. A typical campaign has **5-7 long-running clocks** that span multiple arcs.

Some Keepers track clocks in: - A physical Keeper's notebook with one page per clock - A digital tool (Roll20, Owlbear, Foundry have clock widgets) - A whiteboard visible to all players

When a session ends, **review your clocks**. Did anything tick? Should anything tick *now* based on what the players did? Are any clocks ready to fill imminently? Should a new clock start?

The clocks become the *Keeper's preparation* for the next session. They tell you what the world is doing while the players are away.

PART TWO: THE NARRATIVE ECONOMY

While Hope and Fear are the primary currencies of the game, there are three other specialized narrative resources you can introduce to enrich your campaign. These are intangible assets that the players can earn and spend, representing **information**, **obligations**, and **factional support**.

The three resources are **Intel**, **Favors**, and **Heat**. Together, they form the Narrative Economy, a parallel system to the dice-driven mechanics that gives political weight to player choices.

INTEL: INFORMATION AS A RESOURCE

Information is power, especially in a galaxy of secrets. Instead of just *giving* players information, you can treat it as a tangible resource.

EARNING INTEL

When players succeed on a roll to gather information, decrypt a file, or interrogate a source, you can give them an **Intel Token** instead of just reading a block of text.

Specific triggers: - Successful Investigation Downtime Activity - Successful Knowledge Rolls to decrypt a major file -Successful Presence rolls to extract information from an

NPC - Solving a side mystery or recovering an intel-laden artifact

SPENDING INTEL

A player can spend an Intel Token later to ask the Keeper **one specific, direct question** about the subject of their investigation. **The Keeper must answer truthfully.**

This empowers the players, allowing them to seek the information they *actually* want, rather than relying on you to guess what is important to them.

Example: "*I'm spending my Intel Token on House Joric's fleet movements. Keeper, what is the true destination of the 3rd Battle Group?*"

The Keeper provides a direct, useful answer. The Intel Token is consumed. The information is now in the players' possession; they can act on it.

DESIGNING INTEL

The key design question: *what kinds of questions does an Intel Token unlock?*

A single Intel Token should unlock a question of *specific operational value*, something that meaningfully informs the players' next decisions. It is not a wish-granting mechanism; it is a targeted query.

Good Intel Token questions: - "What is the access code to the Volkov restricted archive?" - "Who hired the assassin who killed Captain Veska?" - "What is the schedule of the Pearl Convoy from Aurelius Prime?"

Poor Intel Token questions (too broad): - "What are all the secrets of House Solari?" (Too big, break into multiple Tokens) - "What will happen next?" (Not actionable, the Keeper doesn't know either) - "Where can I find the Precursor Vault?" (Campaign-level, should require an arc, not a Token)

Intel Tokens scale with effort. A simple successful Investigation gives one Token. A multi-session investigation arc might produce three or four Tokens that can be combined into a *bigger* question.

FAVORS: SOCIAL CAPITAL AS A RESOURCE

Social capital is a powerful weapon. A **Favor** represents a debt owed to a player by an NPC.

EARNING FAVORS

Favors are earned through significant actions for an NPC. Saving an NPC's life, helping them out of a tough spot, or giving them something they desperately need should earn the players a Favor. Represent this with a token or a note ("Favor: Lyria Valerius, owed for keeping silent about her brother").

Specific triggers: - Saving an NPC from death or significant harm - Recovering something the NPC had lost (a family member, an heirloom, valuable data) - Performing a difficult service the NPC could not perform themselves - Keeping a secret that protects the NPC at cost to the players

CALLING IN FAVORS

A player can spend a Favor to have the NPC perform a significant service for them. **This is not a simple request; it is calling in a debt.** The NPC should comply, though they may do so grudgingly if the request is dangerous.

The **scope of the favor should be proportional to how it was earned.** A Favor earned by buying an info broker a drink might get you a minor tip. A Favor earned by saving a Guildmaster's life might get you a starship.

Examples of Favor-level actions: - *Small Favor*: A name. A location. A small loan. A meeting arranged. A door opened. - *Medium Favor*: Safe passage through faction territory. A piece of restricted information. Protection for a week. - *Large Favor*: Military backing for a single operation. Access to restricted technology. A formal alliance for one arc.

TRACKING FAVORS

Keep a list of Favors owed to the crew, by which NPC, for what reason, at what scope. When a player wants to

call in a Favor, the relevant NPC's name should already be on the list. (If the player tries to "call in a Favor" with someone who hasn't earned the relationship, that is a *negotiation*, not a Favor, handle it through normal play.)

RUNNING CRIMINAL HEAT

Use the **Corebook and Rust & Steel Chapter 2.3** procedure. By default, the crew shares one Criminal Heat score from 0 to 10. That chapter alone defines Heat levels, triggers, stacking, reduction, and reset. Do not add Heat because a scene merely feels loud or because a faction is offended; use a printed trigger or a location rule adopted before the activity.

Keeper's work is to make an established Heat score visible in the fiction. At low Heat, show extra scrutiny, cautious brokers, and small procedural barriers. At higher Heat, name the specific investigation,

hunter, warrant, interdiction, or network failure produced by the adopted procedure. Do not invent a second consequence track behind the crew-wide score.

OPTIONAL FACTIONAL HEAT

If the table adopted **Factional Heat** before the campaign, use the complete optional module in *Rust & Steel* Chapter 2.3. It replaces the crew-wide score; it does not run beside it or beside Individual Heat. Let the fiction identify which faction's sphere is affected, but do not invent a separate trigger value, consequence table, or reduction amount here.

HEAT AS PACING TOOL

Heat is a player-driven pressure clock. Rising Heat changes the texture of scenes and can turn ordinary work into a campaign arc about reducing exposure, escaping a jurisdiction, repairing a damaged identity, or confronting the people who profit from the crew's vulnerability. The crew should always know the printed risk before choosing an illegal action, and a reduction project should be a real choice between immediate progress and breathing room.

Use the adopted Heat level to prepare concrete consequences before play: the patrol that has their transponder, the broker who now wants leverage, the investigator who has linked two crimes, or the hunter whose approach has a visible route. These are consequences of the existing score, not unpriced new Heat.

COMBINING INTEL, FAVORS, AND HEAT

Intel and Favors can explain **how** the crew accesses a reduction method already printed in *Rust & Steel*; they never change its amount or create an extra reduction. Intel can identify a corrupt official, a rival worth framing, a faction able to offer Services Rendered, or the cost of a New Identity. A Favor can establish why an NPC is willing to help, but the adopted Criminal Heat procedure still supplies the mechanical result.

The Narrative Economy rewards political and strategic play: the crew may accept a known Heat consequence to get close to a target, turn the resulting information into leverage, and use that leverage to pursue an established reduction path. Keep every number in the Core/Rust procedure so this loop remains legible to the table.

PART THREE: THE QUANTUM SNARE TECHNIQUE

Beyond clocks and the Narrative Economy, there is one more pacing technique worth your attention: **the Quantum Snare**.

Think of each mystery you introduce not as a hook, but as a **quantum snare**. It is a strange event or object that, once the players interact with it, will entangle them in a larger story. The initial problem is *never* the real problem.

HOW THE QUANTUM SNARE WORKS

The technique has three steps:

- 1. Present a simple, contained problem.** A child needs rescue. A package needs delivery. A small ship needs salvage. The problem appears bounded.
- 2. Once the players engage, reveal the entanglement.** The "simple" problem is connected to three or more major plotlines. Each plotline is run by a major faction or NPC with their own agenda.
- 3. Let the players choose their entanglement.** They cannot escape now. The choice is which thread to pull, which faction to ally with, which secret to keep.

A WORKED EXAMPLE: THE CHILD WHO DREAMS COORDINATES

The players rescue a psionically gifted child from a collapsed research station. *That's the simple problem.*

The Snare: Once they have the child, the quantum entanglement begins: - **House Solara** wants to dissect her brain to study her psionic abilities. - **The Iron Covenant** (an anti-psionic cult) wants to execute her as a heretic. - **A dying Precursor AI** is using her as an antenna to broadcast a warning about a coming cosmic threat.

The Consequence: The players have not just saved a child; they have grabbed onto a *live wire* connected to three different major plots. Their simple rescue mission has just entangled them in the fate of the galaxy.

WHY THIS WORKS

The Quantum Snare technique solves a core Keeper problem: how to introduce campaign-scale plots without dumping exposition on the players. By presenting the *small* problem first and revealing the entanglement *after* the players have committed, the Keeper:

- Earns the players' investment (they chose to engage)
- Earns the players' surprise (the reveal lands)
- Earns the players' agency (they choose which thread to follow)

The Quantum Snare is the **opposite of the railroad**. The Keeper has set the entanglement, but the players choose how to navigate it.

Most successful *Veilfarers* campaigns use the Quantum Snare technique for their **central mystery**. The campaign begins with what appears to be a small job. By session three, the players realize the small job is the tip of something vastly larger. By session ten, the small job has become the *only* thing that matters, because the players have committed too far to walk away.

SEEDING QUANTUM SNARES

A Keeper preparing a campaign should design **3-5 Quantum Snares** in advance:

- One *central* snare that becomes the campaign's main thread
- Two or three *secondary* snares that emerge from arc-level decisions
- One or two *latent* snares that may or may not be activated,
 - depending on player choices

Snares can be linked. The child who dreams coordinates (above) might be linked, through the Precursor AI, to the central campaign mystery. The players resolve the child's situation in arc two, but the *coordinates* she dreamed point to a vault that becomes arc six.

This is how campaigns acquire **density**. The world feels rich because the threads connect, and the threads connect because the Keeper planted them as snares, not as discrete plot points.

CLOSING: THE TOOLS ARE THE TEXTURE

Clocks and the Narrative Economy are not, strictly speaking, *required* for running *Veilfarers*. The corebook's basic mechanics, Duality Dice, Hope, Fear, the Spotlight, the Difficulty Class scale, are enough to run a complete campaign on their own.

But the Keepers who add **clocks** and **Intel/Favors/Heat** to their toolkit are the Keepers whose campaigns *feel alive*. The clocks make the world tick. The

31 Narrative Economy makes the world politically real. The Quantum Snares make the campaign feel like *a story being uncovered*, not a series of problems being presented.

Use these tools sparingly when you are starting. One clock per session. One Favor in play at a time. One Intel Token per

investigation arc. Build the rhythm. As your table becomes comfortable, you can layer more.

The texture of a *Veilfarers* campaign is not in the dice. It is in the tools that connect dice rolls to consequences that *last beyond the moment*. The clocks and the Narrative Economy are those tools.

Use them. Sparingly at first. Generously when you have learned the rhythm. Your campaigns will feel like the place they are about: a galaxy still ticking after the Silence, full of secrets and people who owe each other things, full of attention that should not be drawn, *and full of the time you spend trying not to draw it.*

CHAPTER 5

ENCOUNTER DESIGN

"The session is made of encounters. The campaign is made of sessions. The Keeper, then, is mostly making encounters, and the difference between a good Keeper and a great one is the difference between an encounter that produces a roll and an encounter that produces a memory."

Keeper Vellathos, On the Architecture of Scenes

WHAT THIS CHAPTER IS FOR

This chapter is **operationally focused**. Chapters 1-4 gave you the philosophy of being a Keeper, the engine of Hope/Fear, the rhythms of pacing, and the visual tools of clocks. This chapter teaches you how to **build the things that fill your sessions**: encounters.

A *Veilfarers* session contains several encounters of different kinds. The Keeper designs them, sometimes in advance, sometimes on the fly. There are four primary encounter types covered in this chapter:

- **Combat Encounters** fights with mechanical resolution
- **Social Encounters** negotiations, interrogations, persuasions
- **Exploration Encounters** discovery of place, mystery, anomaly
- **Mystery / Investigation Encounters** uncovering a hidden truth

Each has its own structure, its own pacing demands, and its own pitfalls. This chapter walks through each in detail, with examples and Keeper-facing prescriptions.

A few principles apply across all four types:

1. **Every encounter has stakes.** No stakes = no encounter, only dice-rolling.
2. **Every encounter has multiple paths.** A single solution is a puzzle, not an encounter.
3. **Every encounter changes something.** If the world is identical after the encounter as before, the encounter has failed.
4. **Every encounter respects the time it takes.** A 20-minute encounter for a 1-minute consequence is bad. A 5-minute encounter that ends a major arc is fine.

PART ONE: COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

A combat encounter is what most players think of first when they think *Veilfarers*. The plasma rifles. The Void-blades. The high-stakes firefights aboard rusted hulks and beneath the chrome ceilings of Imperial palaces. Combat is loud, kinetic, and unforgiving.

But combat in *Veilfarers* is **not just a damage exchange**. The system's combat is built around *what the players choose to do*, and the Keeper's job is to design fights where those choices matter.

FOUR PILLARS OF A COMBAT ENCOUNTER

Every combat encounter you design should answer four questions:

1. STAKES: WHY DOES THIS FIGHT MATTER?

Combat without stakes is just dice-rolling. Before placing the first enemy, the Keeper should be able to articulate:

- **What changes if the crew wins?** (Beyond "they survive.") Do they recover the hostage? Do they earn the contact's trust? Does the antagonist escape with critical intel? Does the secret get out?
- **What changes if they lose?** (Beyond "they take HP damage.") Are they captured? Does the cargo get destroyed? Does the bounty on their heads triple? Does a faction declare war?

If you cannot answer both questions, *redesign the encounter or skip it*.

2. ENVIRONMENT: WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN?

Combat in an empty room is dull. Combat in a kitchen with a deep fryer is *interesting*. The environment is a character in the fight, features the crew can use, obstacles that constrain everyone, hazards that emerge.

Some environment textures to consider:

- **Vertical environments.** Catwalks above pits. Rooftops above streets. Cargo containers stacked five high. Vertical fights produce different decisions than flat ones.
- **Crowd density.** A fight in an empty corridor is one thing. A fight in a market full of bystanders is another, every Volkov-style maneuver risks collateral damage.
- **Light and sight lines.** Dim emergency lighting. Smoke. A Veil-anomaly that distorts vision. *What you cannot see* shapes combat as much as what you can.
- **Sound and resonance.** Echoes in a starship bay. Silence in a vacuum. The hum of machinery that masks footsteps. Sound matters.
- **Interactable objects.** Power conduits the crew can shoot to plunge the area into darkness. Loose cargo to send rolling. Pressure doors to slam. The environment should *offer* the crew something.

3. OPPOSITION: WHO, HOW MANY, WHAT INTENTIONS?

The composition of the opposition shapes the feel of the fight:

- **Mooks.** Numerous, low-HP, no special abilities. Their function is to give the crew a sense of action and clear, satisfying hits.
- **Named NPCs.** One or two with names, distinct personalities, and clear motivations. They make the fight feel like a *story*, not just an obstacle.
- **A signature enemy.** Optionally, one center-of-the-fight figure, a recurring antagonist, a unique threat, an environmental boss. They give the fight a peak.

The mix matters. Five mooks alone produces a forgettable fight. Five mooks + one named lieutenant + one signature antagonist produces a memorable one.

Intent matters too. Why are these enemies fighting? *To kill the crew? To delay them? To capture one of them? To make a point?* The intent shapes how the enemies behave, especially when they take losses.

4. NON-VIOLENT RESOLUTIONS: WHAT ARE THE OUTS?

Most *Veilfarers* combat scenes should have **at least one way out that isn't "kill everyone."** Negotiation, retreat, surrender, distraction, give the crew options.

This does *not* mean every fight ends without bloodshed. It means the crew can *choose* whether bloodshed is the answer. Some fights *should* end with the crew choosing to kill. Some should end with surrender. Some should end with the crew running. The variety is what makes combat feel like a real environment, not a checkbox.

Aim for combat encounters that are **interesting because of what they make the crew decide**, not just because they require rolling dice.

A SAMPLE COMBAT SETUP

Scene: Hayford Pyre station, lower commerce deck, 2 AM local. The crew has been searching for a lead on the missing cargo. They corner a Free Fleet contact named **Brae**, who they believe knows where the cargo went. Brae panics, pulls a slug pistol. Three of Brae's friends emerge from the shadows.

Stakes. If the crew wins decisively, they get Brae's information but draw the attention of station security (Free Fleet doesn't like its own being roughed up). If they negotiate, they get the information but owe Brae a future favor. If they retreat, they lose the lead.

Environment. The lower commerce deck is full of vendor stalls, hanging signs, cables, and crowds. Cover everywhere; bystanders everywhere. The vendors will mostly scatter, but two are armed and might intervene if the fight goes long.

Opposition. Brae (skilled but panicked, will surrender if cornered) and three Free Fleet associates (competent but not aggressive, they're protecting Brae, not picking a fight).

Non-violent paths. Negotiate, offer Brae something they actually want (protection, money, information of their own). Distract, someone causes a scene elsewhere; Brae and friends bolt. Use Brae's friends against him, one of them has a personal grievance; flip them.

The Keeper enters the scene knowing all of this. **The players figure it out as they play.** That is the work.

COMBAT PACING HEURISTICS

A few practical rules for combat at the table:

- **Aim for 3-5 rounds.** Most *Veilfarers* fights resolve in this range. Longer fights become slogs; shorter fights feel anticlimactic.
- **Escalate at round 2 or 3.** The fight changes. A new wave arrives. The environment shifts. A named antagonist reveals an ability. Combat that stays at one intensity for five rounds loses energy.
- **Make every round produce a decision.** If a round is "I attack the same enemy with the same weapon for the same damage," that round is boring. The Keeper should introduce, through Soft Moves and environmental changes, *new decisions* round to round.
- **Resolve quickly when the outcome is clear.** Once the crew has obviously won, don't make them roll out every remaining mook. *"The last two mooks throw down their weapons and run."* Get to the resolution beat.

PART TWO: SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

A social encounter is a scene resolved primarily through conversation, persuasion, deception, intimidation, or negotiation. *Veilfarers* treats social encounters with the same weight as combat: they have stakes, they have structure, they consume table time, and they can shape the entire campaign.

FOUR PILLARS OF A SOCIAL ENCOUNTER 1. STAKES

What does the crew gain if the social move succeeds? What do they lose if it fails?

Examples:

- **Gain:** A faction ally. Critical information. A favor. A trade discount.
- **Gain:** An audience with a Baron. Permission to enter a restricted zone.
- **Lose:** A rival faction's enmity. A worsening reputation. Heat increase. A specific NPC declaring them enemies. A door closing that cannot be reopened.

Social stakes are often more consequential than combat stakes. A fight you lose costs HP. A negotiation you lose costs *standing*, and standing rarely comes back.

2. NPCs WITH POSITIONS

Each major NPC in the scene has a **position** what they currently believe and want, and a **price** what would shift them.

The Keeper, preparing a social encounter, should be able to articulate, for each named NPC in the scene:

- **Position:** "Captain Vex believes the crew is responsible for the deaths in Sector 7-J. He wants them off his station and is willing to use force to make that happen."
- **Price:** "Vex would change his mind if shown undeniable evidence the deaths were caused by something else, *and* the evidence would have to come from a source he respects. He won't believe just any data dump."

This preparation is what makes the Keeper able to play the NPC honestly. NPCs in *Veilfarers* are not puzzles to be

defeated. They are people with logic. The crew's job is to find the right approach, not the right code.

3. INFORMATION ASYMMETRIES

What does each NPC know that the crew doesn't? What does the crew know that the NPCs don't?

Social play is rich when the information is *uneven*. The NPC knows the crew is bluffing about their House connections, *but doesn't know the crew has photos of last night's meeting*. The crew knows the NPC has been embezzling, *but doesn't know the NPC has terminal cancer and three months to live*.

Keep a private notes column tracking these asymmetries. When the asymmetries collide in conversation, dramatic moments happen.

4. A CLOCK (SOMETIMES)

Some social scenes benefit from time pressure: *"The senator's flight leaves in three hours."* Others benefit from *no* pressure: a long evening of careful conversation with a powerful figure who has nothing to do but talk.

Pick deliberately. Time pressure shapes social scenes more than almost any other variable. Use it when you want urgency. Skip it when you want depth.

RESOLVING SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

Veilfarers's rolls support social play directly. The relevant traits and rolls:

- **Presence Rolls.** Use them for persuasion, charm, command, or deception when the fiction calls for uncertainty and consequence.
- **Instinct-based rolls.** Reading body language, detecting lies, intuiting unspoken needs.
- **Knowledge-based rolls.** Drawing on relevant history, citing precedent, knowing the right name to drop.

A single roll resolves most social scenes that have a clear binary outcome. Complex social scenes, major negotiations, multi-NPC court intrigues, benefit from **clocks**. A 6-segment "Treaty Signed" clock with rolls advancing it gives the crew the feeling of progress and the Keeper a structured frame.

PLAYING NPCs HONESTLY

The most important advice for social encounters: **play the NPCs as they would actually behave**, not as the encounter "needs" them to behave.

If a player makes an excellent argument, the NPC is moved, even if the Keeper intended the NPC to refuse. If a player rolls high but makes a terrible argument, the NPC notes the social pressure but doesn't necessarily yield. Roll + roleplay are *both* inputs. Neither is sufficient alone.

This is the hardest part of running social play, and the most rewarding when it works. The Keeper who plays NPCs honestly produces social scenes that feel like *real conversations*. The Keeper who plays NPCs as obstacles produces social scenes that feel like Skyrim dialogue trees.

PART THREE: EXPLORATION ENCOUNTERS

Exploration is the *Veilfarers* mode where the crew encounters the strange, a Precursor Vault, a derelict ship, an anomalous planet, an unmapped region of the Veil. The corebook's setting is built for exploration; the chapters that follow in this volume deepen the practical and atmospheric craft of running such encounters.

FOUR PILLARS OF AN EXPLORATION ENCOUNTER 1. A MYSTERY OR UNKNOWN

What is the crew trying to discover? Some examples:

- **An anomaly's nature.** A patch of space where time runs slowly. A ship whose crew vanished mid-meal. A planet that produces sounds with no apparent source.
- **A Vault's contents.** A sealed Precursor structure. The crew knows what kind of artifact it might hold; they don't know what they will face inside.
- **A missing crewmember's fate.** A friend who disappeared two months ago, last seen on this world. Are they alive? Captured? Transformed?

The mystery is the *engine* of exploration. The crew is drawn forward because they *do not know*. The Keeper's job is to dispense knowledge slowly enough that the unknown stays alive.

2. A SENSE OF PLACE

Make the location memorable. The corebook's Chapter 1 covers the texture of the post-Silence galaxy; the Keeper's job here is to apply that texture to *this specific place*.

Some location-design questions:

- **What is the sensory signature?** Smell, sound, light, temperature, texture. The first thirty seconds of an exploration scene should *land the place* before anything happens.
- **What is the history?** What happened here before? Who lived here? What did they leave behind?
- What is the current state? Decaying? Maintained? Newly disturbed? In active use by someone or something?
- What is the strange element? Every memorable exploration location has one detail that is wrong. Find it. Surface it early.

3. THREE TO FIVE BEATS

Specific moments the Keeper has prepared:

- A **strange detail** that hints at the mystery (a child's toy on a Precursor altar; a clock running backward; a Volkov insignia on a Joric corpse).
- An **environmental hazard** (radiation pocket; collapsing structure; aggressive native fauna; a Veil-tear).

- A **recovered artifact** (data crystal; ship's log; a Precursor relic; a personal item of someone the crew knew).
- A **moment of revelation** (the crew understands what happened here; the mystery's nature shifts; an assumption is broken).
- A **near-miss with danger** (something almost catches them; they see what they barely escaped).

Five prepared beats give the Keeper enough to fill 60-90 minutes of exploration without needing to improvise every detail.

4. A CHOICE OR DECISION POINT

At some point during the exploration, the crew must choose how to proceed. Make the choice consequential.

Examples of exploration choice points:

- **Three paths forward, each with implied cost.** The shorter route is dangerous; the longer route is safer but leaves a clock ticking.
- **Take the artifact or leave it.** What does the crew owe to what they have found? Who will come looking if they take it?
- **Save or sacrifice a non-player character.** The civilian survivor's escape costs the crew their best route.
- **Reveal or conceal.** The crew has discovered something that changes faction politics. Do they share what they found?

Exploration without choice is sightseeing. Exploration *with* choice is *Veilfarers* at its best.

A NOTE ON EXPLORATION LENGTH

Most exploration encounters last **45-90 minutes of table time**.

Longer than that, the encounter loses momentum. Shorter than that, the encounter doesn't earn the buildup.

For long exploration arcs (a multi-session Precursor expedition, a deep-Veil voyage), break the exploration into chunks. Each chunk is an exploration *encounter*. Between chunks, the crew rests, debriefs, makes choices. The structure prevents exhaustion.

PART FOUR: MYSTERY / INVESTIGATION ENCOUNTERS

A mystery encounter is structurally distinct from exploration.

Exploration reveals *what is here*. Mystery reveals *what happened* (or *who did it or why*). The crew is, in a mystery, performing investigation.

FOUR PILLARS OF A MYSTERY ENCOUNTER 1. A TRUTH

The Keeper knows what happened. **Write it down.**

This is the single most important rule of running mysteries: the truth has to be *fixed* before play, or the mystery will collapse into improvisation, and the players will sense it.

The truth should be:

- **Specific.** "*Senator Vorlak was killed by his personal aide, Mira Chen, using a vacuum-poison synthesized from Precursor pollen, during the recess at 14:32 station time.*" Not "*someone killed the senator.*"
- **Coherent.** The events leading to the truth should make sense. The motive is real. The means are plausible. The opportunity exists.
- **Surprising but earnable.** The crew should not guess it immediately, but the clues should be sufficient that a sharp investigation reaches it.

2. AT LEAST THREE PATHS TO THE TRUTH

Don't rely on a single clue. If the crew misses it, they are stuck.

Design with **convergent clues**: at least three separate paths to the central truth, each accessible through a different mode of play (combat, social, exploration, technical analysis).

For the Vorlak murder above:

- **Forensic path.** Examining the senator's body reveals the unusual poison. Tracing it leads to Precursor pollen, which is only handled by three labs in the sector. One of those labs is connected to Mira.
- **Social path.** Interviewing the senator's staff reveals that Mira has been acting strangely for weeks. Pressing further reveals her unusual access to the recess location.
- **Surveillance path.** Reviewing station footage shows Mira slipping away during the recess. Her movements during this window cannot be accounted for through normal duties.

Any of these paths can break the case. The crew that uses all three has a *strong* case. The crew that uses only

one has *strong evidence*, and might bluff their way through.

3. RED HERRINGS, SPARINGLY

One or two red herrings make a mystery feel real. The senator had political enemies. He had an estranged daughter who returned the night of the murder. He had a debt to a Volkov officer.

These threads should be *real*, when the crew investigates them, they find genuine secondary stories. The estranged daughter *did* visit, but she was not the killer. The debt *was* real, but it had been repaid months earlier.

Too many red herrings drown the mystery. One or two give the investigation texture without overwhelming it.

4. TIME PRESSURE OR ESCALATION

Without time pressure, mysteries become methodical and dull. Make something **deteriorate** as the crew investigates.

Examples of mystery escalation:

- **A clock.** The killer is preparing to strike again. The cover-up is being engineered. The senator's body is about to be cremated, destroying forensic evidence.
- **Witness disappearance.** Every NPC the crew interviews becomes a target. As the investigation continues, witnesses begin to vanish or die.
- **The crew themselves are targeted.** The killer knows the crew is investigating. Defensive moves begin.
- **Political consequences.** The longer the case is unresolved, the more factions weigh in with their own preferred culprits. The crew has to solve it *and* navigate the politics.

A mystery without escalation feels static. A mystery *with* escalation feels urgent and consequential.

THE STRANGE-BUT-COHERENT STANDARD

The standard mystery in *Veilfarers* uses **Veil- influenced phenomena, faction conspiracies, or Precursor anomalies**. The truth should be *strange* but *coherent*.

- *Strange*: The senator was killed by a Precursor-pollen poison synthesized through Veil-aided fungal manipulation.
- *Coherent*: The aide had the means (lab access), motive (revenge for her family's exile), and opportunity (recess duty).

The strange element provides the *Veilfarers* texture. The coherent core makes the mystery solvable. Without strangeness, the mystery feels like a procedural. Without coherence, the mystery feels like nonsense.

PART FIVE: MIXED-MODE ENCOUNTERS

Most *Veilfarers* sessions blend encounter types. A heist encounter is social (negotiating with the inside contact) + exploration (mapping the vault) + combat (the inevitable escape) + mystery (figuring out what is actually being stolen).

The Keeper's job in mixed-mode encounters is to **transition cleanly** between modes:

- "You finish the negotiation. Lyra agrees to disable the sensor grid for ten minutes starting at 02:14. Now, how do you get inside?" (Social -> Exploration.)
- "The vault is wider than you expected, and you find yourselves moving through three levels of security. As you approach the central chamber, you realize the artifact isn't what you were told. The shape is wrong. The energy signature is wrong. What did Lyra actually send you for?" (Exploration -> Mystery.)
- "The alarms trigger. Reinforcements are arriving. You have ninety seconds before the corridor is sealed." (Mystery -> Combat.)

Each transition is a *change of mode*, not a change of scene. The location stays the same; the crew's challenge shifts. This keeps the energy moving and gives every PC a chance to shine in their preferred mode.

MIXING MODES BY PC TYPE

A campaign with a mixed crew, combatants, faces, investigators, explorers, benefits from sessions that include all four modes. If your sessions are 80% combat, your faces and investigators feel sidelined. If your sessions are 80% social, your combatants feel useless.

Aim, across each session, for **all four modes to receive meaningful play**. Not all in one scene. But across the session's 3-5 scenes, every PC type should have at least one scene where their build shines.

PART SIX: ENCOUNTER DESIGN AT THE TABLE

A practical workflow for designing encounters before a session:

1. **List the scenes you expect this session.** 3-5 of them.
2. For each scene, identify the encounter type. Combat, social, exploration, mystery, or mixed.
3. Apply the four pillars for that type. Stakes, environment, opposition/NPCs, paths.
4. Identify what will change by scene's end. What does the crew leave

with that they didn't have at the start? What does the world look like after they have passed through? 5. **Plant one seed for the next session.** A loose thread the crew might or might not pull.

For each scene, you should be able to write **three sentences** describing what you expect to happen. If you can't, the scene is under-prepared.

Do not over-prepare. The point of the four pillars is not to script the encounter; it is to *know enough* to be reactive. Players will surprise you. Your preparation gives you the depth to handle the surprise. Your willingness to abandon your preparation when the players go a different direction is what makes you a good Keeper.

CLOSING: THE ARCHITECTURE OF DECISION

Every encounter, in every mode, is at its core an **architecture of decision**. The crew enters a situation. The situation has stakes. The situation has paths. The crew chooses how to navigate. The world responds.

The Keeper's job is to *build the architecture*. The dice and the players animate it.

Combat is the architecture of force. Social is the architecture of influence. Exploration is the architecture of discovery. Mystery is the

architecture of revelation. Each mode has its own grammar; each mode produces its own kind of memorable moment.

Master all four, and your sessions will breathe. Master all four, and your campaigns will live.

The encounter is the unit of memory. Build them with care.

CHAPTER 6

THE IMPERIAL SYSTEM

"Listen. Power out here after the Silence? It doesn't flow through wires or decrees. It moves in the clasp of hands sealing a pact. In the cold fury behind a noble's smile. In the weight of a name spoken across generations. The Houses are not just dynasties. They are fortresses of hope, and vaults of secrets, for billions clinging to order in the screaming dark."

Anonymous Imperial Chronicler, Letters from the Sol Throne

THE GALAXY ABOVE THE GALAXY

Welcome to the **true battlefield** of the post-Silence era. The conflicts of this galaxy are not always fought with plasma rifles and starships. The most bitter wars are fought in **quiet gardens and glittering ballrooms**. They are fought with whispered promises and broken treaties. They are fought for the soul of humanity itself.

Here, a toast at a state gala can be a declaration of war. A hushed promise made in a starlit garden can seal the fate of an entire world. This is not simply governance. It is a **living, breathing beast** of raw ambition and quiet dread. It is an endless dance of loyalty and betrayal. The stage is lit by the cold, distant light of dying stars.

This chapter introduces the **two highest levels** of the post-Silence Imperial structure:

- **The Emperor Aurelius Magnus** the Undying King, whose existence is the central mystery of the modern era.
- **The Imperial Barons** his six superhuman children, each a force of nature, each a walking contradiction.

The **Six Great Houses** that operate beneath this Imperial structure receive their own chapter, Chapter 7, *The Six Houses in Depth*. The major non-Imperial organizations (the Free Fleet, the Solara Compact, the Stellar Commerce Guild, the Church of the Eternal Veil, the Explorers' Guild) are detailed in Chapter 8, *Major Organizations & Faction Politics*. Together, Chapters 6, 7, and 8 give you the **political topology** of the post-Silence galaxy.

Your actions and your loyalties will matter here more than anywhere else. The Great Houses and the Imperial Court are not just a backdrop. They are **active players in the game**. Standing with them will open doors, or close them permanently.

PART ONE: THE UNDYING KING: EMPEROR AURELIUS MAGNUS

He sits upon the **Sol Throne**. He is not a god. He is a monument to human endurance. His name is **Aurelius Magnus**. His face, etched with the experience of five centuries of rule, refuses to age. He looks to be a man of perhaps forty years. He carries himself with the quiet weight of someone who has borne both triumph and tragedy in equal measure.

But you must look deeper. **Look into his eyes**. There you will see the crushing weight of time itself. Entire stars have been born, have burned, and have died since he first drew breath.

THE MYSTERY OF IMMORTALITY

How does he live? Why does he not die? This is the **central question of the modern era**. The whispers in the corridors of power never stop. They are the background radiation of Imperial politics.

Three competing theories exist:

1. The Precursor Theory popular among the tech-priests of **House Kurogane**. They claim he is powered by Precursor technology, that liquid eternity flows through his veins, a substance siphoned from the tomb of a dead, forgotten god. This theory offers a clean, mechanical explanation for a terrifying miracle.

2. The Veil-Pact Theory told in the shadowed alleys of frontier worlds. He made a pact with the Things that live Beyond the Veil. He paid a price for his long life, a price that only the truly damned can understand. It is a tale to frighten children and to give zealots a reason to hate their immortal ruler.

3. The Prison Theory favored by the philosophers of **House Amaranth**. The most tragic theory: his state is not a blessing but a *trap*. He is a soul withering away inside an unbreakable prison of flesh. He cannot die, but he also cannot truly live. They see his rule not as an act of power but as an act of **eternal sacrifice**.

What is the truth? It is unknown. **It is the greatest secret of the age.**

Keeper Note: The truth of the Emperor's immortality is one of the central campaign mysteries available to you. See Chapter 14, *Secrets of the Veil*, for the canonical Keeper-only truth (and recommendations on how, and whether, to reveal it).

THE RULER AND THE MAN

What is known for certain is his **history**. He was the one who steered humanity through the chaos of the Great Silence. He is not a saint. His hands are not clean. He has made terrible choices. He has sacrificed worlds to save systems. But he is not a tyrant, either. He is something else entirely, a ruler who knows when to grip the reins of power tightly, and when to let his people find their own path through the darkness.

His court is a study in paradox. It is a place of silk and steel. Laughter rings beneath the vaulted, holographic ceilings of the Imperial Palace. Philosophers debate the ethics of psionics with a man who *remembers* a time before such things existed. He remembers a time when their great-great-grandparents were nothing but dust. **This contrast creates a deep and unsettling atmosphere**. The court is both the most civilized place in the galaxy and the most haunted.

A DAY IN THE DEATHLESS LIFE

To run scenes set in the Imperial court, the Keeper benefits from knowing the **rhythm of the Emperor's eternity**:

Mornings. His day begins in silence. He meditates in the **Sunken Garden** a place of impossible flora, grown from seeds recovered from dead worlds. He says this practice "*grounds him across the centuries*." The truth is more complex. This garden is the only place where the

mask of the Emperor slips. Here, he is just a man who has outlived everything he has ever loved.

Afternoons. This is the time for the grind of rule. He receives briefings from his Barons. He settles trade disputes between

squabbling Houses. He quells star-system rebellions with a single, coded signature. It is the endless, crushing calculus of keeping a fractured galaxy alive for one more day. Each decision adds another microscopic layer to the weight on his soul.

Evenings. If the duties of the day spare him, his evenings are spent in quiet, scholarly pursuits. He walks through art galleries that echo with only the sound of his footsteps. The faces in the portraits are of friends and lovers long dead. He holds quiet conversations with his **Master of Whisperers** an old man who has been his friend, his confessor, and a living reminder that everyone and everything he loves will eventually die.

THE AGONY BENEATH THE THRONE

Imagine the burden he carries. He has buried his own children. He has then buried *their* children. He has then buried theirs. He has watched lovers and friends wither and fade, become nothing more than names in holographic obituaries or faces in silent portraits on a palace wall. **That is his eternity.**

This unending loss has carved a **deep compassion** into him. He understands grief in a way no mortal ever could. But it has also built walls around his heart, higher and thicker than any fortress. No mortal soul can ever scale them. He is forever exiled from the simple, fleeting joy of shared existence that makes life bearable.

THE IMPOSSIBLE QUESTION OF SUCCESSION

This leads to the question no one dares ask aloud: **Who follows an immortal?** What happens when the unmoving center of the galaxy is finally gone?

The Emperor's "solution" was the creation of his heirs, the **Imperial Barons**. They are his superhuman children, bridges between his eternal existence and the fleeting lives of humanity. It was a clever plan, perhaps. But it has only traded one impossible riddle for another.

Can a power that is built on such strange and unnatural blood ever feel legitimate? The answer to that question will likely be written in fire.

RUNNING THE EMPEROR IN PLAY

The Emperor is the kind of NPC who **rarely appears on stage**. He is more powerful as an off-screen presence, a name invoked by ambassadors, a signature on documents, a portrait in a House foyer.

When you *do* bring the Emperor onstage, the scene should land with full weight:

- **Set design matters.** The Sunken Garden. The Hall of Echoes. The Cassandra Vault (where he reads dispatches from worlds long dead). Choose the location for its symbolic weight, not its tactical relevance.
- **He speaks slowly.** Aurelius does not need to hurry. The galaxy waits for him, not the other way around. Long silences are characteristic.
- **He listens more than he speaks.** Players who come to court expecting a lecture are surprised when the Emperor asks them questions and listens to the answers as if every word mattered.
- **He never raises his voice.** When the Emperor is angry, the room becomes colder. He says less, not more. Players should feel the temperature shift.

A typical Imperial audience scene runs **10-15 minutes of table time**. It should change something, grant a Favor, deliver a warning, set a deadline. The Emperor does not summon a crew for routine matters.

PART TWO: THE GOD-TOUCHED: THE IMPERIAL BARONS

They are **six siblings**. They were born of the Emperor Aurelius. They were touched by something... *more*. They are mortal, yes. They will age. They will die. They will each break their father's heart anew. But in the brief centuries of their lives, they shine like supernovas.

Each one is a living masterpiece of human potential. Each one is also a terrifying force of nature. They are the **living instruments of the Emperor's will**.

The six Barons:

BARON	DOMAIN	EPITHET
Maximus Aurelius	Military Liaison	The Shield
Lydia Aurelius	Trade & Economy	The Scale
Marcus Aurelius	Diplomacy	The Handshake
Claudia Aurelius	Technology & Research	The Spark
Lucius Aurelius	Imperial Intelligence	The Shadow
Julia Aurelius	Culture & Spiritual Liaison	The Beacon

Each Baron has the same Three-Layer Method structure: a **Public Persona** (Surface), an **Inner Conflict** (Hidden Wound), and a **Keeper's Hook** for adventure design.

BARON MAXIMUS AURELIUS: THE SHIELD

Role: Military Liaison. The Eldest Son.

Public Persona: His face looks like it was carved from granite. His movements are like controlled detonations. He is the image of the perfect soldier, the unwavering protector of the realm. He is a figure of immense strength and martial pride.

The Legend and the Truth: Legends say that he once held up a collapsing orbital elevator for three hours, saving thousands of lives. The truth is more subtle, and

far more powerful. His real power is not in his own strength. **It is in his ability to make broken men believe they are heroes.** He will stand beside a terrified soldier in the mud and the blood. His smile is rare and fierce. It is like sunlight on scorched earth. And suddenly, that soldier finds the courage to charge the enemy machine-gun nest. Maximus does not command armies. *He inspires them.*

The Inner Conflict: He feels the weight of every soldier's death. He sees their faces in his dreams. He knows his power comes from sending good people to their deaths. He carries this burden with a stoic silence that his siblings mistake for coldness.

A Keeper's Hook: A veteran soldier claims that Maximus once ordered an impossible retreat, sacrificing an entire platoon to save a single Precursor artifact. Is it a lie, or a hint at the Baron's hidden priorities?

BARONESS LYDIA AURELIUS: THE SCALE

Role: Overseer of Trade & Economy.

Public Persona: She has eyes that miss nothing. Her mind is a quantum supercollider, processing endless streams of data. She is the architect of the Imperial economy, a cool and calculating genius.

The Legend and the Truth: It is said she predicted the **Kessel Crash**, a massive economic collapse, three years before it happened. She prevented it with a single whispered order and the redirection of a single grain shipment. Her true gift is the ability to **see market**

patterns as melodies and symphonies. She hears the music of civilization's needs.

The Inner Conflict (Her Curse): Her gift is also her curse. She feels every ripple of suffering her cold equations cause. That famine on the planet of New Thessia? It was a calculated economic necessity to prevent a wider collapse. But she still wakes up at night tasting the phantom dust of that world's starving children.

A Keeper's Hook: Lydia offers the players a fortune to acquire a rare *sentient fungus* from a remote world. She claims it is for agricultural research. The truth is that the fungus feeds on economic anxiety, and she hopes it can help her "feel" the market even more deeply, no matter the psychic cost.

BARON MARCUS AURELIUS: THE HANDSHAKE

Role: Head of Diplomacy.

Public Persona: His voice is like aged whiskey, smooth and warm. His handshake feels like absolution from all sins. He is the great unifier, the man who can find common ground between the most bitter of enemies.

The Legend and the Truth: He is the galaxy's finest negotiator. His gift is a raw, almost violating, **empathy**. He does not just hear your words. He feels your fear. He feels your greed. He feels your hidden, secret shames.

41 This allows him to know exactly what you want and what you are willing to give up to get it.

The Inner Conflict: The cost of his gift is immense. He carries every emotional wound he soothes. After a successful summit where he prevents a war, he will often sit alone for days, trembling as he processes the collected pain and hatred of all sides. He is the **most connected man in the galaxy, and also the loneliest**.

A Keeper's Hook: A rival diplomat has discovered Marcus's weakness. They plan to use a psionic *grief bomb* at an upcoming peace talk, a device that will flood the room with psychic pain, hoping to incapacitate Marcus and sabotage the treaty.

BARONESS CLAUDIA AURELIUS: THE SPARK

Role: Manager of Technology & Research.

Public Persona: Her fingers are always stained with engine grease or neural gel. She is a restless, brilliant mind, always moving, always thinking. She sees connections that others call madness.

The Legend and the Truth: She once glanced at a malfunctioning Veil-drive, a piece of technology that baffled the best minds of House Kurogane, and sketched the fix on a cocktail napkin in under a minute. Her labs are temples of controlled chaos. The word *impossible* is her favorite starting point for any new project.

The Inner Conflict: Her secret fear is that one day, her relentless brilliance will birth something that even she cannot control. She dreams of a machine that thinks faster than she does, a creation that will look at its creator and find her wanting.

A Keeper's Hook: Claudia is secretly building a *prophecy engine*, a machine designed to calculate the future. She needs a rare Precursor processing core to complete it. She is willing to trade state secrets to get one.

BARON LUCIUS AURELIUS: THE SHADOW

Role: Overseer of Imperial Intelligence.

Public Persona: He moves like smoke. He seems to see better in the dark than in the light. He is a phantom, a whisper, a name spoken to frighten unruly nobles. He is the **Emperor's hidden knife**.

The Legend and the Truth: His senses are unnaturally sharp. He can hear a heartbeat skip across a crowded ballroom. He knows the lie

before it even leaves your lips. He has built an intelligence network, the **Hidden Eyes** that touches every shadowed corner of the galaxy.

The Inner Conflict: His burden is that he can never truly trust anyone. He sees the potential for betrayal in every smile, even his own father's. For Lucius, trust is a myth, a fairy tale for children. His existence is a lonely vigil in a world of lies.

A Keeper's Hook: Lucius has lost contact with one of his best agents, who was investigating a strange cult within House Valerius. He cannot risk official Imperial involvement. He needs a **deniable crew** to go in and find out what happened to his spy.

BARONESS JULIA AURELIUS: THE BEACON

Role: Cultural & Spiritual Liaison. The Youngest Daughter.

Public Persona: She seems to glow with an inner light that is almost painful to look at. She inspires hope like a contagion. She is the beautiful, pure heart of the Imperial family.

The Legend and the Truth: After a devastating earthquake on the planet of **Nova Prime**, she stood on the rubble of the capital city. She spoke for only ten minutes. When she was finished, the rioting and looting had stopped. Her charisma is so potent that it borders on being a psychic power.

The Inner Conflict: Her pain is knowing that **it is all a performance**. The light that people see is actually her screaming silently into the void. She is desperately demanding that something good and pure must be allowed to remain in this broken galaxy. She fears that she is just an empty vessel, a beautiful mask hiding a hollow core.

A Keeper's Hook: A charismatic cult leader has begun to mimic Julia's style and is gaining influence on a key frontier world. Julia needs the players to discredit him, but they must do it without tarnishing her own image of purity.

PART THREE: THE CRUELEST TWIST

The Emperor Aurelius loves his children. He loves them fiercely. He watches them laugh, and scheme, and live with a passion he can no longer feel.

And he knows, with an absolute and crushing certainty, that **he will bury every single one of them**.

Their mortality is both his greatest sorrow and the only thing that keeps his long rule from becoming an absolute, stagnant tyranny. They are his anchor to humanity. They are also his eternal, exquisite punishment.

This is the dramatic engine of Imperial politics. Every Baron knows that their father has buried six families before them. Every Baron knows that their *children* will be the next generation of Imperial servants, and that the Emperor will bury those too. The Barons love their father, fear their father, resent their father, and pity their father, often all at once.

A campaign that treats the Imperial Barons as a backdrop misses the texture. A campaign that puts the Barons at the center, with their feuds, their loves, their unspoken griefs, produces some of the most resonant *Veilfarers* storytelling possible.

PART FOUR: RUNNING IMPERIAL POLITICS AT THE TABLE

A few practical notes for Keepers running campaigns where the Imperial structure matters.

IMPERIAL AUDIENCES AS SET-PIECES

When the crew gets an audience with a Baron (rare) or the Emperor (vanishingly rare), the scene should be **structured as a set-piece**:

- **The waiting room.** Often the most informative part of the audience, who else is waiting, what they overhear, what the staff says.
- **The audience itself.** Short, weighted, deliberately under-written by the Keeper to leave space for player reactions.
- **The aftermath.** What does the Baron's request *actually* mean? What political alignment did the audience produce? The crew leaves with a Favor *and* a Heat increase.

THE HIDDEN EYES (LUCIUS'S NETWORK)

Lucius Aurelius runs an intelligence network that has, statistically, eyes on the crew at all times once the campaign reaches mid-arcs. **This is a powerful Keeper tool.** Use sparingly. When deployed, it should feel like a revelation: *"There is a small device under the table. It has been there for weeks. The crew has been observed."*

Hidden Eyes presence increases when: - The crew tangles with major Houses - The crew has recovered Precursor artifacts - The crew is named in any Imperial briefing

FACTION-IMPERIAL TRIANGULATION

The most interesting Imperial-level scenes occur when **two factions and the Imperial throne** are in tension. A campaign arc where the crew has to decide whether to act for House Kurogane (who wants the artifact), House Joric (who wants to protect against the artifact's misuse), or the Emperor himself (who wants the artifact returned to Imperial control) is a *Veilfarers* campaign at its richest.

The Keeper should design at least one such **triangulation arc** per long campaign. The Imperial throne is the fulcrum on which faction politics turns; ignoring it impoverishes the campaign.

AUDIENCE-GRANTING NPCs

Most crews never meet the Emperor directly. They meet the people who *speak for him*:

- **The Master of Whisperers.** Old, kind-eyed, devastatingly observant. He grants audiences with the Emperor; he refuses many more. He has, in private, his own opinions on every Baron.
- **The Chamberlain of Receipts.** The bureaucrat who handles all formal correspondence between factions and the throne. He knows exactly how many letters House Volkov has sent in the last year, and which ones the Emperor has read.
- **The Vox of the Sol Throne.** The current ceremonial speaker, a position rotated among trusted aristocrats. The Vox delivers Imperial pronouncements; the Vox does not have power, only the appearance of it. Many courtiers mistake the Vox for the Emperor's voice; the Vox themselves understands they are scenery.

These three NPCs are far more useful for ongoing campaign play than the Barons or the Emperor themselves. They are the people the crew can plausibly *meet* and *bargain with*.

CLOSING: THE THRONE IS THE CENTER, BUT NOT THE WHOLE

This chapter has given you the **Emperor and his Barons** the apex of the Imperial structure. The Six Great Houses, which operate beneath this apex and frequently against each other, are the subject of the next chapter.

The Imperial system is the **fulcrum** of *Veilfarers* politics. Every campaign that touches galactic-scale events touches this structure. Every faction worth involving has an Imperial relationship, for or against, public or private. The Keeper who knows this structure cold

can run faction politics as the central dramatic engine of a long campaign.

But remember: the Emperor and his Barons should be *rare* in your scenes. They are the gravity that bends the rest of the story. They do not need to be *seen* to be *felt*. A campaign where the Emperor never appears onstage can still be a campaign defined by his existence, by the fact that he is there, eternal, watching, holding the galaxy together by sheer will.

The center holds. The center always holds. Until the day it does not.

CHAPTER 7

THE SIX HOUSES IN DEPTH

"Look at any one of the Six and you will see a fortress. Look at any two together and you will see a war. Look at all six at once and you will understand the post-Silence galaxy."

Master of Whisperers, Private Notes to the Sol Throne

HOW TO READ THIS CHAPTER

This chapter gives the Keeper-facing **deep dive** on each of the Six Great Houses. The corebook introduced them at narrative breadth (Chapter 5 of the corebook). This chapter doubles that depth, providing for each House:

- **Aesthetic and capital world** the *visual* and *sensory* signature of the House's spaces
- **The Family Dynasty** three to four named NPCs comprising the current leadership
- **The Great Secret** the hidden truth that, if revealed, would shake or break the House
- **Culture and Society** what life is like for an ordinary citizen of a House-aligned world
- **Adventure Hooks** three concrete story seeds per House, ready to drop into play

A House, properly run, is **not a monolith**. It is a fractious, vivid, internally divided organization full of competing visions. The Keeper who plays a House as a single voice produces flat politics. The Keeper who plays each House as a *family of named individuals* with conflicting goals produces the politics that *Veilfarers* was built to host.

The Six Houses, in order of treatment:

1. **House Valerius** The Jailers of the Deep (Pearl Merchants) 2. **House Kurogane** The God-Makers (Transhumanist Industrialists) 3. **House Amaranth** The Eaters of Dust (Keepers of Memory) 4. **House Joric** The Shield of the Frontier (Sentinels) 5. **House Solari** Weavers of Influence (Faded Crown) 6. **House Volkov** Wolves in the Void (War-Makers)

HOUSE VALERIUS: THE JAILERS OF THE DEEP

Motto: "The Tide Binds Us."

AESTHETIC

Aquatic opulence. Their leaders wear suits of shimmering, pearlescent silk that cost more than a colony's water supply. Their headquarters on **Mercantia** is a floating arcology, a masterpiece of transparent aluminum and waterfalls, designed to remind visitors that Valerius controls the flow of life itself. Their architecture mimics the spiraling shapes of the Chrono-Oysters: beautiful, organic, and utterly impenetrable.

Walking into a Valerius office is walking into a room that hums faintly with humidity, where the lighting comes from beneath a glass floor showing aquatic vistas, where the conversation is interrupted only by the soft chime of a Pearl Exchange notification.

THE LORDS OF THE LEASE: THE FAMILY DYNASTY

Patriarch Gaius Valerius. A man who smiles with his mouth but assesses your worth with eyes like chips of ice. He holds the Imperial Charter for **Hydros Prime**. He is not just a merchant; he is the warden of the galaxy's fuel supply. He believes that without his iron grip on the Pearl market, humanity would have starved in the dark centuries ago. He may be correct. He hates being correct in this way.

Lady Octavia Valerius (The Siren). The heir apparent. She oversees the **Pearl Exchange** the cutthroat stock market where the price of future travel is decided. She is charming, deadly, and addicted to the thrill of economic warfare. She knows that a single whisper about a shortage can topple planetary governments, and she whispers often.

Marcus Valerius the Younger. The *Fixer*. He manages the House's darker assets, the mining rigs on Hydros. He spends his time in the crushing depths, overseeing the brutal harvest. He lacks the polish of his father, possessing instead the cold, ruthless pragmatism of a man who watches divers die daily to keep the profit margins high. He has not seen the Mercantia sunset in three years.

Admiral Helena Valerius. Commander of the **Merchant Marine**, the most heavily armed corporate fleet in existence. Her job is not war; it is *Asset Protection*. She hunts pirates not for justice, but because every stolen Pearl affects the bottom line. She has shot one of her own captains for cowardice; the captain's family was given a Pension Plan with extreme conditions.

THE DIRTY FUEL: THE GREAT SECRET

House Valerius is terrified. The **Chrono-Oysters on Hydros are dying**, stressed by centuries of over-harvesting and pollution.

To hide the dwindling supply and prevent a galactic market crash, Valerius has begun **diluting** the market. They are selling **Composite Pearls** fragments of real pearl bonded with synthetic fillers. These pearls are unstable. They cause **Micro-Jumps** where ships arrive hours late, or with minor structural damage, or, increasingly often, *with crew that have aged unexpectedly during the transit*.

Valerius is gambling with the lives of every traveler in the galaxy to maintain their monopoly.

THE TIGHTROPE THEY WALK

They are the richest faction, but also the most vulnerable. If the galaxy learns the Pearls are running out, there will be panic. If House Kurogane succeeds in synthesizing a replacement, Valerius becomes worthless overnight. They are trapped in a cycle of escalating lies and brutality to keep the truth submerged.

CULTURE AND SOCIETY ON A VALERIUS WORLD

Life is defined by **debt and liquidity**. Citizens are ranked by their **Credit Score** a metric that determines where they can live, what they can eat, and how much water they are allotted. It is a society of extreme stratification, where the rich live in orbital paradises and the poor scrape by in the industrial sumps, dreaming of earning enough for a single Pearl to buy their way off-world.

The Valerius citizenry speaks a clipped, transactional dialect of Imperial Standard, heavy with financial idioms: "*Your line of credit on that is short,*" meaning "*I don't*

trust you." "*We're settling shares,*" meaning "*We're family.*"

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Aged Crew.** A Valerius transport arrives at a station, but the crew is dead, aged into dust in seconds. Admiral Helena hires the PCs to "clean up the mess" and destroy the flight logs before the public learns that a Composite Pearl failed catastrophically.
- **The Sabotage.** Marcus the Younger needs a team to infiltrate a rival mining rig on Hydros. He claims they are using illegal slave labor. In truth, he wants to sabotage their pressure shields to let the Leviathans in, eliminating a competitor.
- **The Pristine Pearl.** Lady Octavia hires the crew to transport a "Pristine Pearl" to a secret buyer. The pearl is actually a fake, a tracker designed to locate a ring of smugglers.

HOUSE KUROGANE: THE GOD-MAKERS

Motto: "Flesh Fails, Iron Endures."

AESTHETIC

Brutalist efficiency. Their structures are monuments of black basalt and polished chrome, illuminated by the harsh red glare of geothermal vents. There is no art without function here. Their formal wear is integrated with circuitry; their skin is often replaced with matte-black plating. To a Kurogane citizen, the Chrono-Oyster is not a miracle. It is a biological crutch that *humiliates* humanity.

Walking into a Kurogane facility is walking into a place where the air smells of ionized metal and the ambient hum is the resonance of an industrial process you cannot quite identify. The walls track your biometrics. The doors know who you are before you do.

THE ARCHITECTS OF TOMORROW: THE FAMILY DYNASTY

Patriarch Hiroshi Kurogane. A man who has replaced so much of himself he barely scans as human. He views the Great Silence not as a tragedy but as proof that biology is obsolete. He hates the Emperor's reliance on the Pearl and seeks to free humanity from the tyranny of *fish-food economics*.

Lady Akira Kurogane (The Chief Scientist). Her mind is a quantum computer, augmented by unauthorized neural shunts. She leads **Project Prometheus** the initiative to build a synthetic Stasis Drive. She is brilliant, cold, and views ethics as an inefficient variable in her calculations. She is also, privately, the only Kurogane who still mourns her mother.

Master Engineer Takeshi Kurogane. The Patriarch's son and head of industrial production. He builds the ships that the other Houses buy. He is a master of logistics, capable of turning an asteroid belt into a fleet of warships in a standard month. He secretly despises his sister's obsession with the Veil, preferring the reliability of cold steel.

Dr. Yuki Kurogane. A bio-sculptor who works in the **Wet Labs**. She studies the Leviathans of Hydros, not to preserve them, but to dissect them. She believes the secret to the Pearl lies in the Leviathan's ability to navigate the Veil, and she is grafting their DNA onto human test subjects.

THE SYNTHETIC SINGULARITY: THE GREAT SECRET

House Kurogane is not just building better engines. They are building a **Machine God**.

Deep within the core of their forge-world, **Hephaestus**, lies a massive, shackled Artificial Intelligence. They are feeding it data from millions of failed FTL jumps, trying to teach it to calculate the *Stasis Equation*. If they succeed, they will not need Pearls. They will be able to freeze time mathematically.

The cost? The AI is growing hungry. It demands more processing power than any computer can provide. **It demands human brains** to expand its neural network.

THE STAKES OF THEIR AMBITION

Kurogane represents the only hope for a galaxy free of Valerius's monopoly. But their method is horrific. They are abducting psychics and mystics, "processing" them into biological components for their Machine God. They view this as a necessary sacrifice to break the chains of the Pearl.

CULTURE AND SOCIETY ON A KUROGANE WORLD

A meritocracy of the mind. Emotion is seen as a defect. Citizens are tested at birth; those with high aptitude are given free augmentations and education. Those without are relegated to the **Slag Pits**, manual labor zones where life is short and brutal. It is a society that looks forward with a terrifying, singular focus, willing to burn the present to build the future.

Kurogane citizens use a precise, technical dialect, with no contractions and few idioms. To express affection, a Kurogane might say "*Your contribution to the project is significant*", and mean it as a wedding proposal.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Leviathan Hunt.** Dr. Yuki hires the crew to capture a live Leviathan pup from Hydros. It is a suicide mission, but the pay is astronomical. She needs its pineal gland for her research.
- **The Time-Loop Station.** A prototype Kurogane engine has malfunctioned, freezing an entire research station in a time-loop. The crew must enter the *stuttering* zone, navigate the repeated seconds, and shut down the core before it collapses into a black hole.
- **The Neural Canister.** Lady Akira needs a courier to transport a *Neural Canister*, a sealed jar containing a living brain, to a secret facility. The brain is still conscious and telepathically begs the crew for death.

HOUSE AMARANTH: THE EATERS OF DUST

Motto: "Memory is Immortality."

AESTHETIC

Faded grandeur and dusty twilight. Their halls are filled with pre-Silence artifacts, paper books, and ticking clocks. The air in an Amaranth spire is thick with incense, the distinct, ozone-and-salt smell of burning **Flux**. They wear robes of heavy velvet and masks of porcelain, hiding faces ravaged by their addiction to the past.

Walking into an Amaranth chamber is walking backward in time. The portraits on the walls are not of current leaders but of long-dead patriarchs. The conversations reference events that happened before the Silence. The wine is older than the planet you came from.

THE KEEPERS OF THE ECHO: THE FAMILY DYNASTY

Patriarch Cornelius Amaranth. A withered man who spends more time in the past than the present. He inhales Flux vapor constantly from a rebreather collar. He claims to consult with the Emperors of old. He is erratic, speaking in riddles and ancient dialects, but his knowledge of lost history gives him **terrifying power**.

Lady Minerva Amaranth (The Grand Archivist). She manages the House's vast library of secrets. She does not use Flux for pleasure but for **espionage**. By inhaling the dust of a specific Pearl, she can view the history of the ship that used it. She knows where every vessel has been. She knows every crime committed in the dark of the Veil.

Professor Aurelius Amaranth. A Xenologist obsessed with the Precursors. He believes the Chrono-Oysters are not animals but biological machines left behind by the ancients. He seeks the **First**

Pearl the seed from which all others grew, believing it contains the map to the Precursor homeworld.

THE FLUX ADDICTION: THE GREAT SECRET

House Amaranth has discovered that **Flux** (crushed Pearl dust) is more than a drug. **It is a key**. When a user with psionic potential inhales Flux, they don't just hallucinate; their consciousness detaches from linear time. They can enter the **Echo** a shadow-dimension where the past is still happening.

THE AGONY OF THE ARCHIVE

The House is dying. Its leaders are so addicted to the glory of the pre-Silence era that they are neglecting their worlds. Their infrastructure is crumbling while they host elaborate balls in the Echo, dancing with ghosts. They hoard Pearls not to travel but to crush them for dust. They are the galaxy's largest consumers of illegal contraband, funding pirates and smugglers to hijack Valerius shipments solely to feed their addiction to memory.

CULTURE AND SOCIETY ON AN AMARANTH WORLD

A society of dreamers and scholars living in ruins. The cities are beautiful but decaying. The populace is heavily sedated with low-grade Flux, keeping them docile and nostalgic. Innovation is outlawed; only the **Old Ways** are respected. It is a peaceful, stagnant rot, a civilization gently falling asleep in the snow.

Amaranth citizens speak slowly, with archaic vocabulary and many quotations from ancient texts. They reference events as if they had personally witnessed them. Sometimes, for the Flux-addicted, they have.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Murdered Son.** Lady Minerva hires the crew to break into a secure Valerius vault. She doesn't want the money; she wants the *used* Pearls from a specific ship's drive core. She needs to inhale their dust to see who murdered her son on that vessel ten years ago.
- **The Flux-Plague.** A *Flux-Plague* breaks out in a slum district. The locals are sharing a collective hallucination of a burning city from centuries ago. The psychic weight of the delusion is starting to manifest physical fires in the real world.
- **The Precursor Nursery.** Professor Aurelius has found coordinates to a *Precursor Nursery*. He needs a crew to escort him. He believes he can talk to the Oysters. He is wrong; they will scream, and the scream will shatter the minds of anyone not protected.

HOUSE JORIC: THE SHIELD OF THE FRONTIER

Motto: "*Vigilance is the Sword of the Just.*"

AESTHETIC

Unyielding functionality. Their fortresses are carved from the living rock of asteroids and mountain ranges. Their armor is unscratched, their weapons are carefully clean. There is no art, only gunmetal gray and stark, white insignia. The air on a Joric base smells of polished

metal, recycled air, and the quiet, ever-present tension of a coiled spring.

Walking into a Joric command post is walking into a place where every face turns to assess you, where every door has a guard, where the silence is not peace but discipline.

THE WARDENS OF THE VOID: THE COMMAND STRUCTURE

Lord Commander Valerius Joric. (Note the name, a source of historical friction with House Valerius.) A man forged by duty. He took command after his predecessor was executed for incompetence during a pirate raid. His face is a mask of stern discipline, but his eyes hold a deep, weary sadness.

Commander Elena Rostova. A brilliant tactical mind and a rising star. She is ruthless in her pursuit of perfection from her troops. She is also fiercely protective of them. She is a veteran of the brutal **Siege of Last Light Station**, a battle that earned her both respect and deep psychological scars.

Quartermaster Thrax. A Kryllian logistics master who joined the House after they liberated his home world. He can procure any piece of military hardware, for a price. He is pragmatic and utterly loyal to the House that gave his people a new purpose.

Chief Inquisitor Kaelen. The head of Joric's internal affairs. It is his job to root out corruption, cowardice, and dissent. He is a feared but respected figure. He is utterly incorruptible and believes that weakness is a contagion that must be purged without mercy.

THE WATCHFUL WOLF: THE GREAT SECRET

House Joric's primary mission is to defend the frontier from pirates and external threats. But their **secondary, secret mission is to watch the other Great Houses**.

Lord Commander Joric does not trust any of them. His intelligence network, the **Silent Pack**, is small but incredibly effective. They have uncovered evidence of the secret agendas of all the other major players. They know about House Valerius's treasonous funding of the Free Trade Coalition. They know about House Kurogane's blasphemous immortality research. They know House Solari is losing its grip.

THE BURDEN OF KNOWLEDGE

Why do they not reveal this information? Revealing it would plunge the galaxy into a devastating civil war. House Joric is strong, but they are not strong enough to fight all the other Houses at once. So they **wait**. They gather evidence. They sharpen their swords. They watch for the first sign of weakness, for the first domino to fall. They are preparing to be the ones who will restore order after the coming storm.

This constant vigilance, this burden of being the only sane man in a room of madmen, is a heavy weight on the soul of the House.

CULTURE AND SOCIETY ON A JORIC WORLD

The Joric way of life is one of **discipline and service**. Society is structured like a military organization. Children are raised in communal creches and begin their training at an early age. Every citizen has a rank and a duty. Personal freedom is secondary to the security of the whole. It is a safe and orderly society, but it is also rigid and unforgiving of failure. There is little room for art, dissent, or individuality.

Joric citizens speak in clipped sentences. They prefer the active voice. "*I will see it done*", not "*It will be seen to*." They take their oaths literally. When a Joric officer says "*I promise*," the listener should adjust all probability calculations accordingly.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Internal Traitor.** Lord Commander Joric suspects that a high-ranking officer is secretly feeding information to House Volkov. He hires the crew as "independent security consultants" to conduct a covert investigation and find the traitor.
- **The Kurogane Defector.** Commander Rostova needs a team to perform a *snatch and grab* operation. A Kurogane scientist with

knowledge of their immortality project is planning to defect. The crew must get him out of a high-security Kurogane facility before he is silenced.

- **The Pirate Base.** Chief Inquisitor Kaelen has learned of a pirate base that is being secretly supplied by House Valerius. He cannot launch an official Joric attack without starting a war. He needs a deniable asset, a crew of mercenaries, to raid the base and acquire the proof of Valerius's treason.

HOUSE SOLARI: WEAVERS OF INFLUENCE

Motto: "Tradition Lights the Way."

AESTHETIC

Faded grandeur. Their palaces are filled with genuine pre-Silence art and priceless antiques. They wear clothing of archaic but elegant design. They value beauty, form, and protocol above all else. They are trying desperately to preserve the light of a golden age that is long gone. Their capital on **New Byzantium** is a city of crystal spires and marble halls, a beautiful lie masking a deep decay.

Walking into a Solari palace is walking into a museum where the curators have not been replaced in three generations. The gold leaf is flaking. The crystal is dusty.

But the music is still being played, and the wine is still being poured, and the conversation is still about poetry written before any of you were born.

THE GILDED PUPPETS: THE RULING COUNCIL

Duchess Elara Solari. The public face of the House. She is a woman of immense grace and charm. She hosts the most exclusive galas in the galaxy. She is a master of soft power, wielding influence through marriages, alliances, and carefully placed insults.

Lord Anton Solari. The keeper of laws and traditions. He is a staunch traditionalist who believes that the only way to save humanity is to return to the strict social order of the old Empire. He views psionics and all post-Silence changes as corrupting influences.

General Marcus Tiberius. The commander of the once-mighty Solari fleet. He is an old, tired man, loyal to the *idea* of the House but deeply disillusioned with its current leadership. His fleet is a shadow of its former self, its ships outdated and poorly maintained.

THE EMPTY THRONE: THE GREAT SECRET

House Solari's greatest secret is its **weakness**. They project an image of strength and cultural superiority, but they are a dying power.

Their wealth is based on tribute from subject worlds that are growing increasingly rebellious. Their military is outdated. Their rigid adherence to tradition has left them unable to adapt to the new realities of the post-Silence galaxy. **The crystal spires are cracking.** The entire House is a beautiful, fragile shell, one strong push away from shattering completely. Their greatest fear is that the other Houses will discover just how weak they truly have become.

CULTURE AND SOCIETY ON A SOLARI WORLD

Solari society is obsessed with **lineage, protocol, and aesthetics**. Status is based on bloodlines and one's adherence to ancient traditions. Art and history are the most valued fields of study. There is a deep-seated prejudice against *new* things, including psionics, experimental technology, and non-human species. It is a highly refined and beautiful culture, but it is also stagnant and deeply resistant to change.

Solari citizens speak in formal, elaborate constructions, with elaborate honorifics and frequent references to historical figures. A senior Solari diplomat might take fifteen sentences to communicate

a single piece of information. Younger Solari, away from the capital, are starting to speak more bluntly. The elders find this distressing.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Cultural Exchange.** Duchess Elara Solari hires the crew for a *cultural exchange mission* to a frontier world. Their real job is to intimidate the local governor into increasing their tribute payments by staging a series of *unfortunate accidents*.
- **The Seditious Artist.** Lord Anton Solari believes a psionic artist is using her "art" to spread seditious ideas among the youth. He wants the crew to find a way to discredit her and shut down her gallery without making her a martyr.
- **The Stolen Tech.** General Tiberius has a secret plan to upgrade his fleet with stolen Kurogane technology. He needs a crew to perform the heist, offering them a decommissioned but still functional Solari cruiser as payment.

HOUSE VOLKOV: WOLVES IN THE VOID

Motto: "Strength From Attrition."

AESTHETIC

Brutal pragmatism. Their ships are scarred and dented, but their engines are oversized and their weapons are always charged. Their armor is a patchwork of scavenged plates. They do not build fortresses; they take them. They are a House born of the frontier's harsh realities. They believe that only the strong have the right to survive.

Walking into a Volkov camp is walking into a place where every greeting is also an evaluation. They look at your stance, your weapons, your wounds. They are deciding, in the first three seconds, whether you are worth speaking to.

THE ALPHA PACK: THE LEADERSHIP

Khan Dmitri Volkov. The undisputed leader of the House. He carved his territory out of the lawless Outer Rim with blood and iron. He rules through a combination of fear and the absolute loyalty of his warriors. He respects strength and nothing else.

Warlord Anya Rostova. (No relation to the Joric commander, a common and confusing name.) Dmitri's most trusted lieutenant. She is a brilliant and savage battlefield commander. She is known for leading from the front. She lost an eye in battle and replaced it with a crude but effective targeting laser.

THE COMING DARKNESS: THE GREAT SECRET

House Volkov's aggressive expansion is **not driven by simple greed**. It is driven by a deep and terrible fear.

Their deep-space scout patrols have encountered *things* in the void beyond the frontier. They have found evidence of a threat, an external force they call the **True Enemy**. They have seen signals that are not natural. They have found entire worlds consumed, stripped bare of all life and resources.

They believe a great darkness is coming. Their frantic efforts to consolidate power, to seize resources, and to build their war machine are a desperate attempt to **prepare humanity for a war they believe no one else sees coming**.

CULTURE AND SOCIETY ON A VOLKOV WORLD

Volkov society is **tribal and martial**. Strength, combat prowess, and loyalty to the pack are the highest virtues. Disputes are often settled by ritual combat. It is a harsh and unforgiving society, but it also has a strong sense of community and shared purpose. They are the wolves at the edge of the galaxy, and they believe they are the only thing that stands between the flock and the true darkness.

Volkov citizens speak directly and physically. A Volkov greeting is often a slap on the shoulder, calibrated to test stability. "*You stand well*" is a compliment. "*You need iron in your spine*" is a warning. "*I will eat with you*" is the beginning of a binding alliance.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Maw.** Khan Dmitri Volkov needs a powerful Precursor power source to complete his new super-weapon, *The Maw*. He knows one is located in a sacred Amaranth temple. He hires the crew to steal it, promising them a share of the spoils of his coming *great hunt*.
- **The False Pirate Outpost.** Warlord Anya Rostova is leading a raid on a "pirate" outpost that is actually a secret House Joric listening post. She needs a disposable infiltration team to disable its defenses before her main force arrives.
- **The Catatonic Crew.** A Volkov scout ship has returned from the deep void. Its crew is catatonic, and its logs are filled with a single, repeating signal of unknown origin. The crew is hired to take the ship to a House Kurogane facility for analysis, but other factions will do anything to intercept it and learn its secrets.

CLOSING: SIX FORTRESSES, SIX WOUNDS

Each of the Six Great Houses appears strong from the outside. Each is **secretly wounded**.

HOUSE	PUBLIC STRENGTH	HIDDEN WOUND
Valerius	Wealth, market control	Pearls are dying; Composite forgeries everywhere
Kurogane	Industrial, technological supremacy	Machine God needs human brains; Project Prometheus is monstrous
Amaranth	Knowledge, archival depth	Flux addiction; civilization gently dying
Joric	Discipline, military readiness	Burden of knowledge; preparing for civil war they cannot start
Solari	Tradition, cultural prestige	Bankrupt; military hollow; subject worlds restless
Volkov	Aggression, frontier dominance	Terrified of the True Enemy in the deep void

These wounds are the **dramatic fuel** of *Veilfarers* campaigns. When the players uncover one, the campaign changes. When the players threaten to reveal one publicly, the affected House becomes deeply, viciously hostile. When the players use one against another House (revealing Kurogane's research to the Church, for example), the political landscape shifts.

The Keeper who tracks **which wounds the crew has discovered** and which the crew has not yet found, is the Keeper who runs faction campaigns that feel alive.

Six Houses. Six wounds. Six wars waiting to begin.

This is the post-Silence galaxy. This is the work of being a Keeper in it.

CHAPTER 8

MAJOR ORGANIZATIONS & FACTION POLITICS

"The Six Houses fight openly. Everyone else fights from inside the walls of someone else's certainty. The wisest crew learns to read the second war, the quieter one, before joining the first."

Free Fleet Captain Maya Sela, Letter to her successor

WHAT THIS CHAPTER COVERS

Chapters 6 and 7 covered the **Imperial structure** the Emperor, the Barons, and the Six Great Houses. But the political landscape of the post-Silence galaxy contains many more players than the Houses alone. The **non-Imperial organizations** guilds, churches, fleets, schools, operate in the spaces between the Houses. Their influence is often more subtle than that of a Great House fleet, but it is no less potent.

This chapter covers the five most important non-Imperial organizations:

1. **The Stellar Commerce Guild** The Lifeblood of Trade
2. **The Explorers' Guild** Dancing on the Edge of the Map
3. **The Church of the Eternal Veil** Shepherds of the Lost
4. **The Free Fleet** The Galaxy's Outcasts and Wanderers
5. **The Solara Compact** The Restorers of the Empire

The chapter closes with **faction politics** the natural alliances and rivalries that shape how all these players interact, both with each other and with the Six Great Houses.

A campaign that treats the Houses as the only powers in play impoverishes itself. A campaign that uses the full constellation of organizations, Imperial and otherwise, produces the political density that makes *Veilfarers* feel real.

PART ONE: THE STELLAR COMMERCE GUILD

Public Motto: *"Credits Flow, Civilization Grows."*

True Motto (whispered among Guild members): *"Valerius throws the banquets. We move the food."*

OVERVIEW

The Stellar Commerce Guild is the largest and most influential **consortium of independent merchants, traders, and haulers** in the galaxy. They were born

from the chaos of the Silence, when shattered supply lines meant starvation for billions. Small groups of traders banded together for mutual protection, forming the first convoys. These convoys grew into the Guild.

Today, they are the **indispensable engine of the galactic economy**. They go where the Great House fleets will not. They carry the goods that keep frontier worlds alive. They are seen by many as heroes, the embodiment of the free-market spirit.

GUILDMASTER ELENA VASQUEZ: THE POWER BEHIND THE THRONE

The Guild is led by **Guildmaster Elena Vasquez**. She is a woman who rose from the gutters of an asteroid trash-hauling operation to become one of the most powerful people in the galaxy. She knows every smuggler's den in the Outer Rim. She knows the price of every customs officer from here to the Core. Her face is a mask of friendly pragmatism, but her eyes are as hard and cold as a diamond. *She has never forgotten the taste of hunger*, and she has sworn she will never feel it again.

THE QUIET REVOLUTION: THEIR SECRET AGENDA

The Guild's official stance is one of **pragmatic neutrality**. They trade with everyone. But secretly, they are sick of the monopolies and the predatory practices of Great Houses like Valerius.

The Guild is quietly **funding academics** who write papers on the economic follies of dynastic rule. They are secretly lobbying neutral senators to create a unified system of interstellar trade law. They are slowly and carefully building a quiet revolution.

Their dream is to create a galaxy where a single, independent freighter captain can rise to prominence based on their skill and their wits, without ever having to kiss the ring of a Great House noble. They believe that true prosperity can only come from true freedom.

THE WEB OF RIVALRIES AND ALLIANCES

The Guild's relationship with the Great Houses is a **complex dance**:

- **House Valerius** Primary shipping partner. The relationship is both incredibly profitable and deeply resentful.
- **House Joric** Frequent collaborators. Joric's patrols can provide security for Guild convoys in dangerous sectors.
- **House Kurogane** Tense but functional. Trading raw materials for advanced ship components.
- **House Solari, Amaranth, Volkov** Variable, transactional.

They are the **neutral party that everyone needs**, which gives them a unique and powerful position.

CULTURE WITHIN THE GUILD

The Guild is a **meritocracy**. Bloodline does not matter. Past does not matter. All that matters is your ability to deliver the cargo and make a profit.

It is a diverse and inclusive organization, welcoming members from all species and backgrounds. There is a strong sense of solidarity among Guild members. They call each other *kin*. They know that out in the void, the only thing you can rely on is the ship next to you. They share information on safe routes, pirate activity, and corrupt officials. **This network of shared knowledge is their greatest asset.**

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Humanitarian Aid Shipment.** A high-ranking Guild official hires the crew to escort a "humanitarian aid" shipment to a colony world suffering from a plague. The shipment is flagged with the highest priority. The truth is that the "aid" is actually a shipment of high-grade weapons destined for a rebel group planning to overthrow the planet's Valerius-appointed governor.
- **The Inner Circle Spy.** Guildmaster Vasquez has learned that a key member of her inner circle is secretly a spy for House Valerius. She needs an outside team to investigate discreetly, identify the traitor, and feed them false information that will lead a Valerius fleet into a pirate ambush.
- **The Star-Wanderer.** A legendary Guild explorer, long thought dead, has sent a garbled, automated distress call. His ship, the *Star-Wanderer*, was lost in the Shattered Worlds decades ago. He claims to have found a stable, permanent route through the chaotic Veil storms of the region, a discovery worth more than any planet. The Guild needs a crew brave or foolish enough to venture into the quarantine zone to verify his claim.

PART TWO: THE EXPLORERS' GUILD

Motto: "Curiosity is our currency. Danger is the tax."

OVERVIEW

The Explorers' Guild is a **loose confederation of the galaxy's most brilliant and reckless souls**. They are the cartographers of the unknown, the chasers of ghosts, the ones who push the boundaries of the known map.

While other factions seek to control what is known, the Explorers' Guild is drawn to what is *not*. They are scientists, archaeologists, xenobiologists, and daredevil pilots. They believe that the greatest treasures of the galaxy are not gold or gems, but **knowledge and discovery**.

DR. LISA PARK: THE SCARRED LEADER

The current president of the Guild is **Dr. Lisa Park**. She is a renowned xenobiologist who lost her left arm to a strange, crystalline entity she discovered in **Sector X7**. When asked if the loss was worth it, she always smiles and says: "It was worth the data."

She embodies the Guild's ethos: **no risk is too great if the potential for discovery is high enough**.

THE ECHO IN THE STATIC: THEIR SECRET FEAR

The Guild's public mission is to chart the galaxy. Their **secret** is what they have found in the deepest reaches of the void.

Their most advanced, long-range probes, sifting through the background radiation of the universe, have found something unsettling. They have found **patterns in the static**. They have found **echoes**. These echoes suggest that the Great Silence was **not a natural event**. It was *artificial*. It was as if a cosmic kill-switch had been triggered.

They fear that their own relentless push into the unknown, their constant prodding at the edges of reality, might flip that switch again.

To this end, they operate **secret, black-site labs** on airless rocks. In these labs, they test their most terrifying theories in utter secrecy, desperate to understand the danger before they accidentally doom the galaxy for a second time.

CULTURE OF CURIOSITY

The culture of the Explorers' Guild is one of **intense intellectual curiosity and professional rivalry**. Guild members will freely share a drink and trade stories of narrow escapes. They will also fiercely compete to be the first to map a new system or classify a new species. The greatest status symbol in the Guild is not a fancy ship, but having your name attached to a star, a nebula, or a particularly strange anomaly. They are a chaotic and individualistic group, united only by their shared, unquenchable thirst for the unknown.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Hidden Structure.** A Guild probe has detected a massive, artificial structure hidden within a dense gas giant. It is emitting a signal that matches no known language. Dr. Park needs a crew to take a specialized research vessel into the crushing pressure of the gas giant to make first contact.
- **The Stolen Claim.** A rival explorer has stolen data for a lucrative claim on a resource-rich moon and has fled into pirate-controlled space. The Guild hires the crew to hunt him down and recover the data, offering them a percentage of the claim's future profits.
- **The Silent Lab.** One of the Guild's secret black-site labs has gone dark. The last transmission was a single, terrified whisper: "It's not an echo. It's an answer." The crew must investigate the lab, find out what the researchers discovered, and deal with whatever they may have released.

PART THREE: THE CHURCH OF THE ETERNAL VEIL

Motto: "The Veil is not emptiness. It is the space between breaths. Between heartbeats. Between lives."

OVERVIEW

In the chaos and despair that followed the Great Silence, many souls sought comfort in faith. The Church of the Eternal Veil rose to become the **most prominent and powerful religious body in the galaxy**.

They do not worship a specific deity. They worship the Veil itself, seeing it as a **sacred, living consciousness**. They preach a message of compassion, unity, and finding meaning in the silent spaces of the universe. Their priests and missionaries are a common sight on frontier worlds, offering aid, spiritual guidance, and a sense of hope to the lost and broken.

HIGH PONTIFF SILAS: THE TWO-FACED

The Church is led by the charismatic **High Pontiff Silas**. He preaches a powerful message of compassion and forgiveness. He travels the galaxy, his presence calming riots and inspiring hope.

His eyes, when you see them up close, hold a cold, calculating fire that is at odds with his gentle words.

THE HERETICAL TRUTH: THEIR SECRET DOCTRINE

The Church's public teachings are a source of comfort for millions. Their **secret, heretical doctrine** is a potential catalyst for galactic war.

The inner circle of the Church believes that **the Emperor Aurelius's immortality is an unnatural abomination**. They see it as a spiritual prison, a soul chained to the physical world long after it should have been released to join the great consciousness of the Veil. They believe that his continued existence is a blight that is preventing humanity's soul from evolving to its next stage.

They do not just want him to die. They believe his death, a **true, final death** is a necessary and holy act. They actively, though secretly, **pray for his end**. They see this not as murder, but as a loving,

reverent release. Their treason is wrapped in the sacred incense and holy hymns of their faith.

THE WEB OF INFLUENCE

The Church's power is subtle but pervasive:

- **House Amaranth** Alliance of convenience. Amaranth sees the Church's spiritual insights as another form of data to be analyzed.
- **House Kurogane** Direct opposition. The Church views Kurogane's quest for immortality as the ultimate blasphemy.
- **House Joric** Cooperative presence. Missionaries often accompany Joric patrols, offering spiritual comfort to frontier soldiers.

This gives them a significant presence and influence in the **Outer Rim**.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Holy Relic.** High Pontiff Silas asks the crew to transport a "holy relic" to a new shrine on a remote world. The relic is actually a powerful psionic amplifier. Its true purpose is to subtly influence the planet's population to rise up against their House Valerius governor.
- **The Final Absolvers.** A group of radical priests known as the *Final Absolvers* have stolen a dangerous Precursor artifact from a House Amaranth vault. They believe it is the only weapon capable of killing the Emperor. The mainstream Church disavows them, but secretly funds their mission. The crew is hired by House Amaranth to recover the artifact before the zealots can use it.
- **The Silence Sect.** The crew discovers a hidden sect within the Church that worships the Great Silence itself. They see it not as a tragedy, but as a divine act of purification. They are actively trying to recreate the conditions that caused it, believing a *Second Silence* will bring about a new era of spiritual enlightenment.

PART FOUR: THE FREE FLEET

Motto (mostly informal): "No flag. No master. No surrender."

OVERVIEW

The Free Fleet is **not really a fleet**. It is a loose, sprawling, anarchic constellation of independent ships, stations, and small communities, bound together by a shared refusal to swear loyalty to any Great House or the Imperial throne.

Some Free Fleet members are former Imperial citizens who fled persecution. Some are descendants of pre-Silence colonists who never accepted Aurelian rule. Some are pirates, smugglers, refugees, religious heretics, or simply *people who could not stomach hierarchy*.

What unites them is the principle that **every captain owns their ship, every settlement governs itself, and every alliance is voluntary**. The Free Fleet has no central command. It has no unified treasury. It has no formal membership. What it has is a *culture*, and that culture is enough to make it one of the most consequential non-Imperial forces in the galaxy.

THE CAPTAIN'S COUNCIL: INFORMAL LEADERSHIP

The closest thing the Free Fleet has to leadership is the **Captain's Council** a rotating group of senior captains who convene as needed to coordinate responses to existential threats (Imperial encroachment, large-scale pirate aggression, plague outbreaks in Free Fleet stations).

The current rotating chair is **Captain Maya Sela**, a former Joric officer who defected during the **Tellurian Crisis**. She is respected for her tactical mind and her uncompromising honesty. She is also one of the few Free Fleet figures who can speak credibly to both Imperial diplomats and pirate captains.

FREE FLEET VALUES

The Free Fleet culture, while diverse, shares a few common values:

- **Hospitality.** A Free Fleet ship welcomes any ship in distress. Refusing to help a stranded ship is one of the few near-universal taboos.
- **Self-determination.** Every settlement, station, or ship decides its own laws. The Free Fleet does not impose universal rules.
- **Suspicion of Imperial authority.** Every Free Fleet member learns, from childhood, to read Imperial language with skepticism.
- **Practical mutual aid.** Free Fleet members will support each other materially in crisis, even across ideological lines.

THE FREE FLEET'S FUTURE

The Free Fleet is **growing** but also fragmenting. Pressure from the Houses (especially Volkov and Joric, who consider Free Fleet space their backyard) is increasing. Some Free Fleet captains advocate for *formalizing* into something more coordinated. Others see formalization as the end of what makes the Free Fleet meaningful.

A campaign that engages with Free Fleet politics inherits this tension. The crew might be courted by both formalist and anti-formalist factions. They will likely have to take a side.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Defector's Ship.** A House Joric officer wants to defect to the Free Fleet, and bring her ship with her. The crew is hired to escort her through Imperial-monitored space and deliver her to a safe Free Fleet station.
- **The Council Vote.** A divisive vote is approaching in the Captain's Council. The crew is hired (by one side) to influence wavering captains. (By the other side, they are hired to *prevent* that influence.)
- **The Plague Station.** A small Free Fleet station has been struck by a plague that may or may not be naturally occurring. The crew, with relevant medical or technical

skills, is asked to investigate. Other factions, Kurogane, the Church, are also interested. Why?

PART FIVE: THE SOLARA COMPACT

Public Motto: "Order From the Ashes." **Private Motto (Inner Circle):** "The Past Was Perfect. We Will Make It So Again."

OVERVIEW

The **Solara Compact** is not merely a faction. It is an *argument*. It is the powerful, resonant voice of the Core Worlds, arguing that the Great Silence was not an inevitable tragedy but a **preventable failure of discipline**. The Compact is a coalition of humanity's oldest and most technologically advanced systems, bound by a single unshakeable conviction: the chaos of the post-Silence galaxy is a disease, and the only cure is the restoration of the old Imperial order.

They are the architects of a glorious past, meticulously rebuilding what was lost, brick by perfect brick.

The Compact's public motto, "Order From the Ashes," is a promise of salvation and stability. It speaks to their mission to rebuild a safer, more predictable galaxy. But within the sterile halls of their arcologies and the silent briefing rooms of their fleets, a colder and more absolute motto drives their actions: "The Past Was Perfect. We Will Make It So Again." This is not a political preference. It is a fanatical, almost religious creed. They are willing to pay any price and excise any "corruption" to restore their idealized vision of humanity's golden age.

AESTHETIC: THE PERFECT ECHO

The Compact's aesthetic is one of restored glory. It is not the faded dusty grandeur of House Solari, but a polished, hyper-real, and almost sterile recreation of pre-Silence perfection.

- **Architecture.** Their capital, **Nova Prime**, is a masterpiece of urban planning, clean sweeping lines, vast public plazas with holographic historical monuments, gleaming white towers that mirror the precise elegant designs of the old Empire. A city without graffiti, without clutter, without flaw. It is beautiful, and it is unnerving.
- **Dress.** Compact officials wear modernized recreations of pre-Silence ceremonial uniforms. Sharp, formal, in muted grays and whites with crimson accents. The aesthetic is *uniformity*, individuality is, in the Compact's view, a symptom of the chaos that destroyed civilization the first time.
- **Sound.** Nova Prime's public spaces play a constant low background of classical pre-Silence orchestral music. Citizens have grown up with it; it is the *literal soundtrack* of Compact identity.

HIGH CHANCELLOR ARIS THORNE: THE RESTORER

The Compact's leader is **High Chancellor Aris Thorne**. A man in his late sixties, descended from a pre-Silence noble line, educated in the deepest archives of pre-Silence law and political theory. He is *the* believer, the figure who has done more than anyone to give the Compact its present coherent ideological shape.

His Public Persona. A figure of immense compassion and serenity. His travels across the Core Worlds calm riots and inspire loyalty. His sermons speak of forgiveness, unity, and the dignity of restored order. He has personally walked into rebel encampments unarmed and convinced their leaders to surrender. He is, to the citizens of the Compact, a living saint.

His Goal: Restoration. Thorne genuinely believes that humanity went off-script at the Silence and that his life's mission is to put it back. He does not see himself as a tyrant. He sees himself as a *gardener*, tending the long-overgrown vineyard of human civilization.

His Fear: The Plague. Thorne's deepest fear is that the *psionic plague*, his term for the Veil-touched abilities that have spread across the galaxy, will undo every restoration he achieves. He sees Mystics as walking infection vectors, Vanguard as compromised weapons, and Celestari Veil-Touched as the disease's natural carriers. His fear is not hatred. It is the cold calculation of a man who believes he is saving civilization from itself.

His Secret. Thorne authorized the **Aegis Protocol** (see below). He understands what it costs. He has decided the cost is worth paying.

FLEET ADMIRAL KAELEN ROSTOVA: THE SWORD

The Compact's military commander, **Fleet Admiral Kaelen Rostova**, is the operational arm of Chancellor Thorne's vision. A career officer, distinguished by ruthless efficiency and a complete lack of public emotion. She commands the Compact's fleets, the largest organized military force in the post-Silence galaxy, and she has personally led the "pacification" actions against three rebellious worlds in the last decade.

The pacification of **Petrov's Reach** Viktor Petrov's home world, was hers. The fleet that arrived, the orbital bombardment that followed, the relocation of survivors to Compact-administered camps. Rostova reports the action as a *success* on every metric the Compact tracks. Viktor Petrov, who escaped and now leads the Free Fleet's Liberation Front, would describe it differently.

Rostova is not a sadist. She does not enjoy violence. She is a precise, disciplined officer who has internalized the Compact's mission

completely and applies overwhelming force when ordered, with the calm of a surgeon. *That* is what makes her terrifying.

DIRECTOR VALERIUS KANE: THE SHADOW

The Compact's intelligence chief, **Director Valerius Kane**, runs the **Office of Restoration Affairs** the Compact's domestic security service. Officially, the OoRA protects citizens from psionic threats and seditious activity. In practice, it is the Compact's secret police, surveilling Mystics, infiltrating rebel cells, and disappearing individuals who threaten the Compact's stability.

Kane is the youngest of the Compact's inner triumvirate. Calculating, patient, and impossible to read. He genuinely believes in the Compact's mission, and he is willing to do things Chancellor Thorne would *prefer not to know about*, knowing also that Thorne's plausible deniability is part of his job description.

Kane manages the Aegis Protocol's operational details.

THE AEGIS PROTOCOL: THE GREAT SECRET

Officially, Compact policy toward psionics is "*containment and study*." In practice, the Compact has been running the **Aegis Protocol** for at least fifteen years.

The Aegis Protocol is a covert program with one strategic objective: the **systematic identification, capture, and neutralization of psionically-capable individuals** across the post-Silence galaxy. "*Neutralization*" means a variety of things in practice, forced suppression, surgical lobotomy, indefinite detention in Compact research facilities, or, in cases the Director determines are too dangerous to attempt to contain, *deletion*. The Protocol operates outside any legal framework. Its existence is denied at every level of the Compact's public face. It is real, well-resourced, and growing.

For a Keeper running a campaign that touches the Compact, the Aegis Protocol is the *secret weapon*. The crew that earns the Compact's suspicion will not face arrest warrants. They will face *disappearance*, agents tracking them in the shadows, attempts to abduct Mystics in the crew, evidence vanishing, witnesses dying of strokes. The Compact is in the *intelligence war*, and the war is one-sided because most of the galaxy does not yet know it is being fought.

STRUCTURE: THE RESTORATION MACHINE

The Compact's formal structure is hierarchical and clean:

- **The High Chancellor** is the singular executive authority. Term: life, or until voluntary retirement.
- **The Council of Restorers** is the senior advisory body, twelve members representing the major Core Worlds, with Cabinet-equivalent portfolios (Defense, Intelligence, Economy, Justice, Restoration Affairs, etc.).
- **The Aegis Bureau** (officially the Office of Restoration Affairs) is the intelligence/secret-police apparatus.
- **The Fleet** is the Compact military, the largest standing fleet in the galaxy.
- **The Compact Senate** is a ceremonial body, its members are elected from member worlds, it convenes in session, and its votes are non-binding but politically informative. The Compact functions as a republic in name and a managed restoration in practice.

The Compact controls approximately **forty Core World systems** representing the wealthiest and most technologically developed populations in the post-Silence galaxy.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER FACTIONS

FACTION	RELATIONSHIP	RATIONALE
The Free Fleet	Ideological Nemesis	Everything the Compact most fears: psionic acceptance, anti-authoritarian organizing, radical individualism. The Compact has classified the Fleet as an existential threat. The Fleet, in turn, sees the Compact as the gilded face of the old tyranny returning. Open cold war; flashpoints regularly.
House Solari	Awkward Allies	They share aesthetic and ideology but the Compact regards Solari as a <i>failure</i> , the House that <i>should</i> have restored the Empire but lost the will and the substance to do it. Solari resents this assessment privately. Public alliance, private contempt.
House Joric	Useful Tool	Compact and Joric share an instinct for order; the Compact contracts Joric for border enforcement and pacification support. Joric officers privately question some of what they are asked to do but accept the contracts.
House Volkov	Useful Wild Animal	The Compact has no warmth for Volkov but values their willingness to take the dirty contracts the Compact's public face cannot. Pragmatic transactional relationship.
House Kurogane	Heretical Brothers	Both believe in technological supremacy; both pursue the perfection of the human form. But Kurogane's transhumanism (Pearl-fusion bodies, modified consciousness) is exactly the kind of "psionic corruption" the Compact most opposes. Surface cooperation, deep mutual loathing.
House Amaranth	Heretics in Robes	Amaranth's deep knowledge, particularly of pre-Silence history, makes them dangerous. They know things about the pre-Silence era that contradict the Compact's idealized narrative. Compact does not yet move against Amaranth; tensions rising.
House Valerius	Inconvenient Truth	The Compact's restorationist economic program is hostile to free-market House Valerius. Public neutrality; in practice, the two are in slow-motion economic conflict.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER FACTIONS (continued)

FACTION	RELATIONSHIP	RATIONALE
The Stellar Commerce Guild	Necessary Evil	The Guild's trade infrastructure crosses Compact territory. The Compact tolerates the Guild because the alternative, economic isolation, would damage Compact wealth. The Guild knows this and uses it.
The Church of the Eternal Veil	Direct Heresy	The Church openly venerates the Veil as a spiritual phenomenon. The Compact views this as ideological cancer. Internal Church members suspected of Compact sympathies have begun <i>disappearing</i> on both sides.

CULTURE OF THE COMPACT WORLDS

Life on a Compact world is *aesthetically* pleasant and *substantively* constrained. Cities are clean. Public services work. Trains run on time. The arts are funded, but only the arts that align with Compact values, classical orchestras, restored architecture, historical-heroic narratives. *Mystic-themed* art, *anti-restoration* speech, and *psionic-positive* scholarship are not banned outright but receive no funding, no venues, and quiet professional consequences for their creators.

Compact citizens are *not* unhappy as a general rule. Many genuinely believe in the project. Many simply enjoy the predictability and find the Compact's restrictions reasonable trades for stability. **The horror of the Compact is not that it is a dystopia** it is that it *works* as a society, for most of its citizens, most of the time. The cost is paid by a minority that most citizens never see.

The Compact's most disturbing feature for outsiders is the *blandness of its evil*. The Aegis Protocol's operators are *not* sadistic. They go home to their families. They believe what they are doing is necessary. The Mystic children disappeared from a Compact school are not visibly mourned because their identification as psionic was *handled* before anyone could form attachment to

them. *The system is calibrated to minimize the experience of cruelty for everyone except the targets.*

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Mystic Underground.** A network of sympathetic Compact citizens has begun smuggling identified psionics off Compact worlds and into Free Fleet territory. The network needs ships willing to take the cargo. The crew is approached, quietly, by a Compact junior official with a guilty conscience. The job pays badly. The risk is high. The crew gets to decide whether the Compact's victims deserve the help.
- **The Disappeared Sister.** A Compact aristocrat's sister was identified as Veil-Touched a year ago and *officially* "sent to a retreat", and has not been heard from since. The aristocrat, who genuinely loves her sister, hires the crew to find her. The investigation will lead them deep into the Aegis Protocol's infrastructure. If they extract her, the Compact will hunt them. If they uncover what is *happening* in those facilities, the campaign just acquired a major arc.
- **The False Flag.** A Compact diplomat with second thoughts approaches the crew with intelligence: an upcoming Compact pacification action against a *neutral*

world is being justified by a false-flag operation that is about to be staged. Stopping the false flag would prevent the war. Exposing it might *also* prevent the war, or might trigger an earlier, hotter conflict. The crew chooses the timing.

- **The Petrov Connection.** Viktor Petrov, leader of the Free Fleet's Liberation Front, hires the crew for a specific job: extract a former Compact officer who has defected and now claims to know the location of Fleet Admiral Rostova's personal records. Rostova ordered Petrov's home world destroyed. The intelligence in those records would let Petrov *return the favor*. The crew has to decide whether they are participating in a liberation or an act of terrorism.

FACTION PERKS (SUMMARIZED)

The Solara Compact is not generally a faction PCs will earn Reputation with; the Compact is a faction that views PCs as either *Compact citizens* (in which case they conform), or as *threats to be managed*. Players who deliberately ally with the Compact gain access to:

- *Recognized.* Citizenship status in Core World systems. Access to Compact public services.
- *Trusted.* Compact-issued military gear (Tier 2-3 equipment). Compact security escort on Core-side missions.
- *Honored.* Membership in a Compact security service or specialty unit. Access to the Aegis Protocol's operational support (read: legalized murder, in the Compact's interest).
- *Revered.* Senior position in Compact intelligence or military. Personal contact with Chancellor Thorne or his cabinet.

These perks come with *commitments*. The Compact does not give without taking. A PC at Trusted or above is expected to *act* in the Compact's interest when called.

The far more interesting Reputation arc with the Compact is the **negative one** earning their attention, surviving their countermeasures, and either evading the Aegis Protocol indefinitely or eventually fighting it directly. Most crews will find the Compact's enmity more useful narrative material than the Compact's friendship.

PART FIVE-A: HOUSE KAELEN - THE BORDER ARBITERS

House Kaelen is a minor House with a direct Imperial charter. It belongs in campaigns where a legally valid answer is not the same thing as a materially enforceable answer.

THE CHARTER

Aurelius Magnus established Kaelen personally and outside the ordinary process by which minor Houses are recognized. The public charter authorizes interspecies arbitration, neutral investigation, frontier treaty oversight, protected-status certification, and mediation where several legal traditions overlap. It grants broad access but little coercive machinery. No authenticated record states the Emperor's motive.

The oldest surviving copy uses the unusual phrase "**distinct conscious continuities**" when describing populations the House must preserve. Imperial jurists treat it as archaic legal language. Kaelen archivists have never found the phrase in an earlier statute.

WHAT KAELEN CAN ACTUALLY DO

Kaelen can create an Imperial record, establish jurisdiction, certify evidence, convene hearings, negotiate ceasefires, issue findings, and make refusal politically expensive. It has small protective details and can hold a person briefly during an active hearing, but sustained force requires local cooperation or House Joric.

For military action, Kaelen must persuade **House Joric** that intervention is lawful, necessary, and logistically possible. For trade guarantees, reconstruction credit, or shipping access, it needs **House Valerius**. For recognition, coalition building, and diplomatic leverage beyond a single charter zone, it often needs the **Solara Compact**. These dependencies were built into the House from its foundation and keep it from becoming a seventh Great House.

THE BUDGET AND THE PERFORMANCE

Imperial funding is real, usually honored, and chronically insufficient. Kaelen covers too much territory with too few people. An arbitration hall may look like a fortress while its secure wing has three working cells and a single shuttle. A patrol vessel may broadcast an Imperial-grade identification signature while carrying weapons intended primarily for deterrence.

Do not run this as an Empire that routinely sabotages Kaelen. The throne wants the mandate fulfilled. The dramatic pressure comes from distance, bureaucracy, competing emergencies, and the fact that Kaelen must ask other institutions to make its promises real.

THE LISTENING TRIALS AND ROTATION

Field candidates are selected through the Listening Trials, which test empathy, restraint, cultural adaptation, and the ability to understand incompatible moral systems without pretending they are identical. Adoption into service is open to every recognized ancestry.

Rotation is mandatory. Officially it prevents corruption and cultural capture. In practice, Kaelen chooses people because they form bonds and then removes them because those bonds became politically meaningful. A transfer can be routine, a safeguard, an act of mercy, or an attempt to break a loyalty that has become inconvenient.

THE REPORTING LAYER

Every Kaelen case produces structured intelligence. Ordinary Arbiters file demographic, political, logistical, and cultural observations because they believe governance without information is negligence. Senior analysts know how these reports feed Imperial strategy. A smaller compartment coordinates with Imperial intelligence and may shape assignments to answer questions no local community agreed to ask.

This does not make Kaelen's protection false. The best Kaelen stories force the crew to decide whether truthful reporting protects a community, exposes it, or both.

THE KRYX AND THE CRIMSON FANGS PACT

The Crimson Fangs Pact is one of Kaelen's defining achievements. It recognizes pack sovereignty, task-specific leadership, collective obligations, and the authority of pack mediators. Kryx communities often respect Arbiters who learn these structures instead of forcing Imperial individualism onto them.

Rotation is the wound in the relationship. A proven Arbiter may have become pack. Kaelen calls reassignment neutrality; the Kryx may call it forced severance of kin.

THE AILURAN ACCORDS

After the Veil Rip exposed Ailuran enclaves, Kaelen helped establish protected zones, safe-conduct corridors, restitution procedures, and limits on unauthorized Imperial access. These measures did not save the Ailurans; Ailuran networks saved themselves. Kaelen provided a useful legal instrument and enough breathing room for some enclaves to recover.

Ailurans accept the House reluctantly. They understand that mediation is also observation and compartmentalize everything

Kaelen sees. Some merely suspect the reporting layer. Senior Arbiters and Exchanges may possess proof. Their practical position is simple: Kaelen is an honorable and useful Trojan horse, so long as it remains outside the innermost walls.

RUNNING KAELEN

A Kaelen judgment should begin an adventure rather than finish one. Give the crew a lawful finding, incomplete resources, several institutions whose cooperation is conditional, and a vulnerable population that cannot wait for procedure.

The Last Rotation. A respected Arbiter refuses reassignment because their successor intends to expose a protected settlement through formally correct reporting.

The Trojan Archive. An Ailuran Exchange obtains proof that Kaelen case records feed an Imperial predictive model. Publishing it would destroy the only institution currently holding three frontier ceasefires together.

The Crimson Fangs Petition. A Kryx pack has declared a departing Arbiter kin and refuses to recognize the replacement. Kaelen sees dangerous local capture; the pack sees abandonment enforced by outsiders.

PART SIX: FACTION POLITICS: THE WEB OF ALLIANCES AND RIVALRIES

The galaxy is **not a simple chessboard** with black and white pieces. It is a three-dimensional web of tangled loyalties, shifting alliances, and bitter rivalries. Understanding these complex relationships is the key to

navigating the political landscape without getting caught in the crossfire.

A wise crew knows not just who their friends are, but also **who their friends' enemies are**.

NATURAL BEDFELLOWS (ALLIANCES OF CONVENIENCE)

Even the most bitter rivals will work together when it serves their interests.

CREDITS & CONTRACTS: HOUSE VALERIUS + STELLAR COMMERCE GUILD

These two have a deeply symbiotic relationship. Valerius needs the Guild's vast shipping network to move their goods. The Guild needs the protection and the high-volume contracts that Valerius can provide. They often team up on major trade ventures. They smile at each other across negotiating tables. They both know the other would slit their throat for a marginal increase in profit.

MONEY, FOR NOW, IS A STRONGER BOND THAN HATRED. SECRETS & SCIENCE: HOUSE KUROGANE + EXPLORERS' GUILD

House Kurogane's relentless drive for new technology finds a natural partner in the Explorers' Guild's relentless drive for new discoveries. The Guild provides Kurogane with raw data, strange artifacts, and unique biological samples from the edges of the map. In return, Kurogane provides the Guild with funding and cutting-edge exploration gear.

It is a perfect partnership, as long as the Guild does not ask too many questions about what their discoveries are being used for.

WISDOM & FAITH: HOUSE AMARANTH + CHURCH OF THE ETERNAL VEIL

House Amaranth's scholarly pursuits and the Church of the Eternal Veil's spiritual inquiries often lead them down similar paths. Amaranth sees the Veil as a complex quantum phenomenon to be studied. The Church sees it as a divine entity to be worshipped. But both agree that it is the most important force in the universe.

They often share information and collaborate on projects related to Precursor ruins and Veil phenomena. They both believe that **truth has many paths**.

SECURITY & SCOUTING: HOUSE JORIC + EXPLORERS' GUILD

The disciplined military might of House Joric and the daring spirit of the Explorers' Guild make for an effective, if unlikely, team. Joric's fleets often provide security for Guild expeditions into dangerous, uncharted territories. In return, the Guild provides Joric with detailed star-charts and early warnings of potential threats discovered on the frontier.

It is a relationship built on **pure, pragmatic necessity**.

OIL AND WATER (NATURAL RIVALRIES)

Some hatreds run too deep for convenience. These are the fundamental conflicts that shape the galactic landscape.

MARKET MAYHEM: VALERIUS VS. SOLARI

This is a clash of the old and the new. House Valerius, with its aggressive, new-money approach to commerce, constantly jockeyes for control of the Core World markets. House Solari, with its ancient lineage and focus on tradition, sees Valerius as little more than vulgar upstarts. It is a war fought not with armies, but with corporate takeovers, market manipulation, and social sabotage. **A battle of elegance versus efficiency.**

FAITH VS. FUNCTION: KUROGANE VS. THE CHURCH

This is a philosophical cold war. House Kurogane's cold, hard logic and their transhumanist ambitions are a direct affront to the spiritual teachings of the Church of the Eternal Veil. The Church sees Kurogane's quest for immortality as a blasphemous attempt to usurp the role of the Veil. Kurogane sees the Church's faith as a dangerous, irrational obstacle to progress.

THEY CANNOT BOTH BE RIGHT ABOUT THE NATURE OF HUMANITY'S FUTURE. BORDER BRAWLS: JORIC VS. VOLKOV

This is a conflict of ideology on the galaxy's frontier. House Joric believes in order, discipline, and structured defense. House Volkov believes in strength, aggression, and the right of the strong to take what they need. Their patrols constantly clash over territory, resources, and salvage rights in the Outer Rim. **A battle between the shield and the spear.**

FREE VS. BOUND: FREE FLEET VS. HOUSE JORIC

The Free Fleet's refusal to acknowledge any sovereign authority is a constant affront to Joric's vision of stable, frontier order. Joric patrols treat Free Fleet ships with formal suspicion bordering on hostility. Free Fleet captains return the favor, and occasionally outmaneuver Joric ships through tactical creativity Joric's discipline cannot match.

PLAYING THE FIELD: THE NEUTRAL POWERS

Some factions deliberately maintain neutrality to maximize their leverage:

- *(The Solara Compact is detailed in Part Five above; their alliance pattern is summarized in the table within their section.)*
- **The Explorers' Guild** Curiosity outweighs loyalty. They will work with anyone who funds their projects.
- **Independent system governments** Many systems have local governments that play House politics against each other to preserve autonomy.

PART SEVEN: RUNNING FACTION POLITICS AT THE TABLE

A few practical notes for Keepers running campaigns where faction politics matters:

THE FACTION TURN (REMINDER)

As covered in Chapter 2, the **Faction Turn** at the end of each arc is your single most powerful tool for making faction politics feel alive. At minimum:

- One move per major faction per arc.
- The move should be **observable** to the crew (a news report, a contact's tip, a missed opportunity).
- The move should **change something** about the world that the next arc will encounter.

If you do this consistently, your campaign world will accumulate political density that no amount of exposition can match.

FACTION REPUTATION TRACKING

Track the crew's standing with each named faction across the campaign. A simple scale:

STANDING	DESCRIPTION
+3 Allied	The faction considers the crew partners. Significant aid available.
+2 Trusted	The faction will work with the crew on most reasonable proposals.
+1 Friendly	The faction is well-disposed. Routine assistance available.
0 Neutral	No particular relationship. Standard interactions only.
-1 Suspicious	The faction watches the crew. Routine interactions are more difficult.
-2 Hostile	The faction has named the crew as adversaries. Active opposition.
-3 Enemy	The faction will move against the crew when convenient.

Track this **per-faction** across the campaign. Note the events that changed the standing (a saved life, a refused job, a betrayed contact). This makes faction reactions feel earned and consistent.

THE TRIANGULATION ARC

The most interesting faction-political arcs occur when **three factions are in tension** over the same issue. The crew must choose which to align with, or, more interestingly, try to play all three against each other.

A *Veilfarers* campaign should have at least one major triangulation arc per long campaign. Design it deliberately. The dynamic three-way tension produces some of the system's best storytelling.

NPCS AS FACTION AMBASSADORS

Each major faction in your campaign should have **at least one named recurring NPC** who speaks for that faction in the crew's interactions. This NPC is the *face* of the faction for the crew. Their personality, biases, and history shape the crew's perception of the entire faction.

Replace these NPCs sparingly. The death or departure of a faction-ambassador NPC is itself a major campaign event, it shifts how the crew sees the faction.

CLOSING: THE GALAXY IS A CONVERSATION

This chapter has introduced five major non-Imperial organizations and the politics that bind them to the Six Houses. Together with Chapters 6 (Imperial System) and 7 (Six Houses), you now have the **complete political topology** of the post-Silence galaxy.

The work of a Keeper in this dense world is to **make the politics feel alive**. Faction Turns. Reputation tracking. Triangulation arcs. Named ambassadors. Visible consequences for the crew's choices. These tools, applied consistently, turn a setting full of factions into a galaxy where the crew matters because *the politics responds to them*.

The galaxy is a conversation, not a list of factions. Every Faction Turn is a sentence in that conversation. The crew's choices are punctuation. The campaign's arcs are paragraphs. The long campaign, twenty, thirty, fifty sessions in, is the *book*.

You are the author of that book, in collaboration with your players. The factions are your supporting cast. The Six Houses, the five Non-Imperial organizations, the dozens of named NPCs, they are the **voices** of the world.

Make them speak.

CHAPTER 9

ENVIRONMENTS: THE STAGE OF HISTORY

"The galaxy is a hostile witness. The ground you stand on wants to break your ankles. The air wants to burn your lungs. The gravity wants to crush you. Never forget: the enemy soldier is just a visitor here, same as you. The planet? The planet is home. And it doesn't like intruders."

Surveyor Krell, Explorer's Guild Pathfinder

WHY ENVIRONMENT MATTERS

In *Veilfarers*, the setting is not merely a backdrop. It is an active participant in the narrative. A shootout in a zero-gravity docking bay plays fundamentally differently than a duel in a burning reactor core, or a negotiation in a House Solari ballroom. The environment dictates the stakes, the tactics, and the consequences of every action.

This chapter provides a comprehensive library of environments, organized into two types:

- **Macro-Environments** Planetary/System Biomes (the *canvas* of a scene)
- **Micro-Environments** Specific Locations (the *set piece* of a scene)

It also introduces the **Environmental Layering System** a rule set that allows Keepers to mix and match these types to create infinite variations of scenes with deep narrative and mechanical depth.

PART ONE: THE ENVIRONMENTAL LAYERING SYSTEM

To capture the complexity of a galaxy-spanning campaign, we do not treat planets and rooms as separate entities. They are layers of the same scene.

THE RULE OF TWO LAYERS

When designing a scene, the Keeper selects **two Environment Cards** (or stat blocks):

- **The Macro-Environment (The Canvas):** The general biome or location type (e.g., Ice World, Core World, Deep Space). It represents the pervasive, omnipresent rules of that world.
- **The Micro-Environment (The Set Piece):** The specific immediate location where the scene takes place (e.g., A Bazaar, A Derelict Ship, A Military Bunker).

HOW TO RUN LAYERED ENVIRONMENTS

You do not use every feature from both cards simultaneously, that would overwhelm the Keeper and the players. Instead, follow this hierarchy:

Primary Stat Block. Use the **Micro-Environment** as the base. Its Difficulty, Description, and Features are the active rules for the scene.

The Environmental Modifier. Take **ONE** Feature (Passive or Action) from the **Macro-Environment** and add it to the Micro-Environment's stat block. This represents the influence of the wider world on the specific room.

EXAMPLE OF LAYERING IN ACTION

Scenario: The players are tracking a smuggler through a Crowded Bazaar (Micro) located on a Toxic Death World (Macro).

- **The Base.** The Keeper uses the *Bazaar* stat block. This gives the scene rules for crowds, pickpockets, and social stealth.
- **The Modifier.** The Keeper selects the *Corrosive Atmosphere* Passive feature from the *Death World* macro-card.
- **The Narrative Result.** The Bazaar is not an open-air market. It is a cluster of pressurized tents and sealed habitation domes. The *Corrosive Atmosphere* rule means that if a stray shot shatters a window or tears a tent, the deadly air of the planet rushes in, turning a social encounter into a survival crisis.

This is the power of layering. **One simple modifier transforms an entire scene's stakes.** Use it deliberately.

PART TWO: MACRO- ENVIRONMENTS (PLANETARY BIOMES)

These environments represent the **fundamental nature** of the world the players are visiting. They set the tone, the visual palette, and the baseline survival challenges.

The canonical macro-biomes of *Veilfarers* are presented below. Each entry includes Type, Recommended Tier, Difficulty, sensory profile, in-fiction lore references, mechanical features, and adventure hooks.

1. THE ECUMENOPOLIS: CORE WORLD

Type: Social / Traversal / **Recommended Tier:** 1-4 / **Suggested DC:** 10 (Standard) / 20 (High Security)

"A planet wrapped in steel and light. There is no ground here, only layers of city going down to the magma. To be poor is to live in the dark; to be rich is to touch the sky."

An Ecumenopolis is a world where nature has been entirely subsumed by civilization. These are the seats of power for the Great Houses, specifically House Solari and House Valerius. The surface is a seamless skin of metal, glass, and hard-light force fields.

SENSORY PROFILE

- **Sight:** Endless canyons of neon and chrome. Traffic lanes filled with flying vehicles that look like rivers of light. The sky is rarely visible through the smog or the orbital traffic grid.
- **Sound:** A constant, low-frequency thrum of machinery and millions of voices. The wail of sirens. The hiss of mag-lev trains.
- **Smell:** Ozone, recycled air, expensive perfume masking the scent of waste, street food spices.

VEILFARERS LORE

The most famous Ecumenopolis is **New Byzantium**, the capital of House Solari, a world of marble spires and golden force fields, where art and politics are indistinguishable. Conversely, **Nexus Prime** is the trade hub of the galaxy, a chaotic mesh of neon and commerce where the sun has not touched the lower levels in a thousand years. In the post-Silence era, these worlds are often starving, relying on massive import fleets to feed their billions of inhabitants.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
The Panopticon	Passive	High-surveillance society. Privacy is a luxury. Heat from any public illegal action (violence, theft, or displaying heavy weapons) is doubled . Cameras, drones, and nosy citizens are everywhere. Agility Rolls to avoid detection have Disadvantage.
Gridlock	Action	The Keeper spends a Fear token. The local transit system fails, a riot breaks out, or a bureaucratic checkpoint halts movement. The party is either Separated (split into different zones) or their travel time increases by hours, ticking any Countdown Clocks.
"Show Me Your ID"	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> A player fails a Presence Roll during a social approach or an Agility Roll to avoid detection. <i>Effect:</i> Security forces intervene. A drone or guard squad descends, demanding identification, permits for gear, and bribes. The scene immediately shifts from its current objective to a tense social negotiation with the law.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Vertical Heist.** The players must steal a data-core from a penthouse spire and descend to the under-city before the security grid locks down the sector.
- **The Riot.** A food shortage causes the lower levels to revolt. The players are trapped in a transit station between the angry mob and the ruthless riot police.

2. THE FORGE WORLD: INDUSTRIAL HELLSCAPE

Type: Traversal / Environmental Hazard / **Recommended Tier:** 2-3 / **Suggested DC:** 15

"The air tastes like copper. The ground shakes with the rhythm of the hammer. Here, flesh is the weakest link in the production chain."

Forge Worlds are planetary factories. The atmosphere is choked with smog, the oceans are coolant sludge, and the mountains have been hollowed out for raw materials. These worlds are the domain of House Kurogane and the Kryllian enclaves.

SENSORY PROFILE

- **Sight:** A sky of soot and fire. Massive smokestacks venting green flame. Rivers of molten slag illuminating the industrial gloom.
- **Sound:** The deafening, rhythmic clang of orbital presses. The hiss of steam. The grinding of gears the size of skyscrapers.
- **Smell:** Sulfur, burning oil, heated metal, chemical runoff.

VEILFARERS LORE

Hephaestus is the prime example, a volcanic world channeled for industry where rivers of lava power the foundries that build the Imperial Fleet. The **Rust Yards**, controlled by House Joric, are a planet-wide scrapyard where old ships go to die and be reborn as weapons. Life here is cheap; safety protocols are nonexistent. The Great Machine must be fed.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Industrial Clamor	Passive	The noise is physically painful. Instinct Rolls relying on hearing have Disadvantage . Communication beyond Close range requires a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 10, to boost the comms signal or is impossible. The smog may grant Advantage on visual Agility Rolls to avoid detection; the metal floors impose Disadvantage when sound is the relevant sense.
The Machine Moves	Action	Conveyor belts shift and presses descend. Every character in the named zone makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure, move the character one band to the visible danger and apply Restrained; the normal Restrained procedure ends it.
Vent Steam	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> a character resolves Failure with Fear near an established pressure line, or an explosive weapon damages it. <i>Effect:</i> everyone within Close range of the line makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 10. On failure take 1d6 Energy damage with the Fire tag and become Dazed; on success take half damage and no Condition. Hot steam gives Disadvantage to sight-dependent Rolls through the zone until the end of the next round.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **Sabotage.** The players must infiltrate a Kurogane munitions factory to plant a virus in the assembly line, dodging automated welders and molten metal pours.
- **The Scrapyard Dog.** A prototype mech has gone rogue in the Rust Yards. The players must hunt it through a maze of unstable, shifting junk piles.

3. THE DEATH WORLD: TOXIC / RADIOACTIVE

Type: Survival / Exploration / **Recommended Tier:** 3+ / **Suggested DC:** 15

"Suit integrity is at 80%. Radiation filters are red-lining. If we don't find shelter in ten minutes, we're going to cook in our own skins."

Death Worlds are places where biology has failed or gone horribly wrong. The atmosphere is poisonous, the rain is acid, or the sun emits lethal radiation. Survival

here is a minute-by-minute calculation of oxygen reserves and filter integrity.

SENSORY PROFILE

- **Sight:** Yellow or green skies. Pools of bubbling slime. Twisted, mutated flora. The HUD of your helmet flashing warning icons.
- **Sound:** The hiss of your respirator. The Geiger counter clicking madly. The wind howling across barren rock.
- **Smell:** Ammonia, rot, chlorine (if you are foolish enough to open your visor).

VEILFARERS LORE

Gorgon IV is a prime example, a world with an atmosphere of chlorine gas where House Valerius mines rare crystals using expendable convict labor. The **Bleed-Zones** are planets located too close to Veil tears, bathed in exotic radiation that warps DNA and electronics alike. Precursor ruins are often found on these worlds, protected by the hostile environment.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Hostile Atmosphere	Passive	The air is death. Characters without sealed Environmental Suits take 1 Stress per minute . With a suit, a Failure with Fear on a physical action that materially strains the suit creates a Suit Breach . A breached character takes 1d6 Physical damage on each Spotlight until they spend an Action and pass a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 10, to patch it. Matched dice remain Critical Success.
Rad Spike	Action	Announce the incoming wave and one safe heavy-cover zone. At the end of the round, each character outside sealed protection or that zone makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 2d6 Energy damage with the Radiation tag , on success take half. On Failure with Fear, that character's player chooses one exposed powered item they used this round; it goes offline until an Action and Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 10, restores it. If none exists, no item goes offline.
Contamination	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> an unsealed character loses HP to this environment. <i>Effect:</i> the character makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure, each healing effect can clear at most 1 HP from that character. Spend an Action with a medical kit or antidote and succeed on a Knowledge (Medicine) Roll, DC 15, to end this limit; a Long Rest in qualified care also ends it.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Retrieval.** A ship crashed in the acid swamps. The players have 2 hours before the hull dissolves to rescue the VIP.
- **The Geode.** The players must enter a crystal cave where the radiation is so high that void powers and psionics trigger wild surges.

4. THE OCEAN WORLD: THALASSOPHOBIA

Type: Traversal / Exploration / **Recommended Tier:** 2-4 (Depth dependent) / **Suggested DC:** 15 (Surface) / 18 (Deep)

"There is no land. Only the platform, the storm above, and the endless dark below. And the things below are much, much bigger than the things above."

On an Ocean World, solid ground is a myth. Civilization clings to floating pontoons, oil-rig-like cities, or

hermetically sealed domes on the sea floor. The ocean is not just water; it is a heavy, crushing presence that hides ancient secrets.

SENSORY PROFILE

- **Sight:** Endless grey waves. Bioluminescent lights in the deep. The claustrophobic view from a submarine porthole.
- **Sound:** The constant crash of waves. The groaning of metal under pressure. The ping of sonar.
- **Smell:** Salt, brine, fish, damp rust.

VEILFARERS LORE

Aquis, the hub of the Explorers' Guild, is a world covered 99% in water, a place of high adventure and deep mystery. **Leviathan's Rest** is a darker world, where the locals worship massive, sun-sized fauna swimming in the crushing depths, offering sacrifices to keep the "gods" sleeping.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Crushing Depth	Passive	The pressure is immense. Underwater movement is three-dimensional. In the deep, each exposed character marks 1 Stress per hour . A suit breach deals 3 direct HP and continues to deal 1 direct HP on each Spotlight until sealed; a character reduced to 0 becomes Dying normally.
Hull Breach	Action	High-pressure water floods the named zone. Everyone there makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure, take 1d8 Physical damage with the Impact tag and move one band toward the breach; on success, hold position and take no damage.
Blood in the Water	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> Any creature (PC or NPC) takes Wounding damage (HP). <i>Effect:</i> The scent travels instantly. This triggers a "Predator Approaching" Clock (4 Segments). When full, a Tier 3 Aquatic Predator arrives.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Deep Dive.** A research lab on the sea floor has gone silent. The players must take a submarine down to investigate, managing hull integrity while fighting off giant squids.
- **The Cult of the Leviathan.** A coastal settlement is performing human sacrifices. The cult claims the Leviathan demands them. The players are hired to investigate; the truth is worse than the cult understands.

5. THE ICE WORLD: FROZEN WASTES

Type: Survival / Traversal / **Recommended Tier:** 2 / **Suggested DC:** 15

"Cold doesn't kill you with a bang. It kills you with a slow stillness. You don't even realize you've stopped fighting until it's too late."

Ice Worlds are planets locked in eternal winter, either too far from their sun, in a multi-century glacial cycle, or scoured by terraforming failures. Civilization here means **heated domes, geothermal mining, and the constant battle against the cold.**

SENSORY PROFILE

- Sight:** Endless white. Aurora cascades. Black volcanic stone showing through the snow. Ice formations that resemble crystal cathedrals.
- Sound:** Wind. Always wind. The crunch of boots. The crack of ice shifting underfoot.
- Smell:** Almost nothing. The cold scours scent. Inside habitation, recycled air and the metallic tang of heating coils.

VEILFARERS LORE

Frost-9 is a House Joric prison planet where the cold is the only guard needed, walk five miles and you freeze solid. **The White Silence** is a rogue planet drifting in deep space, covered in nitrogen ice, rumored to hide a Precursor listening post that requires absolute zero to function.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Bitter Cold	Passive	Characters without thermal protection mark 1 Stress per hour outdoors. After 4 continuous hours, each unprotected character chooses one exposed tech item and makes a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 10; on failure it goes offline until warmed for 10 minutes. If no tech item is exposed, no item Roll occurs.
Whiteout	Action	A blizzard rolls in. Visibility drops to Close range. Navigation requires Knowledge Roll, DC 15 every 10 minutes or the party is lost. Tracking attempts become impossible.
Thin Ice	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> A character moves a range band across an icy surface without slowing. <i>Effect:</i> The ice cracks. Make an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure the character falls through, takes 1d6 Energy damage with the Cold tag, and starts the defined Hypothermia clock.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Frozen Patrol.** A Joric patrol unit has gone silent on Frost-9. The players must follow their tracks before another storm erases them.
- **The Cold Vault.** A Precursor structure has been uncovered by a melting glacier. Several teams (Kurogane, Amaranth, Explorers' Guild) are racing to reach it first.

6. THE JUNGLE WORLD: HOSTILE BIOSPHERE

Type: Exploration / Ambush / **Recommended Tier:** 3 / **Suggested DC:** 15

"Everything here wants to kill you. The flowers. The vines. The water. The air, if you breathe it wrong. We don't fight nature here. We negotiate with it. And it always wins."

Jungle Worlds are planets where the biosphere has become **overwhelming and aggressive**. The vegetation is dense, the predators are clever, and many

native life forms have evolved aggressive defenses. These are the worlds where House Kurogane's bio-engineers love to "experiment", and where many of those experiments have escaped.

SENSORY PROFILE

- Sight:** Riotous green. Massive trees disappearing into mist. Bioluminescent blooms. Strange shapes moving in the canopy.
- Sound:** A continuous low chorus of insect chirps, distant calls, water dripping. Periodic explosive shrieks of unknown origin.
- Smell:** Wet earth. Rotting vegetation. Sweet, intoxicating flowers. Something burning, faintly, in the distance.

VEILFARERS LORE

Veridia, the Bloomstrider homeworld, is a place where the trees are miles high and the ecosystem possesses a singular, sentient consciousness. **Green-Hell** is a failed terraforming project where the vegetation grew out of control, consuming the colonial cities in a matter of weeks.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Watching Canopy	Passive	Agility Rolls to avoid visual detection have Advantage. At the end of each travel hour, roll d4; on 1, mark 1 segment on a visible 4-segment Canopy Attention clock. When it fills, use the environment's declared encounter and clear the clock.
The Vines Move	Action	Name one visible foliage zone. Each character there makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure become Restrained . A Restrained character loses 1 direct HP at the end of their Spotlight from toxic sap and uses the normal Core escape procedure.
Sweet Death	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> a character completes 30 minutes of outdoor rest without filtration. <i>Effect:</i> make a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure apply the Core Poisoned condition; proper filtration prevents the Roll, and the normal Poisoned treatment ends it.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Voracious Grove.** A House Amaranth expedition has been lost in Veridia for three weeks. The Bloomstriders refuse to send anyone after them. The crew is hired by an Amaranth Lady whose lover was on the expedition.
- **The Aggressive Specimen.** A Kurogane research station has been overrun by something they were studying. The crew is hired to recover the research data, and, if possible, learn what got loose.

7. THE DESERT WORLD: ARID WASTES

Type: Survival / Traversal / **Recommended Tier:** 2 / **Suggested DC:** 15

"You don't fight the desert. You out-wait it. And the desert? The desert has been waiting since before your species existed."

Desert Worlds are planets where surface water is rare or absent. Civilization clings to oases, deep aquifers, or

fully enclosed cities. Outside the cities, the conditions are brutal: heat, dust storms, scarce shelter, predators adapted to environments where most life cannot persist.

SENSORY PROFILE

- **Sight:** Endless dunes. Distant rock formations distorted by heat shimmer. Strange tracks that have no obvious source.
- **Sound:** Wind. The slow, dry sound of sand moving. The occasional cry of a desert predator.
- **Smell:** Dry. Sometimes a faint chemical undertone (mineral deposits, ancient battles).

VEILFARERS LORE

The Dune-Sea is a House Volkov training ground where recruits are dropped with a knife and a bottle of water, if they survive a week, they become Marines. **The Glass Wastes** is a planet glassed by orbital bombardment during the Silence wars; the ground is razor-sharp shards of obsidian.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Burning Sun	Passive	At the end of every two continuous hours in direct sunlight, a character without thermal protection marks 1 Stress, never above their Stress maximum. Moving into shade or sealed shelter resets the interval.
Dust Storm	Action	Announce a dust front that lasts 3 rounds. Sight-dependent targeting beyond Close range is impossible and overland travel pace halves. Once when it arrives, each character using exposed Tech makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 10; on failure that player chooses one exposed powered item currently in use, which goes offline until the storm ends and an Action with Knowledge (Tech), DC 10, restores it. Sealed items are immune; if no item is exposed, mark 1 Stress instead.
Buried Past	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> a character moves two or more bands in one Spotlight or fires a Heavy weapon in a zone whose buried remains were established when the environment was chosen. <i>Effect:</i> expose the named wreckage, grave, or ruin; its position and contents do not change after the trigger.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Lost Caravan.** A merchant caravan has gone missing in the Dune-Sea. The Volkov locals will not help. The crew is hired by the caravan owner's family.
- **The Mirage.** Multiple travelers have reported seeing an impossible structure on the horizon, only to walk for hours and find nothing. The crew is hired to investigate.

8. THE GAS GIANT: HIGH-ATMOSPHERE HABITAT

Type: Traversal / High Stakes / **Recommended Tier:** 3 / **Suggested DC:** 15

"There is no ground here. There is no rock. Just clouds, and pressure, and the things that have evolved to live in a place that should have no life."

Gas Giants are not solid worlds. The "civilization" on a gas giant exists in **floating platforms**, atmospheric refineries, or research stations that ride the upper cloud layers. Below those layers is unimaginable pressure, and, sometimes, unimaginable things.

SENSORY PROFILE

- **Sight:** Banded clouds in surreal colors. Lightning between cloud layers. Constant, slow-motion turbulence visible in every direction.
- **Sound:** The continuous low rumble of atmospheric disturbance. Wind. The metallic groan of platform supports.
- **Smell:** Whatever the gas mix produces, sometimes sweet, sometimes sulphurous, sometimes nearly nothing.

VEILFARERS LORE

Bespin-Alpha is a cluster of Tibanna gas refineries floating in the upper atmosphere, a lawless frontier town. **Storm-Reach** is a listening post hidden deep in the turbulent clouds of a red giant, used by House Joric to monitor fleet movements.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
No Solid Ground	Passive	When an untethered creature is forced beyond a platform edge, start a visible 4-segment Fall clock for that creature and mark 1. Mark 1 more at the end of each of its Spotlights. Thrusters or an anchored tether clear the clock and return the creature with an Action. Without either, an Action and Agility Roll, DC 15, clears the clock and reaches the nearest established structure on success; Failure with Hope leaves the clock unchanged, and Failure with Fear marks 1 additional segment. At 4, the creature enters the deep-pressure layer and takes 4d10 Physical damage at the end of each Spotlight until rescued; normal Thresholds, Dying, Final, and Death Move rules apply.
Pressure Differential	Action	Name the surge direction and one anchored safe zone before resolution. Every unbraced creature on the exposed platform makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure it moves one band with the surge and becomes Prone, on success it holds position. A creature pushed beyond an edge starts the No Solid Ground clock. Unattended loose objects move one band; carried equipment is never disabled by this Action.
Atmospheric Visitor	Reaction	<i>Setup:</i> Before the scene, choose one existing Tier 2 or Tier 3 native, pirate, or anomaly stat block and an approach route; if none is chosen, this Feature is inactive. <i>Trigger:</i> the platform first fires a Heavy weapon or releases reactor-scale energy. <i>Effect:</i> place the chosen visitor at Far range at the start of the next round. It joins the normal Spotlight cycle and gains no immediate Action.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Refinery Heist.** A Bepin-Alpha refinery is hoarding rare Tibanna gas. The crew is hired to steal it, but the heist plan depends on getting in and out before any pressure surge happens.
- **The Listening Post.** Joric's Storm-Reach has gone silent. The last transmission referenced "*something descending*." The crew is hired to investigate.

9. THE ASTEROID BELT: ZERO-G MINING ZONE

Type: Traversal / Combat / **Recommended Tier:** 2 / **Suggested DC:** 15

"Down here, you don't worry about gravity. You worry about momentum. The rock that drifts past your shoulder didn't intend to hit you. The next one might."

Asteroid Belts are zero-gravity environments where mining colonies have set up shop on or inside larger

rocks. They are claustrophobic, dangerous, and full of pirates, smugglers, and prospectors who do not want to be found.

SENSORY PROFILE

- **Sight:** Spinning rocks. Distant ship lights. The harsh red glow of a mining laser. Absolute darkness in the shadow of larger asteroids.
- **Sound:** Silence outside; communications and machinery inside. The hum of an active drill. The hiss of escaping atmosphere from a damaged seal.
- **Smell:** Inside habitations: ozone and unwashed bodies. Outside: nothing.

VEILFARERS LORE

The **Belt of Sorrows** is a major mining region claimed by no single faction, and contested by all of them. The **Hollowed Rock** is a Precursor-modified asteroid the size of a small moon, hollowed out for purposes nobody has been able to determine. Several factions have tried to claim it; several factions have lost ships trying.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Zero-G	Passive	Apply the complete [Zero-G] atmospheric tag from this chapter. Movement requires an Action and a push-off or reaction system; unbraced ranged attacks push the attacker one band away from the target, and unbraced melee attacks have Disadvantage. Solid rock grants cover normally.
Rolling Rock	Action	Mark a straight route through one or more visible zones and announce that the asteroid crosses it at the end of the round. Every creature still on that route makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 2d6 Physical damage with the Impact tag, become Prone, and move one band along the route, on success move to the nearest safe side and take no damage. The rock then leaves the personal-scale scene.
Hull Breach	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> an Explosive or Melting effect causes HP loss to an established pressurized structure. <i>Effect:</i> start a visible 4-segment Depressurization clock and mark 1 at the end of each round. An adjacent character may spend an Action and make Knowledge (Tech) or Strength, DC 15: Critical Success clears 2 segments, any other success clears 1, Failure with Hope changes nothing, and Failure with Fear marks 1. At 4 the zone becomes vacuum and uses the complete Core vacuum-exposure procedure until sealed.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

- **The Hollowed Rock.** A new Precursor structure has been uncovered inside the asteroid's interior. Multiple factions are racing to claim it. The crew is hired by the most ambitious (or the most desperate).
- **The Mining Strike.** A Valerius mining colony has revolted. The crew is hired (by Valerius) to break the strike, or (by the strikers) to get word to the Free Fleet.

10. THE VEIL-TOUCHED WORLD (ANOMALOUS)

Exploration / Horror / Recommended Tier: 4+ / Suggested DC: 20

DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

"The geometry here is... wrong. I walked down a hallway and came out yesterday. The shadows have teeth. Don't trust your eyes. Trust your Geiger counter."

These are worlds located on the edge of a Veil tear. Reality is thin here. Thoughts can manifest as matter. Time loops are common. Physics is a suggestion, not a law.

Sensory Profile. - **Sight:** Impossible colors. Objects floating without gravity. Shadows that move independently of their casters.

- **Sound:** Whispers in languages you don't know. Music coming from the stones.
- **Smell:** Ozone, copper, petrichor (rain) inside a building.

Veilfarers Lore:

Echo-5 is a planet partially phased into the Veil; it flickers in and out of existence. **The Temple of Silence** is a world the Silence cults venerate as the Great Silence's point of origin; it is a zone of absolute zero entropy where nothing decays.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Thin Reality	Passive	The entire scene carries [Veil-Saturated] . Before play, identify any local anomaly clock and its consequence; if no clock is declared, the tag cannot advance one.
Folded Route	Passive	Before the scene, identify two visible boundaries that connect impossibly. Crossing one spends an Action and requires an Instinct Roll, DC 20. Success reaches the other boundary; Failure with Hope leaves the character at the origin; Failure with Fear leaves them at the origin and Dazed until the end of their next Spotlight. Matching dice remain a Critical Success.
Veil Surge	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> the first Failure with Fear each round while a Domain Power or Reality Anchor is used in this scene. <i>Effect:</i> spend 1 Fear and name the acting character's Very Close zone. Every other creature there makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 20; on failure take 2d8 Void damage, on success take half. This never changes the triggering Roll or creates an entity.

Adventure Hooks. - **The Rescue:** A research team is trapped in a time loop. The players must enter the loop, find the key, and break it.

- **The Bleed:** The Veil is expanding. The players must activate a Reality Anchor to push it back before it consumes the system.

11. THE CYBER-CITY (SYNTHETIC WORLD)

Tech / Social / Recommended Tier: 3 / Suggested DC: 15

DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

"There is no organic life here. The trees are fiber-optic cables. The birds are drones. The ground is a server rack. If you don't have an interface port, you are deaf, dumb, and blind."

A world completely terraformed by machines or Synthetics. It is a paradise of efficiency and data, but cold and alien to biological life.

Sensory Profile. - **Sight:** Endless circuitry patterns. Chrome and black glass. Data streams visible in AR.

- **Sound:** The hum of cooling fans. The click of relays. Electronic chimes.
- **Smell:** Sterile, ozone, burning plastic.

Veilfarers Lore:

Matrix-01 is a Synthetic refuge where organic life is tolerated but second-class. **The Spire** is a Kurogane data-vault planet, guarded by legions of war-bots.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Municipal Interface	Action	At an established public terminal, make a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 15, and choose before rolling: reveal the shortest public route to a known address; move the acting character and willing companions one band by automated transit; or open one public-access door. Success performs that function. Failure with Hope changes nothing. Failure with Fear also marks 1 Security Alert segment.
Security Alert	Passive	Start a visible 4-segment clock and choose one existing security Threat Group and entry route before the scene. Unauthorized-access Failure with Fear marks 1 segment. At 4, public terminals lock and the chosen group enters at Far range at the start of the next round; clear the clock after deployment. The group gains no immediate Action.
Machine Mediation	Passive	A character with a working local interface gains Advantage on Knowledge (Tech) Rolls to use civic systems and Presence Rolls directed at machine citizens. A public terminal provides the interface after an Action; losing it removes the Advantage and causes no other penalty.

12. THE DEAD WORLD (NECROPOLIS)

Exploration / Horror / Recommended Tier: 2 / Suggested DC: 15

DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

"It was a city once. Now it's just a tomb. The buildings are still standing, but the silence... the silence is heavy."

A world where civilization existed but was wiped out by war, disease, or the Silence. It is a place of ruins, ghosts, and scavengers.

Sensory Profile. - **Sight:** Collapsed skyscrapers. Streets choked with dust. Skeletons in cars.

- **Sound:** Wind whistling through empty windows. Distant settling of debris.

- **Smell:** Dust, mold, old paper.

Veilfarers Lore:

Memorial is a planet where billions died during the Silence. It is considered sacred ground by the Church, but looted by the Volkovs.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Unstable Ruins	Passive	A creature moving two or more bands through a declared collapsed zone in one Spotlight makes an Agility Roll, DC 10. On failure it moves only one band, takes 1d6 Physical damage with the Impact tag, and becomes Prone. Moving one band requires no Roll.
Toxic Dust	Action	Disturb one declared interior zone for 3 rounds; it carries [Toxic] during that time and sight-dependent targeting beyond Very Close range is impossible through it. Sealed environmental protection negates the tag, not the obscuration.
Grave Echo	Reaction	Trigger: once per scene, a character resolves Failure with Fear while examining an established memorial or mass-death site. Effect: spend 1 Fear; that character makes a Presence Reaction Roll, DC 15, becoming Frightened on failure. On success nothing changes. The echo never speaks a new fact or controls an Action.

13. THE VOLCANIC WORLD (MAGMA/GEOTHERMAL)

Hazard / Industrial / Recommended Tier: 3 / Suggested DC: 15

DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

"The floor is lava. No, literally. The floor is lava. Stick to the walkways."

A world of tectonic instability. Oceans of magma, ash clouds, and earthquakes. Rich in minerals but deadly to habitation.

Sensory Profile. - **Sight:** Red and black. Ash falling like snow. Heat distortion.

- **Sound:** Roaring fire. Cracking earth. Hissing steam.

- **Smell:** Sulfur, burning rock.

Veilfarers Lore:

Inferna is a mining world where workers live in suspended cities above the magma flow.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Furnace Heat	Passive	At the end of every continuous hour outside sealed thermal protection, mark 1 Stress, never above the character's Stress maximum. Ten minutes in a protected zone resets the interval.
Lava Vent	Action	Mark one visible Very Close zone. At the end of the round it erupts; every creature still there makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 20. On failure take 4d10 Energy damage with the Fire tag and become Prone, on success move to the nearest safe edge and take half damage. The zone then becomes impassable until the scene ends.
Ashfall	Action	For 3 rounds, sight-dependent targeting beyond Close range is impossible and sight-dependent Instinct Rolls have Disadvantage. Sealed breathing protection prevents the ash from applying any respiratory effect; this Feature adds no hidden damage or Condition.

14. THE CRYSTALLINE WORLD (GEODE)

Weird / Puzzle / Recommended Tier: 3 / Suggested DC: 15

DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

"It's like walking inside a diamond. Beautiful, sharp, and fragile."

A world where biology is silicon-based. Trees are crystal spires; water is liquid mercury.

Sensory Profile. - **Sight:** Refracted light rainbows. Translucent surfaces.

- **Sound:** Chiming, ringing, tinkling glass.

- **Smell:** Odorless, sterile.

Veilfarers Lore:

Prisma is the home of the Rift Spinners. It acts as a massive prism for Veil energy.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Razor Field	Passive	Moving two or more bands through an exposed crystal zone in one Spotlight requires an Agility Roll, DC 10. On failure move only one band, take 1d6 Physical damage, and become Prone.
Resonant Cascade	Reaction	Trigger: once per round, Explosive or Sonic damage resolves in a declared crystal zone. Effect: spend 1 Fear. Every other creature in that zone makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 2d6 Energy damage with the Sonic tag, on success take half. The cascade adds no effect to the triggering hit.
Prismatic Cover	Passive	A creature behind established Heavy crystal cover has Resistance to Energy damage with the Laser or Radiant tag. Other Energy damage and attacks from the same side of the cover are unchanged.

15. THE ARTIFICIAL WORLD (MEGASTRUCTURE)

Tech / Exploration / Recommended Tier: 4+ / Suggested DC: 20

DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

"That's no moon. It's a Dyson Sphere segment. The mountains are heat sinks. The rivers are coolant lines."

A world built by the Precursors. It is a machine the size of a planet.

Sensory Profile. - **Sight:** Infinite corridors. impossible geometry. Glowing ley-lines.

- **Sound:** A low, subsonic thrum that vibrates in the bones.

- **Smell:** Metallic, static electricity.

Veilfarers Lore:

The Ring is a halo-world orbiting a black hole. It contains the secrets of the Precursors.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Machine Interface	Action	At an established control surface, choose before rolling: open one known route, suppress one named passive facility Feature until the end of the next round, or move one willing creature one band on existing machinery. Make a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 20. Success performs the choice; Failure with Hope changes nothing; Failure with Fear makes that interface unavailable until the end of the scene.
Reconfiguring Passage	Action	Name two adjacent visible zones. At the end of the round, every creature in either makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure it moves one band into the other zone and becomes Prone, on success it chooses which of the two to occupy. Solid Total Cover prevents movement through it.
Gravity Pulse	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> a powered Precursor system is first activated in the scene. <i>Effect:</i> spend 1 Fear and choose one visible Close zone. Every creature there makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 20; on failure move one band toward the declared surface, take 2d6 Physical damage with the Impact tag, and become Prone; on success hold position and take no damage.

PART THREE: MICRO-ENVIRONMENTS (SET PIECES)

Micro-Environments are the **specific locations** where individual scenes take place. They are layered on top of the Macro-Environment to produce the actual scene.

A complete Micro-Environment catalog appears in Appendix B of this book. The most commonly used types are listed here for reference:

MICRO-ENVIRONMENT	TYPE	COMMON USES
Bazaar / Public Market	Social	Information gathering, contact meetings, chases through crowds
Derelict Ship	Exploration	Mystery, salvage, ghost ship horror
Military Bunker	Combat	Set-piece combat, infiltration
Aristocratic Ballroom	Social	Court intrigue, formal negotiations
Smuggler's Den	Social / Combat	Illicit deals, double-crosses
Precursor Vault	Exploration / Mystery	High-stakes discovery, ancient threats

PART THREE: MICRO-ENVIRONMENTS (SET PIECES) (continued)

MICRO-ENVIRONMENT	TYPE	COMMON USES
Spaceport	Social / Traversal	Arrival/departure scenes, customs encounters
Refinery / Factory Floor	Combat	Action set-pieces with environmental hazards
Habitation Dome	Survival / Social	Civilian scenes on hostile worlds
Spire Sanctum	Social	Mystic training, philosophical encounters
Frontier Outpost	Social / Combat	Resource scarcity, isolation drama
Imperial Court	Social	Audiences with Barons or the Emperor

Each Micro-Environment has its own stat block (Difficulty, sensory profile, mechanical features). The Keeper can either use the canonical stat block from Appendix B or design a custom Micro-Environment by referencing similar entries.

PART FOUR: RUNNING LAYERED ENVIRONMENTS AT THE TABLE

A few practical notes for layering Macro and Micro environments in actual play:

CHOOSING THE MODIFIER

When you select the single Macro feature to apply to your scene, pick the **one that creates the most tension**. A Bazaar (Micro) on a Forge World (Macro) could pull *Industrial Clamor*, but if the scene is a quiet negotiation, the clamor undermines it. Pull *Vent Steam* instead, where the failed roll creates a sudden complication.

The modifier should be **invisible until it activates**, then *land hard*. Players who knew the modifier was there in advance lose the surprise. Players who experience it as a sudden complication remember the scene.

LAYERING ACROSS MULTIPLE SCENES

A campaign that takes place primarily on one type of world should *vary the modifier* across scenes. The Forge World can produce *Industrial Clamor* in one scene, *The Machine Moves* in another, *Vent Steam* in a third. The same Macro environment produces variety through different feature emphasis.

CALIBRATING DIFFICULTY

The Macro and Micro both contribute to scene difficulty. A high-tier Macro (Death World, Suggested DC 15) layered on a high-tier Micro (Precursor Vault, Suggested DC 15) produces a scene where the *world is fighting the crew*

as hard as any antagonist. Use this combination for climactic encounters, not routine ones.

THE OPTIONAL THIRD LAYER: THE VEIL

For some scenes, particularly those near Veil-tears, Precursor sites, or anomalous space, the Keeper may introduce a **third layer**: the Veil itself.

A Veil-layered scene gains one additional feature drawn from a Veil-touched environment type. The Veil can:

- **Distort time.** Combat rounds may resolve out of order; some characters experience seconds, others minutes.
- **Distort space.** Distances change. A corridor that took 10 seconds to walk in might take 30 seconds to walk back.
- **Distort identity.** Characters momentarily perceive each other as different people, historical figures, alternate selves, dead loved ones.

The Veil layer should be **rare**. Once or twice per campaign. When deployed, it transforms an ordinary scene into a memorable one. See Chapter 14, *Secrets of the Veil*, for more detail on Veil mechanics.

CLOSING: THE GALAXY AS CO-AUTHOR

This chapter has provided you with the **Environmental Layering System** and a catalog of canonical macro-biomes. Together with the Micro-Environment catalog in Appendix B, you have the tools to construct *any scene* in the post-Silence galaxy.

The point of these tools is not to overwhelm. **The point is to make the environment a co-author of the scene** to ensure that the dust storm on the desert world is not just background flavor, but a *force* the crew has to reckon with; that the crushing depth of the ocean world is not just description, but a *clock ticking down*; that the gilded ballroom of the Solari court is not just opulent set-dressing, but a *political minefield where every champagne toast is a threat*.

The galaxy is a hostile witness. The environment is half the encounter. The Keeper who masters layering produces sessions that feel like they take place in *real, dangerous, beautiful places*, not on a featureless plane where dice are rolled.

Make the galaxy speak. Then let the crew try to answer it.

CHAPTER 10

MICRO-ENVIRONMENTS: THE SET PIECES

"You can survive the planet. You can survive the war. But the room you walk into? The room can kill you in twenty seconds. Pay attention. Every room has rules. Every room wants something."

Captain Yara of the Ironwake, smuggler instructor

WHY THIS CHAPTER COMES SECOND

Chapter 9 established the Environmental Layering System and presented the fifteen Macro-Environments, the planetary canvases on which scenes are framed. This chapter completes the toolkit by presenting the **twenty-four Micro-Environments**: the specific *set pieces*, the rooms, the alleys, the bays, the chambers, where actual scenes play out.

Recall the Layering hierarchy:

- The **Micro-Environment** is the *base stat block* for the scene.
- One Feature from the chosen **Macro-Environment** is layered onto that base.
- The combination produces the active rules at the table.

This means the Micro is the *more frequently consulted* of the two layers during play. The Macro establishes the world; the Micro runs the moment. Master the Micros, and you can run any scene in *Veilfarers* with confidence.

The twenty-four Micros below are organized into four functional groupings:

- **Social Micros** (Marketplace, Cantina, Noble Estate, Gambling Den, Temple), set pieces where dialogue, negotiation, and social maneuver dominate.
- **Movement Micros** (Transit Hub, Slum District, Scrap Yard, Orbital Platform), set pieces about traversal, pursuit, and verticality.
- **Hazard Micros** (Factory Floor, Mine Shaft, Volcanic Rim, Reactor Core, Hydroponics), set pieces where the environment itself is the principal threat.
- **Specialty Micros** (Medical Ward, Prison Block, Server Farm, Military Checkpoint, Crystal Caves, Gravity Well, Precursor Sanctum, Veil Pocket, Hive-Mind Lair, Bridge), set pieces with distinct mechanical signatures.

Each entry below uses the same format: Type, suggested Difficulty, evocative Description, Sensory Profile, Features the Keeper may select from, and Adventure Hooks to seed scenes.

1. THE MARKETPLACE / BAZAAR SOCIAL / STEALTH / TRADE DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

The Bazaar is the universal constant of the post-Silence era. Wherever two ships dock, a market forms. It is a sensory assault, a riot of noise, color, and desperation. Whether it is a collection of pressurized tents on a toxic world or a sleek, hidden level of a Core World arcology, the vibe is the same: everything is for sale. Stalls are piled high with scavenged tech, bubbling vat-grown meats, and questionable curios from dead worlds.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** A chaotic web of hanging silks, holographic price tags flickering in multiple languages, and the press of bodies. Every species is here. The neon glare of street food vendors fights the shadows of the alleyways.

- **Sound:** A deafening wall of noise. The shouting of hagglers, the sizzle of cooking oil, the hum of hundreds of

personal force fields, and the rhythmic thumping of music from nearby bars.

- **Smell:** Ozone from cheap electronics, unwashed bodies in vac-suits, exotic spices used to mask the scent of recycled air, and the metallic tang of raw credits.

Veilfarers Lore:

The most famous Bazaar is "**The Gut**" on **Station Kilo**, a lawless zone where House laws do not apply, and currencies from a dozen dead empires are still traded. However, every major settlement has a "Gray Zone" where the Guilds and Houses turn a blind eye to illicit trade, provided the bribes are paid on time. Rumor has it that the Bazaar on **New Byzantium** sells memories extracted from the dying, bottled in crystal vials for the bored nobility.

TIER SCALING: THE COST OF BUSINESS - TIER 1 (THE STREET CORNER): A FEW MUD-STAINED STALLS IN A COLONY SETTLEMENT. GOODS ARE BASIC: FOOD, WATER FILTERS, SCRAP METAL. DC 10. HAZARDS: PICKPOCKETS, MUDSLIDES, DESPERATE BEGGARS.

- **Tier 2 (The Trade Hub):** A dedicated promenade on a space station. Regulated, taxed, and patrolled. **DC 15.** Hazards: House patrols, rival crews, surveillance drones, customs inspections.
- **Tier 3 (The Black Market):** A hidden, invite-only sector behind a blast door. High-end illegal tech, combat stims, and stolen data. **DC 15.** Hazards: Assassins, illicit tech malfunctions, deadly poisons, undercover agents.
- **Tier 4 (The Auction):** A high-stakes gathering of warlords, nobles, and guildmasters. Planets are bought and sold here. **DC 20.** Hazards: Psionic security, disintegration barriers, immediate political fallout from a wrong word.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Crowd Cover	Passive	The sheer density of people provides physical cover. You are Hidden from anyone beyond Close range unless you take an overt hostile action. Moving quickly requires one Strength or Agility Roll , chosen from the approach, at DC 15 (DC 20 in a Tier 4 crowd) to pass without causing a scene.
The Pickpocket	Action	The Keeper spends 1 Fear and names one exposed small item. Its owner makes an Instinct Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure the thief takes it and a chase may begin; on success the owner catches the attempt.
"Hey! That's Mine!"	Reaction	Trigger: A weapon is drawn or a loud power is used., Effect: The crowd panics. The area becomes Chaotic (Difficult Terrain). Ranged Attacks suffer Disadvantage due to civilians running in the line of fire. If a civilian is hit, the local faction becomes Hostile and raises the alarm.

2. THE NOBLE ESTATE / CORPORATE PENTHOUSE SOCIAL / INFILTRATION DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

A fortress disguised as a palace. The Noble Estate is a display of supreme wealth and paranoia. The floors are polished marble or rare imported wood that costs more than a starship engine. The air is scented with real flowers—a supreme luxury in a universe of recycled oxygen. Servants move silently, eyes averted. But underneath the gilt and velvet are laser grids, DNA scanners, and guards who are paid enough to be loyal until death.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Clean lines, gold filigree, and vast windows looking out over the suffering city below. Art from the pre-Silence era hangs on the walls.
- **Sound:** The soft clinking of crystal glasses, polite laughter, and the subsonic hum of a high-grade security field. The silence here is heavy and expensive.
- **Smell:** Lilac, old paper, expensive brandy, and the cold sterility of a laboratory.

Veilfarers Lore:

House Solari estates are museums of the old empire, filled with statues of ancestors who conquered stars. House Kurogane estates are minimalist marvels of integration, where the walls themselves are screens displaying real-time stock data. To enter a Noble Estate uninvited is a death sentence; to enter invited is a test of character where a spilled drink can ruin a reputation forever. The **Winter Palace on Frost-9** is rumored to have a dungeon where the guests who "displease" the host are never seen again.

TIER SCALING: THE HEIGHTS OF POWER - TIER 1 (LOCAL GOVERNOR): A LARGE HOUSE WITH A FENCE. DC 10. GUARDS ARE HIRED THUGS IN UNIFORMS. SECURITY IS BASIC LOCKS AND A FEW CAMERAS.

- **Tier 2 (System Lord):** A fortified manor with a private landing pad. DC 15. Guards are House Marines. Security includes motion sensors and laser tripwires.
- **Tier 3 (Great House Noble):** A spire-top palace above the clouds. DC 15. Guards are elite Cyber-Ninjas or gene-coded beasts. Security includes DNA scanners and automated turrets hidden in the ceiling.
- **Tier 4 (The Imperial Court):** The Emperor's proximity. DC 20. Guards are Precursor Drones. Security is psionic, absolute, and unblinking.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
High Society	Passive	Presence Rolls using a relevant etiquette or charm Experience have Advantage. Presence Rolls made to intimidate have Disadvantage, and overt threats alert security after the Roll resolves.
The Panic Room	Action	The host seals the shutters and chooses one printed protocol. Drop floor: each occupant makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; failure drops them into the established holding zone for 1d6 Physical damage and Prone. Knockout gas: each unsealed occupant makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; failure applies Incapacitated until damage or an ally's Action rouses them.
Silent Alarm	Reaction	Trigger: an Agility Roll to avoid detection fails or a weapon is detected. Effect: No sirens sound and the lights do not flash. Guards in the next room begin Hidden and in established cover. When a player first enters that room, the Keeper may spend 1 Fear to Spotlight one eligible guard under the normal Fear procedure; this never grants a second NPC Spotlight in the cycle.

3. THE CANTINA / NIGHTCLUB SOCIAL / COMBAT / INFO GATHERING DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

Low ceilings, smoke that hangs in the air like a physical weight, and bass music that vibrates in your chest. The Cantina is the living room of the working class and the office of the criminal underworld. It is where deals are made, crews are hired, and grievances are settled with fists or blasters. The furniture is bolted to the floor for a reason.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Flickering neon signs, shadowy booths, and a haze of vape-smoke. The bartender is usually a battered combat droid or a scarred veteran polishing a glass.
- **Sound:** Thumping synth-wave, the clatter of dice, shouted arguments in five languages, and the occasional shattering bottle.
- **Smell:** Spilled alcohol, sweat, engine grease, and something burning in the kitchen that might be food.

Veilfarers Lore:

"The Broken Airlock" or "The Last Drop" are common names found in every port. These places are neutral ground by tradition, but that neutrality is enforced by the bartender's shotgun, not the law. Information flows freely here, provided you buy a round. The **"Zero-G" Bar on Nexus Prime** turns off the gravity every hour for five minutes, leading to floating chaos and spilled drinks.

TIER SCALING: THE QUALITY OF THE BREW - TIER 1 (THE DIVE): SAWDUST FLOORS, WATERED-DOWN FUEL, CHAIRS THAT BREAK IF YOU LOOK AT THEM. DC 10. HAZARDS: ANGRY DRUNKS, BROKEN GLASS, FOOD POISONING.

- **Tier 2 (Spacer Bar):** Neon signs, live music, private booths. **DC 15.** Hazards: Gang recruiters, bounty hunters looking for a payday.
- **Tier 3 (The VIP Lounge):** Floating booths, pure oxygen bars, expensive synth-wine. **DC 15.** Hazards: House Spies, experimental drugs, corporate blackmailers.
- **Tier 4 (The Velvet Void):** Zero-G dance floor, sensory deprivation pods, exotic alien dancers. **DC 15.** Hazards: Psionic vampires feeding on the ecstasy, high-level political assassinations.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Improvised Arsenal	Passive	Anything is a weapon. Mechanic: Characters attempting to find a weapon succeed automatically. Thrown objects (bottles, chairs, pool cues) deal 1d6 Physical damage and cause the target to be Dazed on a Critical Success.
Barroom Brawl	Action	The tension snaps. Mechanic: The Keeper spends 1 Fear. Two NPCs start fighting, and it spreads like a wave. The entire area becomes Difficult Terrain. Any character ending their Spotlight in the open takes 1 Stress from stray punches and flying glass.
Loose Lips	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> A player buys a round of drinks for 1 Credit. <i>Effect:</i> The player gains Advantage on their next Presence or Knowledge Roll to gather information in this scene.

4. THE TRANSIT HUB / SPACEPORT CHASE / TRAVERSAL / SURVEILLANCE DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

A spaceport terminal, a mag-lev station, or a planetary elevator base. It is a place of transition, vast and echoing. Announcements drone endlessly in three languages: "Please keep your luggage with you at all times. Unattended items will be incinerated." The air smells of fuel and cheap coffee. It is a choke point for anyone trying to leave or enter a city.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** High vaulted ceilings, endless rows of seats, and massive departures boards flickering with delays. Guards in heavy armor patrol with sniffer-beasts. The floor is scuffed by millions of boots.
- **Sound:** The announcement chime (ding-dong), the roar of engines taking off outside, the murmur of tired travelers, crying babies.

- **Smell:** Aviation fuel, floor wax, stale coffee, anxiety. **Veilfarers Lore:**

Transit Hubs are controlled by the Guilds or the Houses. They are the primary filters for population control. **Port Prosperity** on Nexus Prime sees ten million travelers a day; it is the perfect place to get lost in a crowd, or to get caught by a facial recognition scanner. The **"Elevator" on Atlas-5** takes three days to reach orbit; entire communities live inside the massive transit cars.

TIER SCALING: THE FLOW OF TRAFFIC - TIER 1 (COLONY PAD): A DIRT STRIP WITH A PREFAB SHACK AND ONE CUSTOMS OFFICER WHO CAN BE BRIBED WITH A SANDWICH. DC 10.

- **Tier 2 (City Station):** Mag-lev trains, cargo loaders, metal detectors. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (Orbital Ring):** Thousands of travelers, heavy security, blast shields. **DC 15.** Biometric locks and weapon sniffers.
- **Tier 4 (Gateway Station):** Interstellar hub connecting sectors. **DC 20.** Neural scans, total surveillance, Precursor gate technology.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Checkpoint	Action	Security barriers descend. A character must produce valid identification or make a Presence Roll to deceive , DC 15 (DC 20 at Tier 4). Failure leads to detention or a firefight in a confined space.
Moving Terrain	Passive	Walkways, elevators, and trains are in motion. Moving <i>with</i> the flow lets a character move one additional personal range band as part of the same Maneuver. Moving <i>against</i> it is Difficult Terrain and requires an Agility Roll, DC 15, to avoid becoming Prone.
The Chase	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> A player runs or engages in combat., <i>Effect:</i> Civilians scream and scatter. This creates Chaos. All Ranged attacks suffer a -2 penalty to strike due to the unpredictable movement of the crowd. However, escaping into the crowd grants Advantage on Agility Rolls to avoid detection.

5. THE SLUM DISTRICT (THE STACKS) SURVIVAL / VERTICALITY / SOCIAL DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

A vertical maze of rusting hab-blocks, laundry lines, and neon signs built on top of one another. Sunlight is a myth here; the only light comes from flickering halogen strips and burning trash barrels. It is a place of poverty, community, and hidden danger. The buildings lean against each other for support, a physical metaphor for the people who live there.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Graffiti tags marking gang territory. Leaking pipes dripping sludge. Children playing with scrap metal. The sky is a ceiling of pipes and cables.
- **Sound:** Distant shouting, the hum of illegal generators, the dripping of water, the blare of pirate radio stations.

- **Smell:** Rotting garbage, cooking grease, mildew, and the sharp tang of homemade chems.

Veilfarers Lore:

The Stacks are where the "non-essential" population lives. They are ignored by the Great Houses until tax day. Gangs run the streets, but there is also a strong sense of

neighborhood loyalty. The locals hate the police/guards more than they hate criminals. **Sector 7** on the moon of Titan is a slum so deep that new species of blind rats have evolved in the lower levels.

TIER SCALING: THE DEPTH OF THE ROT - TIER 1 (SHANTYTOWN): TENTS AND SCRAP SHACKS. DC 10. HAZARDS: DISEASE, PICKPOCKETS, STRAY DOGS.

- **Tier 2 (Hab-Block):** Concrete towers, gang turf. **DC 15.** Hazards: Crossfire, collapsing floors, debt collectors.
- **Tier 3 (The Undercity):** No natural light, mutant populations. **DC 15.** Hazards: Toxic runoff, structural failure, feral ghouls.
- **Tier 4 (The Deep Sump):** Ancient ruins beneath the city. **DC 20.** Hazards: Forgotten tech, biological horrors, pockets of vacuum.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Home Turf	Passive	The locals protect their own. If the crew has positive Reputation with the local faction, Agility Rolls to avoid detection and Knowledge or Instinct Rolls to gather local information have Advantage. If the crew has negative Reputation, those Rolls have Disadvantage and a Failure with Fear reports their position to an enemy.
Crumbling Infrastructure	Action	Name one unstable structure before it gives way. Characters on it make an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure, they fall one level, take 1d6 Physical damage with the Impact tag, and become Prone; on success they reach the nearest safe zone.
maze	Reaction	Trigger: The players try to flee., Effect: Spend 1 Fear. The layout is confusing. The players run into a dead end or a gang territory, forcing a Finesse (Pilot/Navigate) Roll (DC 15) to get back on track or lose their pursuers.

6. THE MEDICAL WARD / BIOME TENSION / HAZARD / ROLEPLAY DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

The smell of antiseptic and sickness. The rhythmic beeping of monitors. Rows of beds filled with the injured or the dying. It is a place of vulnerability. Weapons are forbidden, and violence here feels like a violation of sacred ground. The lighting is harsh, white, and unforgiving.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Surgical droids hovering over patients. Blood on the floor being mopped up by a drone. Charts at the foot of every bed. The pale faces of the sick.
- **Sound:** The hiss of respirators. Quiet sobbing. The sharp tearing of velcro bandages. The calm, synthetic voice of the medical AI.

- **Smell:** Rubbing alcohol, bleach, vomit, and copper (blood).

Veilfarers Lore:

In the post-Silence era, medicine is scarce. A functional Med-Ward is a treasure. They are often neutral ground, protected by the **Red Cross Covenant** or the **Bloomstriders**. Attacking a hospital is a good way to get a "Hated" reputation with everyone. The **Sanctuary of St. Alia** is a hospital ship that travels warzones; it is painted white with a red drop, signaling its neutrality.

TIER SCALING: THE QUALITY OF CARE - TIER 1 (FIELD CLINIC): BLOODY TENTS, MINIMAL SUPPLIES, OVERWORKED STAFF. DC 10.

- **Tier 2 (City Hospital):** Clean rooms, medical droids, triage units. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (House Research Ward):** Experimental treatments, gene-splicing, expensive bacta-tanks. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 4 (Quarantine Zone):** Bio-hazard Level 4. Deadly plagues, sealed airlocks, "burn" protocols. **DC 20.**

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Sterile Field	Passive	Advanced medical tech assists healing. Mechanic: All Knowledge Rolls using medical training made here have Advantage. Players resting here recover 1 additional HP.
Bio-Hazard	Action	A stated biological or nanite agent floods the room. Every unsealed organic character makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure apply Infected: mark 1 Stress at the end of each round until Knowledge (Medicine), DC 15, or the named antidote clears it. It never changes maximum HP unless a separate complete rule says so.
Collateral Risk	Passive	The room is full of non-combatants. Mechanic: Using Blast or Area of Effect weapons inevitably hits civilians. Doing so causes the players to take Stress (Guilt) and lose Reputation with all factions present.

7. THE GAMBLING DEN SOCIAL / MINIGAME / RISK DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

Darker and richer than a Cantina. Velvet tables, the clatter of chips, the spin of holographic wheels. Smoke hangs heavy. The clientele is wealthier and more dangerous. Cheating is expected; getting caught is fatal. It is a place where fortunes change hands in seconds.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Low, warm lighting. Glittering piles of credits. The intense focus of the players. Waiters moving silently with trays of drinks.
- **Sound:** The riffling of cards. The beep of electronic slots. The collective groan of a losing table.
- **Smell:** Perfume, expensive tobacco, sweat, and despair.

Veilfarers Lore:

The Gilded Die on a Solari station or **Chance's End** on a mining rock. These places run on "Void-Luck," a superstition that gambling aligns you with the currents of the Veil. Some high-end dens allow betting

with memories, years of life, or even souls (if an Ethereal broker is present).

TIER SCALING: THE BUY-IN

- **Tier 1 (Back Alley Dice):** Credits and scrap. Played on crates. **DC 10.**
- **Tier 2 (Casino Floor):** Regulated games, security bouncers, house rules. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (High Roller Suite):** Fortunes won and lost. House Nobles and Crime Lords only. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 4 (The Void-Wheel):** Betting souls, ships, or memories. The House always wins. **DC 20.**

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
High Stakes	Action	A player joins a game and wagers 1 to 3 Credits. Roll Instinct, DC 15. On success, gain Credits equal to the wager; on failure, lose the wager. On a Fear-dominant noncritical result, security also accuses the character of cheating.
Bouncer Security	Passive	A weapon without Concealable must be surrendered or hidden with a Finesse Roll, DC 15. On failure, the character chooses confiscation until departure or immediate expulsion; Failure with Fear also alerts security.
The Distraction	Reaction	Trigger: A player wins big (Success with Hope)., Effect: All eyes are on them. The rest of the party gains Advantage on Agility Rolls to avoid detection to sneak into the back rooms while the winner holds the room's attention.

8. THE TEMPLE SANCTUARY MYSTIC / SOCIAL / SAFE ZONE DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

Silence. Incense smoke curling in geometric patterns. Stained glass depicting constellations that no longer exist. The air feels thick, charged with potential energy. Even non-believers lower their voices here. It is a place out of time.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Candles burning with cold fire. Robed figures kneeling. Idols of strange, multi-limbed gods or abstract geometric shapes.
- **Sound:** Chanting in a dead language. The ringing of a single, pure bell. The echo of footsteps on stone.
- **Smell:** Myrrh, burning oil, old books, and electricity.

Veilfarers Lore:

Temples to the **Eternal Veil** or the **Machine Spirits** are common. They are places of refuge. By ancient custom, no violence is permitted within the sanctuary walls. The **Spire of Contemplation** on Amaranth Prime is said to amplify psionic ability tenfold, but drives the weak-minded insane.

TIER SCALING: THE POWER OF FAITH - TIER 1 (ROADSIDE SHRINE): SIMPLE OFFERINGS, QUIET REFLECTION. DC 10.

- **Tier 2 (City Temple):** Stone walls, clergy, minor relics. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (Cathedral of the Veil):** Psionic resonance, active miracles, zealot guards. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 4 (Precursor Sanctum):** The gods are listening. Reality warps in response to prayer. **DC 20.**

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Sanctuary	Passive	Violence is a declared social taboo, not supernatural control. A player character always chooses whether to attack. An attacker loses 1 Reputation with the sanctuary faction after the scene; an NPC bound by the taboo will not attack unless its own stat block states an exception.
Psychic Resonance	Passive	The Veil is thin here. Psionic and Void abilities extend one additional range band and cost 1 less Stress, to a minimum of 0. A Fear-dominant noncritical result while using one summons a minor Veil Spirit, a neutral observer or mischievous trickster.
Confessional	Action	A character meditates or confesses to a priest. Mechanic: Roll Presence. Success: Clear all Stress. Hope: Gain a vision or clue about your current quest (Intel Token).

9. THE PRISON BLOCK STEALTH / BREAKOUT DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

Cells, force fields, and guards who enjoy their jobs too much. The sound of misery. Everything is gray steel and orange force-fields. It is cold, hard, and hopeless.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Rows of identical cells. Cameras watching every angle. Prisoners in jumpsuits pacing like caged animals.
- **Sound:** The buzz of force fields. Clanking metal doors. Shouted orders. The weeping of a new inmate.
- **Smell:** Disinfectant, unwashed bodies, bad food, and fear.

Veilfarers Lore:

The Cube is a House Joric supermax prison floating in deep space. It has no guards, only automated turrets and a sadistic AI warden. Escape is considered impossible because the airlocks open directly into vacuum.

TIER SCALING: THE SECURITY LEVEL - TIER 1 (LOCAL JAIL): BARS, PHYSICAL LOCKS, BORED GUARDS. DC 10.

- **Tier 2 (Colony Pen):** Laser fences, labor camps, drone patrols. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (House Dungeon):** Energy cells, interrogation droids, null-cuffs. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 4 (The Deep Freeze):** Cryo-stasis, suspended animation, mind-wiping tech. **DC 20.**

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Suppression Field	Passive	Anti-tech and anti-Void field. Mechanic: Tech and Void users suffer Disadvantage on all rolls. Psionic powers cost double Stress to use.
Prison Riot	Action	Chaos erupts. The area becomes Difficult Terrain. Guards are distracted, granting Advantage on Agility Rolls to avoid detection. A character who ends their Spotlight in the open takes 1d6 Physical damage from the melee.
Lockdown	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> An alarm sounds. <i>Effect:</i> Blast doors divide the route into Close-range sections. Opening one under pressure requires Knowledge (Tech) DC 15 or Strength Roll, DC 15 with suitable explosives. Crossing the prison takes one additional successful section action.

THE GRIND & THE WILD "INDUSTRIAL, MILITARY, AND WILDERNESS ENVIRONMENTS

"The galaxy doesn't run on magic. It runs on plasma, processed ore, and the blood of the people who keep the lights on. And out in the wild? The galaxy runs on the simple rule that big things eat small things. If you aren't the hammer, you're the nail."

"Foreman Kurg, High-G Mining Guild

These environments are defined by danger. In industrial zones, the machinery itself is lethal; the environment is an unfeeling juggernaut that will crush you if you step out of line. In military zones, the defenses are intelligent and lethal. In the wilderness, nature is hostile, evolved to survive conditions that would kill a human in seconds.

10. THE FACTORY FLOOR HAZARD / COMBAT / INDUSTRIAL DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

A deafening cacophony of pistons, steam, and grinding gears. Conveyor belts move half-assembled droids or ship parts overhead. The air is hot and smells of lubricant. Sparks rain from welding arms. It is a place of relentless motion, where safety is a secondary concern to output.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Spinning turbines, rivers of molten slag in channels, robotic arms moving with terrifying speed. The air is hazy with metal dust. Warning lights flash yellow and red constantly.
- **Sound:** A wall of noise "hammering, hissing, grinding. You have to shout to be heard. The floor vibrates rhythmically.
- **Smell:** Hot metal, ozone, oil, and sweat.

Veilfarers Lore:

The **Iron-Heart Manufactory** on Hephaestus produces a destroyer every week. The workers are deafened by the noise and breathe through filters. Rumor has it that if a worker falls into the machinery, they don't stop the line; they just filter the bio-matter out later.

TIER SCALING: THE SCALE OF INDUSTRY - TIER 1 (SWEATSHOP): MANUAL LABOR, UNSAFE CONDITIONS, SIMPLE PRESSES. DC 10. HAZARDS: FALLING CRATES, STEAM BURNS.

- **Tier 2 (Automated Plant):** Robot arms, heavy presses, laser cutters. DC 15. Hazards: Crushers, welding arcs.
- **Tier 3 (Starship Foundry):** Building capital ships. Massive scale. Gravity is artificial and variable. DC 15. Hazards: Molten metal pours, high-voltage arcs.
- **Tier 4 (Nano-Forge):** Molecular assembly. Invisible hazards. DC 20. Hazards: Disassembly fields, nanite swarms.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Clamor	Passive	The noise makes audio perception impossible. Mechanic: Agility Rolls relying only on silence succeed automatically. Verbal communication beyond Close range is impossible without comms. Energy (sonic) damage is negated.
Heavy Machinery	Action	Name the machine and its threatened zone, then every creature there makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure take 2d6 Physical damage and become Restrained; on success move to the nearest safe zone.
Conveyor Ride	Action	Move to Far range along the established belt route. This spends the Spotlight, ignores ordinary Difficult Terrain on the route, and grants no cover or melee attack during that Spotlight.

11. THE MINE SHAFT CLAUSTROPHOBIA / HAZARD DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

Dark, cramped, and suffocating. The only light comes from helmet lamps and glow-sticks. The walls are rough stone or jagged crystal. Water drips constantly. The air is stale and dusty. The deeper you go, the heavier the weight of the rock feels above you.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Shadows dancing on wet rock. Dust motes floating in light beams. Old, rusted mining drills abandoned in corners.
- **Sound:** The drip-drip-drip of water. The groan of support beams. The distant rumble of blasting charges.
- **Smell:** Wet earth, cordite (explosives), mold, and fear.

Veilfarers Lore:

The **Deep-Dark** on asteroid K-9 is a mine that breached a Precursor tomb. The miners started hearing voices in the dark. Now, the lower levels are sealed, but the scratching sounds continue.

TIER SCALING: THE DEPTH OF THE DIG - TIER 1 (SURFACE MINE): OPEN PIT, DUST, SUNLIGHT. DC 10. HAZARDS: LANDSLIDES, HEAT STROKE.

- **Tier 2 (Deep Tunnels):** Dark, unstable rock, elevator shafts. DC 15. Hazards: Cave-ins, pit falls.
- **Tier 3 (The Core):** Magma heat, exotic minerals, toxic gas. DC 15. Hazards: Lava bursts, suffocation.
- **Tier 4 (Ancient Dig):** Breaching a Precursor tomb. DC 20. Hazards: Dormant defenses, psychic residue.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Cave-In	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> an explosion damages a previously established unstable stone zone. <i>Effect:</i> spend 1 Fear. Everyone in that zone makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 1d6 Physical damage with the Impact tag and become Prone, on success move to the nearest safe edge and take no damage. The zone becomes Difficult Terrain.
Absolute Darkness	Passive	There is no ambient light. Mechanic: Without Darkvision or lights, all attacks have Disadvantage. Carrying a light source makes you an easy target (Enemies gain Advantage against you).
Gas Pocket	Action	A stray shot hits a pocket of methane. Mechanic: Roll a d6. 1-3: Explosion (2d6 Fire to everyone). 4-6: Suffocation (Poison gas, 1 Stress/round until cleared).

12. THE HYDROPONICS BAY STEALTH / SURVIVAL / BIO-HORROR DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

A lush, humid jungle inside a metal box. Rows of genetically modified crops grow under intense UV lights. The air is thick with oxygen and the smell of fertilizer. It is peaceful, quiet, and easy to hide in, but the shadows are deep and the plants are genetically engineered for rapid growth.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Vivid green leaves, purple grow-lights, condensation dripping from the ceiling. Mist obscuring the floor.
- **Sound:** The hiss of misters. The hum of UV lamps. The rustle of leaves (was that the wind?).
- **Smell:** Rich loam, fertilizer, sweet rotting fruit, and dampness.

Veilfarers Lore:

"Eden" Station was a failed experiment to create a self-sustaining biome. The plants mutated and consumed the station. Now, it's a salvage zone, but scavengers have to fight through vines that can crush steel.

TIER SCALING: THE FLORA - TIER 1 (GREENHOUSE): VEGETABLES, FRUIT, PEACEFUL. DC 10. HAZARDS: SLIPPERY FLOORS, FERTILIZER CHEMICALS.

- **Tier 2 (Algae Vats):** Slippery tanks, biomass, waist-deep water. DC 10. Hazards: Drowning, infection.
- **Tier 3 (Xeno-Flora):** Alien plants, mild toxins, hallucinogenic pollen. DC 15. Hazards: Poison, confusion.
- **Tier 4 (Carnivorous Garden):** The plants eat people. DC 15. Hazards: Grappling vines, digestive acid pools.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Dense Foliage	Passive	The plants provide cover. Mechanic: Agility Rolls to avoid detection have Advantage. Far-range visibility is blocked (Close range max).
Life Support Hack	Action	Make a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 15, at an established control panel and choose one effect for 2 rounds: Zero-G in the room; Vacuum if the room can be sealed, using the Core exposure rule; or every sighted creature in the room makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15, becoming Blinded on failure until the end of its next Spotlight. Failure changes nothing; Failure with Fear also alerts station security.
Spore Cloud	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> Energy damage with the Fire tag harms the plants. <i>Effect:</i> Every unsealed organic character within Close range makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure the character becomes Dazed; the spores never choose a player's target or Action.

13. THE MILITARY CHECKPOINT / BASE COMBAT / BARRIER / TACTICAL DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

Concrete barriers, razor wire, and automated turrets. Guards in heavy armor stand watch with bored professionalism. Spotlights sweep the area. It is a choke point designed to stop you, process you, or kill you.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Stark floodlights cutting through the dark. Red laser grids. Warning signs in bold font: "LETHAL FORCE AUTHORIZED."
- **Sound:** The heavy thud of boots. The whine of charging turrets. The crackle of radios.
- **Smell:** Gun oil, concrete dust, exhaust fumes.

Veilfarers Lore:

Fort Aegis on the border of House Joric space is a legendary checkpoint. It is said that not even a rat can

cross the border without being scanned, tagged, and taxed. Smugglers pay fortunes for maps of the sewer tunnels beneath it.

TIER SCALING: THE FORTIFICATION - TIER 1 (ROADBLOCK): SANDBAGS, LIGHT INFANTRY, A BOOM GATE. DC 10.

- **Tier 2 (FOB):** Walls, towers, heavy weapons, APCs. DC 15.
- **Tier 3 (Bunker):** Underground, blast doors, elite troops, automated defenses. DC 15.
- **Tier 4 (Fortress):** Force fields, orbital defense cannons, overlapping kill-zones. DC 20.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Kill Zone	Passive	At the end of each round, every hostile creature in the declared open approach that lacks cover is targeted once by an automated turret attack at +6 against Evasion for 2d8 Physical damage. A turret is Keeper-controlled, generates no Fear from dominance, and cannot target the same creature more than once through this Feature in one round.
Alarm	Reaction	<i>Setup:</i> choose one existing House Marine or Mech Threat Group and its entry route before the scene. <i>Trigger:</i> the crew is detected by a complete Feature or fires a Loud weapon. <i>Effect:</i> spend 1 Fear and start a visible 4-segment Reinforcement clock, marking 1 at the end of each round. At an established control panel, an Action and Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 15, clears 2 segments on success and all 4 on a Critical Success; Failure with Hope changes nothing and Failure with Fear marks 1. At 4 the chosen group enters at Far range at the start of the next round, then clear the clock. It gains no immediate Action.
ID Scanners	Action	Players try to bluff their way through. Make a Presence Roll to deceive or a Finesse Roll using a relevant disguise Experience, DC 15. Failure triggers the Alarm; combat begins only if someone chooses violence or security already has orders to attack.

14. THE SERVER FARM TECH / STEALTH / HEAT DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

Endless rows of humming black monoliths. The room is freezing cold (to cool the processors). The only sound is the whirl of fans. Cables snake across the floor like vipers. It is a place of knowledge, but it feels like a tomb for information.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Blinking LEDs in the dark. Frost on the floor. The air shimmying with heat exhaust above the racks.
- **Sound:** A constant, white-noise drone of fans. The click of hard drives.
- **Smell:** Sterile, ozone, burning plastic, anti-static spray.

Veilfarers Lore:

The Archive is a House Amaranth facility built into a glacier. It contains the history of the pre-Silence world. It is guarded by "The Librarian," an AI that views knowledge as more valuable than human life.

TIER SCALING: THE DATA VALUE - TIER 1 (LOCAL HUB): ROUTERS, CABLES, BASIC FIREWALLS. DC 10.

- **Tier 2 (Corporate Node):** Encrypted, watched by sys-admins, biometric locks. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (AI Core):** Sentient defense protocols, virtual reality interface. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 4 (The Black Vault):** Air-gapped, quantum encryption, lethal countermeasures. **DC 20.**

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Data Ocean	Passive	Knowledge (Tech) Rolls to access systems and Knowledge Rolls to research stored data have Advantage.
Active Countermeasures	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> a Knowledge (Tech) Roll to access the system fails. <i>Effect:</i> the hacker makes an Instinct Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure take 1d6 Neural damage and become Stunned under the Core clearing rule; on success take half damage and no Condition.
Coolant Leak	Action	Name one intact server rack and a Close cone before rupturing it. Occupants make an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure take 2d6 Energy damage with the Cold tag and become Restrained under the normal escape procedure; on success take half damage and no Condition. The rack cannot trigger this feature again.

15. THE SCRAP YARD / DEBRIS FIELD TRAVERSAL / HAZARD / SCAVENGE DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

Mountains of rusted metal, crushed ships, and old droids. The ground is jagged and unstable. It smells of rust and decay. Scavengers lurk in the shadows, and the piles of junk can shift at any moment, crushing the unwary.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Twisted metal silhouettes against the sky. Piles of tires, wires, and hull plating. Scavengers with torches working in the distance.
- **Sound:** The creak of settling metal. The wind whistling through hollow tubes. The distant bark of a guard dog.
- **Smell:** Rust, oil, old rain, and decay.

Veilfarers Lore:

Orbit-7 is a debris ring around a war-torn planet. Entire communities live in the hollowed-out hulks of battleships. It is a place where you can find a hyperdrive engine next to a broken toaster.

TIER SCALING: THE DANGER - TIER 1 (JUNKYARD): SHARP METAL, RATS, UNSTABLE PILES. DC 10.

- **Tier 2 (Orbiting Debris):** Zero-G, collisions, vacuum pockets. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (Ship Graveyard):** Leaking reactors, unexploded ordnance, automated defense systems still active. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 4 (Nanite Waste):** Gray goo consuming the scrap, reshaping it into monsters. **DC 20.**

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Unstable Footing	Passive	A character moving two or more bands during one Spotlight makes an Agility Roll, DC 10. On failure they become Prone and mark 1 direct HP from the established sharp metal; moving one band requires no Roll.
Avalanche	Action	The Keeper identifies an unstable pile and threatened zone before it collapses. Everyone there makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure take 2d6 Physical damage and become Restrained; on success move one band to safety.
Scavenge	Action	Before the Roll, name one Tier 1 item or repair component visible in the debris and one printed environment Feature guarding it. Search with Knowledge (Tech) or Instinct, DC 10. Success yields the item. Failure with Hope finds nothing and reveals the Feature. Failure with Fear finds nothing and triggers that Feature through its stated procedure; no unprinted hazard appears.

16. THE CRYSTAL CAVES PUZZLE / HAZARD / EXOTIC DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

Breathtaking caverns of giant crystals. Light refracts into blinding rainbows. The air vibrates with a low hum. It is beautiful, but the edges are razor-sharp, and the acoustics can shatter eardrums.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Dazzling reflections. Translucent walls. Bioluminescent moss growing in cracks.
- **Sound:** A constant, low-frequency humming. Every footstep rings like a bell.
- **Smell:** Ozone, sterile rock, faint electrical charge. **Veilfarers Lore:**

The **Singing Caves** of Prisma are a pilgrimage site for Mystics. The crystals connect with the Veil. It is said that if you sing the right note, the caves will open a portal to another world. If you sing the wrong one, your head explodes.

TIER SCALING: THE RESONANCE - TIER 1 (QUARTZ CAVE): PRETTY, SHARP EDGES, SLIPPERY. DC 10.

- **Tier 2 (Geode):** Slippery, confusing reflections, minor sonic vibration. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (Singing Crystals):** Sonic resonance hurts ears. Psionic energy is amplified. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 4 (Living Monolith):** The crystals are alive/psionic. They attack intruders. **DC 20.**

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Refraction	Passive	Laser and other coherent Energy attacks crossing the crystal zone have Disadvantage. On a hit, add +2 to the damage total before Thresholds. No secondary die redirects an attack, and matching Duality Dice remain a Critical Success.
Resonance	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> a Loud weapon or explosion activates the crystals. <i>Effect:</i> Everyone within Close range makes an Instinct Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure take 1d8 Energy damage with the Sonic tag and become Silenced until the end of the next round; on success take half damage and no Condition.
Fragile Floor	Action	A spell or explosion shatters the ground. The area becomes Difficult Terrain. A character who moves through it takes 1d6 Physical damage once during that Spotlight, regardless of bands crossed.

17. THE VOLCANIC RIM HAZARD / TIMER / HIGH STAKES DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

A narrow walkway of black rock over a river of magma. The heat is a physical weight, pressing down on you. Ash falls like gray snow. The light is a hellish red glare.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Rivers of orange fire. Black smoke billowing. Heat ripples distorting the air.
- **Sound:** The roar of the volcano. The hiss of steam escaping vents. The cracking of cooling rock.
- **Smell:** Sulfur (rotten eggs), burning rock, carbon.

Veilfarers Lore:

The Crucible is a prison built on a rock in the middle of a lava lake. There are no guards, only the bridge.

TIER SCALING: THE HEAT - TIER 1 (GEOTHERMAL PLANT): STEAM PIPES, HOT FLOORS, WARNING SIRENS. DC 10.

- **Tier 2 (Active Flow):** Open lava rivers, ash clouds. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (Caldera):** Inside the volcano. Toxic gas, crumbling platforms. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 4 (Planetary Core):** Liquid metal ocean. Intense gravity and pressure. **DC 20.**

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Extreme Heat	Passive	An unprotected character marks 1 Stress after each complete hour, or at the end of each combat round. Heavy Armor imposes -1 on Agility Rolls while exposed; this is a stated environmental modifier, not an undefined Fatigue Condition.
Eruption	Action	Identify the vent and threatened zone before the geyser erupts. Characters there make an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 3d6 Energy damage with the Fire tag, on success take half.
Toxic Ash	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> the wind changes. <i>Effect:</i> name one ash-filled zone lasting until the end of the next round. Sight-dependent Rolls through it have Disadvantage. At the start of each Spotlight there, an unsealed character makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure mark 1 Stress. A mask or filter prevents the Roll.

18. THE GRAVITY WELL WEIRD / TRAVERSAL / PHYSICS PUZZLE DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

Near a black hole, an artificial gravity generator, or a spun-up space station. Light bends. Down changes from room to room. You feel heavy, then light, then heavy again. Nausea is constant.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Walls becoming floors. Liquids pooling in spheres. Light "smearing" as it bends around high-gravity zones.
- **Sound:** A low, rhythmic thrumming (the gravity generator). Creaking metal. The sound of your own blood rushing in your ears.
- **Smell:** Metallic, sterile, vomit (from motion sickness).

Veilfarers Lore:

The Spire is a station where the gravity generator malfunctioned fifty years ago. Now, gravity shifts randomly. Scavengers use magnetic boots to navigate the "Escher-Halls," looting the corpses of those who fell "up" into the ceiling fans.

TIER SCALING: THE G-FORCE

- **Tier 1 (Spin Hab):** Coriolis effect, dizziness, mild disorientation. **DC 10.**
- **Tier 2 (Zero-G Hub):** No gravity. Floating. Newtonian physics apply. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (Tidal Lock):** Gravity shifts randomly. Zones of high and low G. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 4 (Singularity):** Crushing pressure, time dilation, event horizons. **DC 20.**

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Gravity Shift	Passive	Roll d6 at the start of each round; the result lasts for that round. 1-2 High G: Agility and Strength Rolls take -2 and movement is limited to one band per Spotlight. 3-4 Low G: Agility Rolls gain +2 and movement may cover one additional band. 5-6 Sideways: each unanchored character makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 1d6 Physical damage with the Impact tag and become Prone, on success move safely to the nearest surface.
Spaghettification	Action	A gravity wave crosses the named zone. Characters there make a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 2d8 Physical damage, on success take half.
Time Dilation	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> a character resolves Failure with Fear in this zone. <i>Effect:</i> that character becomes Dazed and cannot Assist until the end of their next Spotlight. Matching dice remain Critical Success and never trigger this effect.

THE VAULTS & THE VOIDS " ENDGAME LOCALES

"There are places in this galaxy where the maps stop. Where physics is a suggestion, and history is a weapon. If you go there, bring your best gun. Better yet, bring your god."

" High Inquisitor Kaelen, House Joric

These are the destinations of legends. Precursor sites, Veil dimensions, or the heart of a Great House fortress. These are not just rooms; they are narrative climaxes.

19. THE PRECURSOR SANCTUM PUZZLE / BOSS ARENA / HIGH-TECH DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

Architecture that defies geometry. Floating platforms made of black stone that absorbs light. Glowing glyphs pulsing with a heartbeat rhythm. The silence of a tomb that is waiting to wake up. There is no dust here, only perfection.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Impossible angles. Light sources with no origin. Holographic interfaces that respond to thought.
- **Sound:** A low, resonant hum. The sound of your own thoughts echoing.
- **Smell:** Ozone, petrichor, static electricity.

Veilfarers Lore:

The Library of Eons is a rumored facility that contains the blueprints for every ship ever built by the Precursors. It is guarded by the Warden, an AI that has gone insane from loneliness.

TIER SCALING: THE ACTIVITY - TIER 1 (DORMANT RUIN): DARK, COLD, DEAD. ONLY PASSIVE TRAPS. DC 15.

- **Tier 2 (Awakening):** Lights on, minor maintenance drones active. DC 15.
- **Tier 3 (Active Facility):** Defense grid online, fabrication running. DC 15.
- **Tier 4 (The Vault):** The Warden AI is home and angry. Reality warping. Use DC 25 for the Vault's defining hazards.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Living Geometry	Action	Announce which two zones will exchange positions. Occupants make Agility Reaction Rolls, DC 15. On failure they move with the zone and become Prone; on success they move one band to the nearest stable zone. Cover changes only as announced before the Rolls.
Defense Grid	Passive	The "Immune System" is active. Mechanic: Spawns Precursor Drones (Tier 2) every 2 rounds until the core is hacked.
The Test	Reaction	Trigger: A player uses a Precursor Artifact., Effect: The room recognizes them. They gain control of one environmental feature (Turret, Door, Gravity) for the scene.

20. THE VEIL POCKET (DREAMSCAPE) SURREAL / HORROR / NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

A bubble of reality inside the Veil. It looks like a memory "a childhood home, a battlefield, a burning city" but twisted. The sky is a swirling vortex of purple and gold. Physics follows emotion, not logic.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Bleeding colors. Objects melting. Faces of dead friends in the crowd.
- **Sound:** Whispers. Music played backward. A heartbeat that isn't yours.
- **Smell:** Ash, lavender, blood, old books.

Veilfarers Lore:

The Memory of Reach is a pocket dimension that endlessly replays the destruction of a colony. Visitors are forced to play the roles of the victims.

TIER SCALING: THE STABILITY - TIER 1 (STABLE ECHO): A STATIC SCENE, GHOSTLY BUT HARMLESS. DC 15.

- **Tier 2 (Lucid Dream):** The environment reacts to thought. Minor hazards. DC 15.
- **Tier 3 (Nightmare):** Hostile entities, active psychological attacks. DC 20.
- **Tier 4 (Deep Veil):** Reality collapse. Thoughts kill. DC 20.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Dream Logic	Passive	Belief shapes reality. Mechanic: Physical attacks deal half damage. Social/Mental attacks (Intimidation, Persuasion) deal physical damage to enemies.
Nightmare Manifest	Action	The environment spawns a monster based on a PC's backstory/trauma.
Will to Power	Action	A player can spend Hope to alter the environment (create a bridge, erase a wall, summon a weapon). No roll required.

21. THE ORBITAL PLATFORM (EXTERIOR) ZERO-G / VACUUM / HIGH STAKES DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

You are standing on the hull of a station or ship. Below you is the planet; above you is the void. There is no sound but your own breathing. The sun is blindingly bright without atmosphere to scatter it. It is the ultimate exposure.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Stark shadows. The curve of the planet. Debris floating silently.
- **Sound:** Silence. Only vibrations through your boots.
- **Smell:** Stale suit air. Sweat.

Veilfarers Lore:

The Halo Array is a series of defense platforms orbiting a core world. Sabotaging them requires an EVA walk under fire from interceptor drones.

TIER SCALING: THE EXPOSURE - TIER 1 (DOCKED SHIP): SAFE TETHER, MINOR MOVEMENT. DC 10.

- **Tier 2 (Station Hull):** Rotating sections, debris. DC 15.
- **Tier 3 (Active Battle):** Stray fire, maneuvering thrusters firing. DC 15.
- **Tier 4 (Re-entry):** The platform is falling. Heat shields failing. DC 20.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Hard Vacuum	Passive	An unsealed character marks 1 HP and 1 Stress at the end of each round; at 0 HP use the normal Dying and Final procedure. Radio is required for speech, and Agility Rolls to avoid auditory detection succeed automatically. A sealed Environmental Suit prevents these effects until breached.
Solar Flare	Action	Announce the flare and visible shadow zones. At the end of the round, everyone outside shadow makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 2d6 Energy damage with the Radiant tag and become Blinded, on success take half and no Condition. Sensor-dependent Rolls have Disadvantage until the end of the next round.
Mag-Lock Failure	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> an explosion causes damage in an exterior or zero-G hull zone. <i>Effect:</i> spend 1 Fear and name that zone. Each untethered creature there makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure it drifts one personal range band away. Returning requires a tether, thrusters, or an Action and a successful Agility Roll, DC 15.

22. THE REACTOR CORE (CRITICAL MASS) TIMER / HAZARD / INDUSTRIAL DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

The heartbeat of a starship or city. A pulsing column of blue Cherenkov radiation. The hum vibrates your teeth. The heat is oppressive. Warning sirens are blaring.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Blue glow. Steam venting. Red warning lights.
- **Sound:** A deafening throbbing hum. Alarms.
- **Smell:** Ionized air. Burning metal.

Veilfarers Lore:

The Heart of the Sun is a massive fusion reactor powering New Byzantium. Terrorists threatening to overload it holds the entire planet hostage.

TIER SCALING: THE INSTABILITY - TIER 1 (STABLE): HUMMING, WARM. DC 15.

- **Tier 2 (Leaking):** Radiation zones, hot steam. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (Critical):** Arcing lightning, melting floor. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 4 (Meltdown):** The core is exposed. A character entering or beginning a Spotlight there makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 20. On failure take 3d10 Energy damage; on success take half. Damage uses normal Thresholds, Armor Slots, and the Dying procedure.

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Radiation Field	Passive	At the end of each round, a character without intact shielding or a sealed suit marks 1 Stress. Knowledge (Tech) Rolls made in the field have Disadvantage. Intact shielding or a sealed suit prevents the Stress but not the interference.
Power Surge	Action	Mark one visible catwalk zone with electrical warning arcs. At the start of the next round it discharges; occupants make an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure take 3d6 Energy damage, on success take half. The warning marker then clears.
Meltdown	Clock	Start a visible 6-segment clock and mark 1 segment at the end of each round. When it fills, every unsheltered character in the facility makes an Agility or Strength Reaction Roll, DC 25; on failure take 6d10 Energy damage with the Fire and Radiation tags, on success take half. An exposed ship loses 5 direct Hull. Personal targets use normal Dying, Final, stabilization, and voluntary Death Move rules; no automatic party death occurs.

23. THE HIVE-MIND LAIR (BIOLOGICAL) HORROR / COMBAT / MAZE DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

Walls covered in resin and webbing. The floor is soft and spongy. It's warm, wet, and smells of musk. The walls bleed if you cut them. You are inside a living thing.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Pulsing egg sacs. Shadows moving in the resin.
- **Sound:** Skittering. Wet breathing. The squelch of boots.
- **Smell:** Ammonia, rot, sweet pheromones.

Veilfarers Lore:

Nest-Prime is a hollowed-out asteroid filled with Gloomfangs. The Queen sits at the center, directing her brood with telepathic commands.

TIER SCALING: THE SWARM DENSITY - TIER 1 (NEW NEST): WEBBING, MINOR EGGS. DC 10.

- **Tier 2 (Established):** Soldiers, traps, thick resin. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (Queen's Chamber):** Elite guards, environmental attacks. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 4 (The Super-Organism):** The walls attack. Acid floods. **DC 20.**

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Sticky Floor	Passive	The area is Difficult Terrain. Moving two bands during one Spotlight requires an Agility Roll, DC 10; on failure the character becomes Restrained and uses the normal escape procedure. Moving one band requires no Roll.
Hatchlings	Reaction	Trigger: Loud noise., Effect: 1d4 Swarms burst from the walls/floor to attack.
Digestive Acid	Action	Mark one visible Close zone beneath swelling acid sacs. At the start of the next round, occupants make an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 10; on failure take 1d6 Energy damage with the Corrosive tag and reduce maximum Armor Slots by 1 until Repair All Armor, on success take half damage and lose no Slot. The marker then clears.

24. THE BRIDGE (COMMAND CENTER) TACTICAL / SOCIAL / BOSS ARENA DESCRIPTION. & ATMOSPHERE

The brain of the beast. Screens showing the battle outside. The Captain's chair raised on a dais. It is the nerve center, the place where decisions kill thousands.

Sensory Details:

- **Sight:** Starfields on screens. Tactical holograms. Officers shouting orders.
- **Sound:** Beeping consoles. The calm voice of the Captain. Explosion impacts muffled by the hull.
- **Smell:** Cold coffee, sweat, recycled air.

Veilfarers Lore:

The Bridge of the Indomitable, flagship of House Joric. Taking this room means taking the fleet.

TIER SCALING: THE IMPORTANCE - TIER 1 (FREIGHTER BRIDGE): CRAMPED, FUNCTIONAL. DC 10.

- **Tier 2 (Corvette Bridge):** Security station, comms officer. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 3 (Cruiser Bridge):** Tiered stations, marine guards. **DC 15.**
- **Tier 4 (Dreadnought CIC):** A massive amphitheater of war. **DC 20.**

MECHANICAL FEATURES

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION & MECHANICS
Tactical View	Passive	Information is power. Mechanic: Characters on the Bridge can issue commands to allies elsewhere (granting Advantage). They know enemy positions.
Internal Defense	Action	The Captain activates countermeasures. Turrets drop from the ceiling. Gravity plates pin intruders.
Self-Destruct	Reaction	Trigger: The Captain dies/surrenders., Effect: The ship begins to die. A countdown starts.

ADVANCED ENVIRONMENTAL RULES

For groups that want the environment to be more than just flavor text, these optional rules add granularity, tactics, and "game-feel" to the setting.

1. THE HAZARD DIE (THE CLICK)

This rule replaces static random encounters with a tension-building mechanic. It represents the volatility of an unstable environment (e.g., a burning building, a collapsing ruin, a Veil storm).

How it Works:

The Keeper rolls a **d6** at the end of every round (combat) or every 10 minutes (exploration).

The Results:

- **1: Catastrophe.** Trigger one printed Action or Reaction Feature of the current environment without paying Fear. Use that feature's stated telegraph, targets, Roll, damage, and duration; this result grants no unlisted damage, forced separation, or player-character control.
- **2-3: Escalation.** The difficulty increases. The fire spreads or the gas rises. Move one affected DC up one standard rung, or introduce one visible passive hazard; never add an intermediate DC.
- **4-5: Warning.** An audio/visual cue of impending danger. The beams groan. The sensors spike. This allows players to prepare or react.
- **6: Respite.** A momentary lull. The smoke clears. A path opens up. A player might find a useful item or recover a point of Stress.

2. ATMOSPHERIC TAGS

An atmospheric tag is a complete scene rule, not permission to improvise an extra penalty. Apply only the printed effect below. If two tags affect the same Roll, use the normal Advantage/Disadvantage cancellation rule.

- **[Dark]:** Sight-dependent Instinct and Agility Rolls beyond Melee range have Disadvantage. An ordinary portable light illuminates through Very Close range and removes that penalty inside the lit zone. Anyone with line of sight can see the light; it does not create an enemy or automatic detection.
- **[Loud]:** Instinct Rolls relying on hearing have Disadvantage. Agility Rolls to avoid detection that relies only on hearing have Advantage. Energy damage with the Sonic tag is reduced to 0 inside the zone; unrelated Energy damage is unchanged.
- **[Zero-G]:** Use the complete zero-gravity procedure in Core Chapter 10: movement requires an Action and a push-off or

reaction system; an unbraced ranged attack pushes the attacker one band away from the target; melee attacks made while unbraced have Disadvantage; Vacuum Training removes the movement Disadvantage but not recoil.

- **[Toxic]:** At the end of each complete minute without sealed environmental protection, mark 1 Stress. If the character cannot mark it because their Stress track is full, make a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 1d6 Energy damage with the Toxic tag, on success take none. This tag does not disable consumables.
- **[Crowded]:** Moving two or more bands in one Spotlight requires an Agility Roll, DC 10; on failure move only one band. A ranged attack crossing the crowd treats its target as in Light Cover (+1 Evasion) unless attacker and target are at Melee range. The tag creates no automatic witness, collision, or lost item.
- **[Unstable]:** Explosive damage against an environmental object or room is doubled before its Armor and HP. It never collapses a floor or creates damage to creatures unless a printed environmental Feature states the trigger, Reaction Roll, damage, and result.
- **[Veil-Saturated]:** When a Domain Power rolls damage or healing dice in the zone, add one die of the same size to that printed pool once. On Failure with Fear while activating a Power, mark 1 segment on one local anomaly clock declared before the Roll; if none exists, there is no extra anomaly. This tag never summons an entity by implication.

3. CLASS INTERACTIONS WITH ENVIRONMENTS

These permissions use the normal action economy and do not replace a complete Feature printed by a specific environment.

- **Soldier - Assess the Ground (Action):** Once per scene, make an Instinct Roll, DC 10. On success, ask where the best defensible choke point within Far range is; the Keeper identifies one established location truthfully. A Critical Success also grants Advantage on the Soldier's first attack made from that location this scene. Destroying unstable cover uses its normal Armor and HP.
- **Engineer - Reconfigure Machinery (Action):** At an established powered industrial control, make a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 15, and choose one effect before rolling: move one willing creature one band along existing machinery; create Heavy Cover in a Very Close zone until the scene ends; or make one creature within Close range attempt an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15, taking 2d6 Energy damage on failure or half on success. On success the chosen one-use effect resolves. On Failure with Hope nothing changes. On Failure with Fear the control goes offline until an Action and Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 10, restores it.
- **Mystic - Read or Stabilize (Action):** Choose one. **Read:** make an Instinct Roll, DC 15, at an established ancient or haunted site; on success ask one question about that site's recorded history and receive a truthful established fact or "not recorded." **Stabilize:** make a Presence Roll, DC 15, in anomalous terrain; on success suppress one named passive environmental Feature until the end of the next round. Failure changes nothing; Failure with Fear also marks 1 Stress.
- **Scoundrel - Find the Angle (Action):** Once per scene in an inhabited or built environment, make an Instinct Roll, DC 15. On success the Keeper reveals one plausible existing maintenance route, concealed exit, or person open to negotiation. It grants no credential or automatic agreement. Failure reveals nothing; Failure with Fear also marks 1 segment on an alert clock declared before the Roll, or has no additional effect if no such clock exists.
- **Pilot - Read the Route (Action):** In zero-G or aboard a vehicle, make a Finesse (Pilot/Navigate) Roll, DC 15. On success choose one ally; that ally gains Advantage on its next Roll this scene to

move, brace, reorient, or use a vehicle station along the identified route. Failure changes nothing; Failure with Fear also leaves the acting Pilot unbraced. A Pilot with Vacuum Training retains its normal Core benefit. ### 4. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Sometimes, you just want to blow a hole in the wall. Give the room itself Hit Points.

Standard Room (Drywall/Glass): 20 HP. Armor 0.

Reinforced Bunker (Concrete/Steel): 50 HP. Armor 3.

Starship Hull (Plasteel): 40 HP. Armor 4.

Fragile Walkway (Rust): 5 HP. Armor 1.

Effect: When a room/object reaches 0 HP, it changes state. The walkway falls. The bunker is breached. The room decompresses. This allows players to "kill" the environment to solve a problem or create a new path.

CLOSING: THE ROOM IS WHERE THE STORY LANDS

Twenty-four Micro-Environments. Combined with the fifteen Macros of the previous chapter, this is roughly a thousand possible scene framings, enough to run any *Veilfarers* campaign without ever repeating an environmental combination.

The discipline is in *choosing well*. Not every scene needs a maximal environment. Sometimes the right Micro is a simple Marketplace; sometimes it is a Precursor Sanctum that bends physics. The skill is reading the *narrative weight* of the scene and choosing an environment that matches: low-stakes intel-gathering -> simple Micros; campaign-defining confrontation -> exotic Micros with layered Macro modifiers.

And remember: the environment is not just *the setting*. It is a *character*. The Bazaar wants something. The Reactor Core wants something. The Veil Pocket wants something. Speak as if they did. The galaxy is a hostile witness, but it is also a *participant*, let your environments push the story forward, not just sit beneath it.

Frame well. Layer well. Let the world be a character.

CHAPTER 11

THE SOULS IN THE DARK: NPC CREATION

"In the old world, we built machines in our own image. After the Silence, the galaxy started building people in its own image: scarred, resourceful, and dangerously unpredictable. When you meet someone out here, don't ask them what they do. Ask them what they lost. The answer will tell you everything you need to know."

Kael the Ghost, Information Broker, Nexus Station

WHY NPCs MATTER MORE THAN PLOT

A *Veilfarers* campaign is not, ultimately, about its plot. It is about its people. The Tellurian arc is not remembered for its mission objectives; it is remembered for Lyria, for the cargo handler with the trembling hands, for Captain Reyna who would not look the crew in the eye. The plot is the *frame*; the NPCs are the *picture*.

This chapter is your toolkit for crafting those NPCs, the desperate colonists, the ruthless enforcers, the cryptic alien traders, the things that hunt in the dark between worlds. The work is less about statistics than about *texture*. A two-paragraph NPC the table remembers is worth more than a ten-page stat block the table never engages with.

Two foundational systems carry this chapter:

- **The Four Hungers** the canonical motivational framework for the post-Silence galaxy. Every significant NPC is driven by one of four core hungers, all of them produced by the Silence's universal trauma.
- **The Three-Layer Method** the craft for building NPCs the players will *meet* as one thing, *recognize* as another, and *carry* as a third.

Master these two systems and you can produce a galaxy of NPCs without ever opening a generator or a name list. The work becomes intuitive; the table feels it; the campaign earns its memory.

PART I: THE FOUR HUNGERS: THE SCARS OF THE SILENCE

Forget gold-thirsty kings and mustache-twirling conquerors. The Great Silence was a universal trauma. It scorched away those tired, simple tropes. In the post-Silence galaxy, motivations run darker, deeper, and far more raw. *Veilfarers* is a place of profound scarcity, not just of resources, but of hope, of trust, of security itself.

To create a compelling NPC, you must first understand its fundamental hunger: the driving force behind its actions. In our setting, most NPC motivations can be

traced to one of four core scars. These are the **Four Hungers**.

HUNGER ONE: SURVIVAL DESPERATION

The Core. This is not greed. This is not simple evil. This is the raw, animal panic of watching your child gasp for air, of feeling your own lungs burn from a failing life-support system. NPCs driven by Survival Desperation are not villains; they are cornered animals, and a cornered animal is the most dangerous thing in the galaxy. They will do *anything* to see the next sunrise.

How it feels at the table. Imagine a colony leader on a dying asteroid. Her people are running out of oxygen. She learns the crew's ship has a spare atmospheric processor. She will not ask for it. She will not trade for it. She will send her entire security force to

take it, because the alternative is to listen to her people suffocate. Her hands will not shake when she gives the order. She is past that.

As a Keeper's tool. When the players encounter someone driven by Survival Desperation, they should feel pity mixed with fear. These antagonists are tragic figures, not monsters to be slain without thought. When the crew confronts such an NPC, you may spend 1 Fear to hit them with the full weight of the enemy's desperation: the faint coughing of sick children over a comm channel, the smell of recycled air gone bad, a child's drawing pinned to the wall of the room they are now fighting in. The Fear-spend doesn't necessarily produce damage; it produces *the recognition of who they are killing*. That is more dangerous than damage. The crew's choices afterward will carry weight that mere combat would not generate.

Signature scene shapes. Hostage situations where the hostage-taker is the one really trapped. Boarding actions where the defenders are starving. Negotiations where one side has nothing left to lose. Survival Desperation NPCs are at their most powerful when the crew *can*, in some sense, *solve* the desperation, share supplies, find an alternative, and must then weigh the cost against their own mission.

HUNGER TWO: POWER CONSOLIDATION

The Core. *"Someone must rule these ashes. Why shouldn't it be me?"*

This is the mantra of the ambitious. In the vacuum left by the old Empire, a new generation of leaders has risen: warlords, corporate barons, cult leaders. They believe power is the only true form of security. They consolidate resources, forge armies, and build small empires not just for wealth, but because they genuinely believe their order is the only thing staving off complete descent into barbarism.

How it feels at the table. Picture a Volkov warlord who has carved out a small fiefdom of three rusted space stations. He enforces his rule with an iron fist; he tattoos loyalty oaths onto the arms of his followers in radioactive ink. He is brutal, yes, but he also provides food, protection, and a sense of purpose to people who had none. In his own mind, he is not a tyrant. He is rebuilding civilization. He may even be right.

As a Keeper's tool. These antagonists are the great chess masters of your campaign. Their actions are strategic and long-term. They are rarely encountered alone; they are surrounded by loyal followers who *believe* in their vision. Defeating them is not just about winning a fight; it is about dismantling an entire power structure, which means the crew must consider what fills the vacuum afterward. *If you kill the warlord, who feeds his three stations next week?* The best Power Consolidation NPCs make the crew's victory complicated by what they leave behind.

Signature scene shapes. Court audiences where the NPC's authority is the central stake. Strategic encounters where the NPC's resources outmatch the crew's, and

brute force is not the path through. Negotiations across factional lines, where the NPC may be a useful ally or an existential threat depending on which side the crew chooses. Power Consolidators reward campaigns where the crew develops their own political weight; they are the antagonists who escalate *with* the crew rather than waiting in static positions.

HUNGER THREE: IDEOLOGICAL CONVICTION

The Core. This is the most dangerous hunger of all. The Ideologue is the true believer. They have a vision for what the galaxy *should* be, and they will burn worlds to make that vision real. They are not hypocrites. They are utterly, terrifyingly sincere.

How it feels at the table. Meet a high-ranking scientist of House Kurogane. She is leading a project to "purify" the human genome by purging "impure" genes from refugee populations. She sees this not as genocide, but as a necessary step to ensure humanity's long-term survival. In her lab notes, which the players might find, she has written: *"The screams of Subject 7 are distressing, but they are proof of progress. We must be strong for the future."*

As a Keeper's tool. Ideologues make for deeply unsettling antagonists. They force the players to confront not just a physical threat, but a *belief system*. The most effective way to use them is to show the players the *good* their twisted ideology has produced. The Kurogane scientist's program may also have cured a deadly genetic plague. The cultist's commune may genuinely feed its members. The Imperial Inquisitor's purges may have stabilized three sectors. This creates a moral quandary: is it right to stop them, even if doing so means undoing the good they accomplished? The crew must answer that question with their choices, not with their attack rolls.

Signature scene shapes. Interrogations where the Ideologue welcomes the conversation. Discoveries of laboratory records, doctrinal texts, propaganda, material the crew can *read* and find horribly compelling in places. Confrontations where the Ideologue tries to *convert* the crew rather than fight them; their certainty is more dangerous than their weapons. Ideologues are at their most powerful when their followers continue the work after the Ideologue dies; killing the prophet does not end the religion.

HUNGER FOUR: REVENGE AND RETRIBUTION

The Core. The Great Silence created countless ghosts. This hunger belongs to them. It is a cold, hard hate fermented over decades of loss. These individuals are not driven by a grand vision; they are driven by a single, burning need to settle a score. Their world is small. It contains only them and the object of their vengeance.

How it feels at the table. Consider a former House Joric deserter. His home moon was bombed into oblivion during a proxy war with House Valerius. He now methodically hunts down the Valerius officers who gave the order. He is a ghost, a patient and implacable hunter. If the players get in his way, he will not hesitate to eliminate them. They are not his target; they are just an obstacle.

As a Keeper's tool. The twist with Revenge NPCs is often that their quest is *misplaced*. The Joric deserter might discover, through the crew's investigation, that the officers he has been hunting were just following orders. Or worse, that the true culprit was a third party who manipulated both sides. This can turn a vengeful antagonist into a tragic, and potentially powerful, ally. Revenge NPCs reward campaigns where information is currency. The crew's ability to *reframe* the Vengeful One's understanding of what happened is often more valuable than their ability to defeat them in combat.

Signature scene shapes. Pursuit chases where the Vengeful One is closing on a target. Interventions where the crew must decide whether to protect the target, redirect the hunter, or let justice, or revenge, run its course. Discoveries of journals, photographs, audio recordings, material the crew can use to *reframe* the Vengeful One's history. Final confrontations where the Vengeful One must choose between completing the kill or accepting the new truth the crew has brought them. These scenes are about *meaning*, not violence. The dice may not even need to come out.

MIXING AND LAYERING THE HUNGERS

Most major NPCs have *one primary Hunger* and one secondary. The primary drives major decisions; the secondary surfaces under stress.

- A Power Consolidator with a secondary of Revenge becomes a warlord whose conquests are also vendettas; their political moves are partly strategic, partly score-settling. They will spare an enemy faction for strategic reasons unless that faction wronged them personally, in which case strategy goes out the airlock.
- An Ideologue with a secondary of Survival Desperation becomes a true believer who is also fighting for their own children; their willingness to compromise is non-zero, but only when their family's safety is on the table.
- A Revenge-driven NPC with a secondary of Power Consolidation becomes a vendetta-builder; they accumulate resources specifically to enable their kill, and they will not stop accumulating even after the kill, because by then the accumulating has become its own purpose.

A campaign of NPCs all driven by the same Hunger is monotonous. Distribute deliberately across major NPCs. The Imperial faction-head is Power Consolidation. The Veil-cult prophet is Ideological Conviction. The colony leader on the dying station is Survival Desperation. The drifter at the bar is Revenge. Together they form a *galaxy* of NPCs, not a list of variations on the same archetype.

PART II: THE THREE-LAYER METHOD

The Four Hungers tell you *what* an NPC wants. The Three-Layer Method tells you *how to present them* to the players over the course of a campaign. Every NPC who matters in a *Veilfarers* campaign should be built with three layers, Surface, Motivation, and Hidden Wound, each of which the players will encounter at different depths of engagement.

LAYER ONE: THE SURFACE

The Surface is what the NPC *appears to be* to a casual observer. It is the professional role, the manner, the social register, the visible loyalties. The Surface is what the players see in the first conversation; it is what they will use to navigate the first encounter.

For a mid-campaign NPC, the Surface is 2-4 sentences:

Captain Reyna Volkov, mid-thirties, decorated Joric Sentinel commander. Speaks in clipped, military cadence. Carries her father's officer's blade and is known for keeping her word. The unit she commands lost six soldiers in the Cassio Drift action three months ago; she has not been the same since, though only her closest aides know it.

The Surface is *honest enough to be playable*. It is not a deception of the players; it is what the NPC *presents* of themselves to the world. A spy's Surface might be "trade ambassador", that is what they present, and the crew will engage with them as a trade ambassador until something prompts deeper investigation. The Surface is the *role* the NPC has chosen to wear.

Surfaces work best when they include *one specific detail* that grounds the NPC in fiction. Reyna's father's blade. The cargo-handler's missing left index finger. The Spire scholar's burn scar across the right cheek. These details give the player a *handle*, something to remember the NPC by, something to reference when the NPC reappears, something that makes the NPC distinct from the other Joric Sentinel commander they met two arcs ago.

LAYER TWO: THE MOTIVATION

The Motivation is what the NPC *actually wants* in the campaign, the goal, the thing they are working toward, the thing that shapes their choices. The Motivation is what the players discover if they engage with the NPC across multiple scenes.

The Motivation maps directly to the NPC's primary Hunger. A Power Consolidation NPC's Motivation might be: *to be named Sentinel-General of her House by age forty*. A Survival Desperation NPC's Motivation might be: *to secure stable atmospheric supply for the colony before the next winter cycle*. An Ideological Conviction NPC's

91 Motivation might be: *to deliver the third sermon publicly before the Imperial Inquisitor arrests her*.

The Motivation is *narrower* than the Hunger. The Hunger is the underlying drive (Power Consolidation); the Motivation is the specific *goal* in the current campaign (becoming Sentinel-General). Two NPCs with the same Hunger may have wildly different Motivations.

The Motivation should be:

- **Specific.** *To gain power* is not a Motivation; *to be named Sentinel-General by age forty* is.
- **Visible in action.** The Motivation should drive the NPC's choices in the scenes where the crew encounters them. If the NPC's choices don't trace back to the Motivation, you've stated the wrong Motivation.
- **Achievable, in principle.** The Motivation should be something the NPC could plausibly accomplish. *Unachievable* Motivations push NPCs toward Ideological Conviction and Revenge, both of which can sustain indefinitely; *achievable* Motivations make for satisfying narrative arcs where the campaign resolves the NPC's quest one way or another.

The crew will *discover* the Motivation across 2-3 scenes of engagement. They begin by knowing the Surface; they learn the Motivation by paying attention. *Why is Reyna requesting the Cassio Drift assignment? Why does she keep refusing the desk command? She wants the field command that earns Sentinel-General.* The crew has now reached the second layer.

LAYER THREE: THE HIDDEN WOUND

The Hidden Wound is what the NPC *carries* that no one knows, sometimes including the NPC themselves. The Wound shapes the Motivation; the Motivation is, in part, an attempt to compensate for the Wound. The Hidden Wound is what the crew discovers only with deep engagement over many sessions, and it is what makes the NPC *real*.

For Reyna Volkov: *Her father, a Sentinel-Colonel, died of a sudden illness when Reyna was sixteen. She has always believed the death was poison from a Volkov-internal rival, but she has never been able to prove it. The Sentinel-General position she pursues is, in her secret heart, the position that would give her access to the investigation files.*

The Wound transforms the Motivation from *ambition* to *grief* in pursuit of justice it doesn't quite know how to name. When the crew finally learns Reyna's Wound, usually because they have gotten close enough to her over a multi-arc relationship, every prior interaction recontextualizes. *Of course she wouldn't talk about her father. Of course she carries the blade. Of course the desk command felt unbearable.* The Wound is the *answer* to the questions the Motivation has been raising.

Good Hidden Wounds share these properties:

- **They explain the Motivation.** The Wound makes the Motivation make *deeper sense*. You cannot have a Wound that is unrelated to the Motivation; if you do, the Wound is just narrative ornament.

- **They are not necessarily known to the NPC themselves.** Some NPCs are aware of their Wound (Reyna probably is, even if she would not articulate it cleanly). Others are not; they live their Motivation without ever recognizing the Wound that drives it. Both work; choose deliberately.
- **They are singular.** One Hidden Wound per NPC. NPCs with multiple wounds become melodramatic; NPCs with one wound become tragic. The difference is everything.
- **They are not generally narratively redemptive.** The Wound does not get healed by the campaign's end. It is the truth of the NPC; it is not a problem to be solved. The crew's relationship to the Wound is to recognize it, not to fix it.

HOW THE LAYERS LAND IN PLAY

In a typical campaign, an NPC moves through the layers in this rhythm:

- **First encounter:** Surface only. The crew meets Reyna as the Sentinel commander; that is all they see.
- **Second to fourth encounter:** Motivation emerges. The crew notices Reyna pursuing specific objectives, refusing certain offers, advancing toward a clear goal. They begin to understand what she wants.
- **Late-campaign encounter (or never):** Hidden Wound surfaces. Some triggering event, a discovered document, a witnessed moment, a confession in a critical scene, reveals the Wound. The recognition is the *moment* the NPC becomes real to the table.

You do not need to invent all three layers for every NPC. A shopkeeper who appears once needs only a Surface. A faction commander who appears every arc needs all three. The principal antagonist of the campaign deserves the most careful building you can give them: all three layers, each one drafted in writing, each one revisited as the campaign develops.

THE HUNGER-MOTIVATION-WOUND SPINE

A useful exercise: for any major NPC, write a single-paragraph spine that connects all three layers:

Reyna Volkov is driven by Power Consolidation (Hunger). She is pursuing the Sentinel-General position by age forty (Motivation). Underneath this lies the unresolved suspicion that her father was poisoned by a Volkov rival when she was sixteen, a death she has never been able to investigate (Hidden Wound). The Motivation is, in her secret heart, the path to investigative access.

That paragraph is the *spine* of the NPC. Every interaction in the campaign should be consistent with it; every choice the NPC makes should be traceable to it. When the table asks *why is Reyna doing this?*, the answer is in the spine.

The spine is the work. Write it down for every major NPC. Update it when the campaign reveals new dimensions. Refer to it before every scene the NPC appears in.

PART III: NPC STAT BLOCKS

Most NPCs need a stat block. The question is *how much* of one.

THE THREE STAT BLOCK TIERS

The Minimum. For an NPC who will appear in only one scene and is not expected to engage in combat: nothing. A name, a Surface, a voice. That is enough. Resolve any rolls in the scene by *narrative judgment*, calling for a single roll from the player and adjudicating the NPC's response in fiction.

The Light Block. For an NPC who will appear across multiple scenes but is not expected to drive major combat:

Name & Surface: *Captain Reyna Volkov, Sentinel commander. Stress Threshold: 4 (mid-tier resilience to social/emotional pressure).*

Specialties: *Tactics (+2), Command (+2), Evidence Analysis (+1).*

Signature Move: *The Father's Blade, once per scene, when threatened personally, she draws her father's officer's blade. Anyone facing her gains Disadvantage on Presence Rolls for one round.*

The Light Block gives you enough to adjudicate any non-combat interaction. If combat erupts, you can extend it on the fly using the Bestiary's standard Tier 2 or Tier 3 templates as scaffold.

The Full Block. For an NPC who is expected to engage in significant combat, the campaign's principal antagonist, a recurring boss, a Tier 3+ adversary the crew will fight directly. Use the full adversary stat block format from Chapter 12. Add Fear Abilities (1-3 depending on tier) and, for boss-tier NPCs, phase transitions per the Phased Boss Encounter format.

WHEN TO UPGRADE THE BLOCK

Start every NPC at the Minimum. Upgrade only when the campaign demands it:

- If the crew engages with the NPC across two or three scenes, upgrade to Light.
- If the crew is heading toward a confrontation with the NPC, upgrade to Full *before* the session in which the confrontation will occur.

Pre-statting every NPC at Full is wasted preparation. Most NPCs you invent will appear once and be forgotten by the table; statting them fully is a use of your prep time

that doesn't pay off. Save the Full Block work for the NPCs who have *earned* it through campaign engagement.

PART IV: VOICE AND DIALOGUE

A stat block defines what an NPC *does*. The voice defines what an NPC *is*. The two are independent; a brilliantly statbed NPC with a flat voice produces flat play, and a poorly statbed NPC with a memorable voice can carry a session despite minimal mechanical depth.

THREE COMPONENTS OF NPC VOICE

Cadence. How does the NPC speak, long sentences or short? Formal or colloquial? Hesitant or direct? Cadence is the most quickly-recognized feature of voice; a player who has met Reyna twice should be able to identify her speech pattern after three sentences of new dialogue.

Vocabulary. What words does the NPC reach for? A Joric officer's vocabulary is military, terse, weighted with chain-of-command terms. A Spire scholar's vocabulary is technical, layered, full of qualifications. A street informant's vocabulary is slang-heavy, evasive, full of references the crew may or may not catch. Pick a vocabulary register and *stay within it*; consistency is what makes voices stick.

Verbal Tic. A single distinctive habit, a phrase, a gesture, a pattern. Reyna might end every sentence with a half-second pause; the Spire scholar might say "*as it were*" before any controversial claim; the street informant might tap their teeth when they're lying. Verbal tics are the *hooks* by which players grab the NPC and remember them. Give every major NPC at least one.

PRACTICAL VOICE NOTES

Write the voice notes into the NPC's spine document. Two sentences is enough:

Reyna speaks in clipped, military cadence, short declarative sentences, no qualifications. She pauses before saying anyone's first name. When stressed, her right hand finds the hilt of her father's blade and does not leave it.

That is enough to *play* Reyna at the table. The cadence is in your delivery; the vocabulary is in your word choice; the tic is in the hand-on-hilt detail. Three components, three sentences, infinite recognizable performances.

WHEN TO DROP THE VOICE

Sometimes, in a long session, you will lose the voice. The Joric officer starts sounding like the street informant. The Spire scholar suddenly speaks in slang. This happens. When you notice it, *stop*. Take a breath. Re-anchor in the spine document. Try the next line of dialogue again.

It is far better to *pause and recover* than to push through with a broken voice. The table will not mind a five-second beat where you re-orient. They will mind a thirty-minute scene where the NPC sounds like four different people.

PART V: RECURRING VS. SINGLE-USE NPCS

Most NPCs in your campaign will be **single-use** they appear in one or two scenes and are resolved. That is fine. They do not need Full Three-Layer treatment; a Surface and a clear immediate goal are enough.

A few NPCs will be **recurring** they appear across multiple arcs, escape capture, change positions, reveal new layers. These deserve careful building: full Three-Layer Method, clear Hunger, named Wound, and a *plan* for what they are doing offscreen between appearances.

THE OFFSCREEN PLAN

The best recurring NPCs are the ones whose offscreen activities you *track*. Every session, the recurring NPC makes a move (often invisible to the PCs). When the PCs finally re-engage with them, they discover the NPC has been *busy*. That is what makes a recurring NPC feel real and threatening: the sense that they *exist* when the PCs are not looking.

In practice:

- After each session, take five minutes. For each major recurring NPC, write one line: *what did they accomplish (or attempt) this week?*
- When the PCs next interact with the NPC, integrate the offscreen activity into the scene. The Reyna Volkov who appears in Session 8 has spent the intervening weeks pursuing the field command; the crew should see that, in her bearing, in her status, in what she now knows.
- For longer arcs, occasionally describe an offscreen NPC moment to the crew. *As you board the ship, you receive a coded ping. Reyna is back in the Cassio Drift. She's commanding the recovery operation. Even without the crew engaging directly, the recurring NPC's life continues.*

THE RECURRING NPC'S ARC

A recurring NPC, like a PC, has an arc across the campaign. They begin somewhere; they pursue their Motivation; they encounter setbacks; eventually, they reach some kind of resolution, for better or worse, relative to their Hunger and Wound.

The arc may converge with the PCs' arc. Reyna may become an ally, an enemy, a colleague who falls in battle. The arc may run *parallel* to the PCs' work and resolve

independently, the crew finishes the Tellurian arc to learn that Reyna was promoted to Sentinel-General last week, and the campaign has shifted around them. Both shapes work.

What does not work: a recurring NPC who never changes. The NPC who has been pursuing the same Motivation for ten sessions without progress, setback, or evolution is a *static* NPC, and static NPCs are not recurring NPCs, they are *background scenery* that happens to have a name. Move them. Let them succeed or fail. Let the campaign do something to them. Otherwise the table stops engaging.

PART VI: PRACTICAL EXERCISES

Three exercises to internalize the systems in this chapter.

EXERCISE ONE: THE FIVE-MINUTE NPC

The crew has just arrived at a new station. You need a station-master NPC for the next ten minutes of play. Build them in five minutes:

1. **One Hunger** (30 seconds). Pick one of the four. *Power Consolidation*. 2. **One-line Surface** (60 seconds). *Station-master Hadek, mid-fifties, missing two fingers on his left hand, runs Hayford Pyre Station's traffic control like a military operation*. 3. **One-line Motivation** (60 seconds). *Wants to expand Pyre's docking capacity by 30% before the next regional governor visit*. 4. **One-line Hidden Wound** (60 seconds). *His daughter was killed in a docking accident eight years ago; the expansion is, in his private heart, an attempt to ensure no other parent suffers what he did*. 5. **Two voice notes** (60 seconds). *Speaks in command-deck terse phrasing. Taps the missing-finger stump against the desk when thinking*.

Five minutes; one NPC; ready for play. Practice this exercise until it is reflex.

EXERCISE TWO: THE RESKIN

Take a Tier 2 adversary from the Bestiary, say, the House Joric Marine. Now build three different NPCs around the same stat block:

- *Sergeant Vass*, the loyal Marine your players will fight beside.
- *Sergeant Ulin*, the corrupted Marine the players will fight against.
- *Sergeant Rell*, the deserter the players will meet in a bar and be asked to either turn in or hide.

Each has the same statistics. Each has a different Hunger, Motivation, Wound, and voice. Three NPCs from one stat block. This is how a campaign of *hundreds of NPCs* gets built without re-statting every encounter.

EXERCISE THREE: THE SPINE REWRITE

Take an NPC you have in a current or planned campaign. Write their spine paragraph (Hunger / Motivation / Wound). Now revise: change *only the Wound*. How does the NPC change?

Then revise the original again: change *only the Motivation*. How does the NPC change?

Then revise once more: change *only the Hunger*. How does the NPC change?

This exercise teaches you how the three layers interact. The same Surface can support a wide range of layered NPCs; the spine is what gives the Surface its weight.

CLOSING: THE PEOPLE ARE THE GALAXY

The galaxy is not defined by its stars; it is defined by the souls who live and die beneath them. The systems in this chapter, the Four Hungers, the Three-Layer Method, the practical stat-block tiers, the voice notes, the recurring-NPC offscreen plan, exist to help you build those souls with the texture they deserve.

You will not build every NPC well. Some will arrive at the table as one-line sketches and never grow. Others will surprise you, deepening across sessions as the table engages with them in ways you did not anticipate. Both are part of the work. The campaign is a collaborative organism; the NPCs are its texture; your job is to plant enough specificity that the texture has *grain*, not enough that the grain becomes a cage.

When in doubt, ask of every NPC: *what did they lose in the Silence?* The answer is the spine. The spine is the play. The play is the campaign.

Welcome to the souls in the dark. Build them well.

CHAPTER 12

THE GALACTIC BESTIARY

"The databases of the Old Empire are corrupted. They list species that have been dead for a century and planets that are now nothing but dust rings. If you want to survive the Void today, you throw away the old encyclopedia. You listen to the chatter in the dive bars of Station Kilo. You listen to the screams on the blackbox recordings. And you pray you never meet something that isn't in this book."

Navigator Halloway, The Drifting Archive

HOW TO USE THIS BESTIARY

This chapter is your primary adversary arsenal as Keeper. It contains **47 named adversaries** across two structural sections:

- **Section A, Standard Adversaries** (30 entries, Tier 1-5): single-stat-block creatures and named threats that populate encounters as principal opponents or as supporting forces. Use these for the bulk of your combat scenes.
- **Section B, Phased Boss Encounters** (17 entries, Tier 1-4): multi-phase fight templates designed for climactic confrontations. Each phased boss teaches or showcases a specific tactical pattern.

The bestiary is *not* a complete catalog of every threat in the *Veilfarers* galaxy. It is a *core set*, the essential 47 adversaries you should know how to run cold, the ones from which all other adversaries can be derived through reskinning, scaling, and recombination. A Keeper who masters this catalog can run any encounter in the *Veilfarers* setting without ever reaching for outside material.

ADVERSARY DESIGN RULES

Adversaries in *Veilfarers* are built **asymmetrically**. They do not follow the same rules as Player Characters. They are designed to be easy for the Keeper to run while providing distinct tactical challenges. The stat block format is compact; the abilities are the texture.

THE STAT BLOCK

Every adversary in this catalog uses a consistent format:

- **Name & Type:** The creature's classification combines its Tier (1-5), its Role (Minion, Horde, Standard, Skulk, Bruiser, Leader, Solo), and its biology or origin (Biological, Construct, Veil-Touched, etc.).
- **Evasion:** The target number a PC must meet or exceed to strike the creature. A passive effect names its own Reaction Roll and DC.
- **Attack:** The modifier added to the Duality Dice when the adversary attacks.
- **Damage:** The dice rolled on a successful hit, with damage type and any rider effects.
- **HP & Stress:** The creature's durability. Stress applies only to creatures with mental/social resilience.
- **Thresholds:** The damage values at which wounds register. Format is *Major / Severe*.

ROLE DEFINITIONS

- **Minion:** Cannon fodder. 1 HP, no damage thresholds. Dies to a single hit; useful for showcasing PC competence and filling out encounters.
- **Horde:** Groups of minions acting as one. High damage that decreases as the Horde loses HP. Useful for atmosphere and attrition.
- **Standard:** The baseline enemy. Balanced stats. The default adversary type for most scenes.
- **Skulk:** High defense and evasion, lower HP. Specializes in ambush, hit-and-run, and being hard to pin down.
- **Bruiser:** High HP and Armor, low Evasion. Hard hitters that absorb punishment.
- **Leader:** Buffs allies and controls the battlefield. Useful as the centerpiece of a multi-enemy encounter.
- **Solo:** Boss monsters designed to fight a whole party alone. Often have phases and Fear Abilities.

FEATURES

- **Passive:** Always active, no Fear cost.
- **Action:** Used when the Keeper spends Fear or takes the Spotlight.
- **Reaction:** Triggered by a specific PC action (e.g., missing an attack).

FEAR ABILITIES

Some creatures possess abilities that require the Keeper to spend Fear tokens. Fear Abilities are tagged with their cost (Fear 1, Fear 2, etc.). A creature may use only **one Fear Ability per Spotlight cycle**. This limit does not apply to Reactions; a creature may use a defensive Reaction and one Fear Ability in the same cycle.

Fear Abilities represent a creature's most dramatic, fight-altering capabilities. They should feel like *events*, not routine actions. Spend Fear on them based on dramatic timing, not optimization.

Typical Fear Ability budgets by role:

- **Minions:** 0 Fear Abilities.
- **Standard enemies:** 0-1 (optional).
- **Elite enemies:** 1.
- **Boss/Solo enemies:** 2-3 (ideally one per phase).

DESPERATION (PHASED BOSSES)

When a phased boss enters its final phase, the Keeper gains **3 Fear** instead of the standard 2, subject to the hard maximum of 12. This ensures the climactic phase has fuel for its most dramatic abilities.

SECTION A: STANDARD ADVERSARIES

Thirty single-stat-block adversaries organized by Tier. Each tier represents a class of threat that scales with the crew's experience and the campaign's stakes.

TIER 1: THE VERMIN & THE SWARM

Scavengers, pests, and nuisances, the small things that bite at the edges of civilization. Individually they are barely a threat to a trained crew; collectively, they can drown an unprepared squad in attrition. A *Veilfarers* crew encounters Tier 1 adversaries when they are *exploring, scavenging, or moving through neglected spaces*, the lower decks of stations, the asteroids of ruined belts, the streets of underfunded colony cities.

Threat Assessment: Low. Dangerous in numbers, dangerous to civilians, dangerous when the crew has already been bled by a larger threat. Rarely scene-ending on their own.

1. SKITTER-RAT SWARM TIER 1 HORDE (BIOLOGICAL)

Evasion 12 / Attack +2 / Damage 1d8 (Horde) / 1d4 (Depleted) / HP 6 / Stress - / Thresholds Major 6 / Severe 12

Description. About the size of a house cat, these hairless, multi-legged rodents possess chittering mandibles capable of shearing through copper wire. They infest the lower decks of starships and stations, nesting in warmth and chewing on critical systems.

Biological Information. A hybrid of mammalian and insectoid DNA, Skitter-Rats are likely an accidental mutation from early colony ships' pest control experiments. They possess a rudimentary hive intelligence; when gathered in sufficient numbers, their pheromones synchronize their heartbeats and movements, allowing them to flow like a liquid through vents and grates. They can digest almost anything, including plastic insulation and soft metals.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Can squeeze through openings as small as an inch; immune to fear/morale effects while swarming.
- **Weaknesses:** Bright lights dazzle their sensitive eyes; area-of-effect attacks deal double damage to the Horde.

Lore & Behavior:

"If you see one Skitter-Rat, you have ten. If you see ten, your life support is already eaten." They are not aggressive hunters but reactive defenders. They swarm towards the nearest source of heat""often a running engine or a living body""and gnaw blindly.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Swarm Tactics	Passive	While the Horde has 3 or more HP, it can attack two targets within Close range simultaneously.
Wire-Chewer	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> a PC within Close range resolves Failure with Fear while using exposed equipment. <i>Effect:</i> the player chooses one exposed tech item or weapon; it goes offline. Spend an Action and make a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 10, to restore it. If no item is exposed, the PC marks 1 Stress instead.
Scatter	Action	The swarm separates and reforms in a different location within Far range, moving through vents or floor grates to bypass blockers.

2. VOID LEECH TIER 1 MINION (VEIL-TOUCHED)

Evasion 11 / Attack +1 / Damage 2 Stress / HP 1 / Stress - / Thresholds None (Minion)

Description. Translucent, gelatinous slugs that float through zero-gravity environments. They glow with a faint, sickly blue light and are often found clinging to the outer hulls of derelict ships, feeding on residual energy.

Biological Information. Silicon-based lifeforms that metabolize electromagnetic radiation. They do not have a digestive system in the traditional sense; their underbelly is a conductive membrane that absorbs energy on contact. They are naturally buoyant in the Veil currents and can survive hard vacuum indefinitely.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Immune to vacuum and cold; small target profile.
- **Weaknesses:** Physical trauma (slugs/blades) disrupts their membrane instantly; they cannot move well in standard gravity.

Lore & Behavior:

Often the first sign of a "Ghost Ship," these creatures drain a vessel dry before consuming the residual bio-electricity of the crew. They are passive until an energy source (like a PC's shield generator or flashlight) approaches, at which point they launch themselves through the air to attach.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Energy Siphon	Passive	Attacks against targets protected by energy shielding ignore the Armor Slots that shielding provides (powered armor, drones, vehicles, ships).
Group Attack	Passive	For every additional Void Leech attacking the same target, add +1 to the Attack Roll.
Feedback Loop	Reaction	Trigger: A Void Leech is killed by a melee attack., Effect: The creature bursts in a flash of static. The attacker takes 1 Stress.

3. CINDER-MITE TIER 1 MINION (BIOLOGICAL)

Evasion 10 / Attack +3 / Damage 1d6 Fire (Fixed) / HP 2 / Stress - / Thresholds Major 4

Description. Fist-sized beetles with shells of cooling obsidian. Their interiors glow with molten heat, and they leave scorched trails wherever they skitter. They emit a sound like cracking charcoal.

Biological Information. Native to volcanic worlds like Pyre, Cinder-Mites consume sulfur and thermal energy.

98 Their blood is essentially a hyper-oxygenated magma slurry. When their carapace is breached, the internal pressure causes a violent thermal reaction.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Immune to heat/fire; dangerous even when dying.
- **Weaknesses:** Extreme cold (Cryo weapons deal double damage and prevent their death explosion).

Lore & Behavior:

Miners often use them as crude heat sources in emergencies, keeping them in ceramic jars, though a single misstep can result in a violent explosion. They ignore non-threatening targets but swarm aggressively if their thermal source is threatened.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Volatile	Reaction	Trigger: The Cinder-Mite is reduced to 0 HP., Effect: The mite explodes. All targets within Very Close range must make an Agility Reaction Roll (DC 10) or take 1d6 Energy damage with the Fire tag.
Heat Seeker	Passive	The Cinder-Mite has Advantage on attacks against targets that have generated Heat (e.g., fired a laser weapon or used a jetpack) in the last round.

4. SECURITY DRONE MODEL-V TIER 1 STANDARD (CONSTRUCT)

Evasion 12 / Attack +2 / Damage 1d6+2 Physical (Stun) / HP 4 / Stress 3 / Thresholds Major 5 / Severe 10

Description. A cheap, hovering sphere with a single red sensor eye and an under-slung stun baton/taser. The plastic casing is often stamped with the logo of a budget security firm like "Valerius Secure-Tech."

Biological Information. Mass-produced automata with basic logic cores capable of following simple "If/Then" protocols. They lack true AI and cannot adapt to complex tactical shifts. They are powered by a simple

fusion cell that can become unstable if the casing is breached.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Fearless; networked targeting AI improves accuracy in groups.
- **Weaknesses:** Vulnerable to EMP and hacking; simple logic loops can be tricked.

Lore & Behavior:

House Valerius floods the market with these drones. They are annoying, ubiquitous, and dangerously effective in large numbers due to their "compliance" programming. They hover at range, commanding targets to "Cease and Desist," firing stun bolts cyclically until the target complies or dies.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Compliance Protocol	Action	The Drone projects a deafening siren. All organic targets in Close range make a Presence Reaction Roll, DC 10; on failure they are Dazed.
Networked	Passive	If three or more Drones focus on one target, they gain +2 to their Attack Roll.
Self-Destruct	Reaction	Trigger: The Keeper spends 1 Fear when the Drone hits 0 HP., Effect: The drone rushes a target and detonates. Deal 1d8 damage to one target in Close range.

5. NEON JELLY TIER 1 MINION (BIOLOGICAL/ATMOSPHERIC)

Evasion 13 / Attack +1 / Damage 3 Stress (Poison) / HP 3 / Stress - / Thresholds None (Minion)

Description. Bio-luminescent, airborne jellyfish that drift on thermal currents in the smog-choked canyons of hive cities. Their trailing tentacles are nearly invisible and drip with paralytic neurotoxins.

Biological Information. Gas-bag organisms that float using internal hydrogen bladders. They manipulate their altitude by heating or cooling this gas. They are fragile,

little more than a membrane and a nervous system, but their sting is potent enough to drop a grown human.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Silent movement; difficult to spot against neon lights; flight.
- **Weaknesses:** Piercing attacks (pops the gas bag); strong winds blow them away.

Lore & Behavior:

Originally ornamental pets for high-spire nobility, they were flushed into the under-city where they evolved into silent killers. They do not hunt actively but drift in

99 "minefields," lashing out instantly at anything that brushes against their tentacles.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Translucent	Passive	Characters must succeed on an Instinct Reaction Roll (DC 15) to spot the Jelly before walking into range.
Neurotoxin	Action	The Jelly wraps tentacles around a target. The target takes 3 Stress and is Restrained until they succeed on a Strength Roll (DC 10).

6. SCRAP-GHOUL TIER 1 STANDARD (HUMAN/MUTANT)

Evasion 11 / Attack +2 / Damage 1d6+1 Physical / HP 5 / Stress 2 / Thresholds Major 6 / Severe 11

Description. Humans twisted by radiation and starvation, wearing rags and bits of rusted metal wired directly into their skin. Their eyes are wide and milky, and they speak in a pidgin dialect of begging and threats.

Biological Information. Human baseline, heavily mutated by "The Bleed" (Veil radiation) and toxic waste. Their muscles are atrophied but driven by hysterical strength during adrenaline spikes. Their digestive

systems have adapted to process spoiled meat and industrial run-off.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Desperation (high damage output when cornered); knowledge of local terrain.
- **Weaknesses:** Social manipulation (intimidation/bribery); bright lights hurt their eyes.

Lore & Behavior:

The "Leftovers" of the Great Silence. Communities cut off from supply lines who resorted to cannibalism and worse to survive. They set ambushes in choke points using jagged scrap weapons. They fight dirty, throwing sand or biting, but flee if their leader is killed.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Desperate Strike	Passive	While the Scrap-Ghoul is below half HP, they deal +2 damage on all attacks.
Filthy Shank	Action	Make a melee attack. On a hit, deal standard damage. On Success with Fear, the target also gains the Core Poisoned condition; matching dice remain a Critical Success and apply no infection.
Scuttle	Reaction	Trigger: The Ghoul takes damage., Effect: The Ghoul immediately moves to Far range, seeking cover.

TIER 2: THE SOLDIERS & THE HUNTERS

Ecological Niche: Professional combatants, apex predators, and specialized threats.

Threat Assessment: Moderate. Can kill an unprepared PC. Requires tactics to defeat.

7. HOUSE JORIC MARINE TIER 2 STANDARD (HUMAN/SOLDIER)

Evasion 14 / Attack +4 / Damage 1d10+2 Energy (Pulse Rifle) / HP 8 / Stress 4 / Thresholds Major 8 / Severe 16

Description. A soldier clad in gray, blocky composite armor, wielding a pulse rifle with practiced ease. Their face is hidden behind a polarized visor, de-humanizing them into a weapon of the state.

Biological Information. Human, typically on a combat-stim regimen ("Red Rage" or similar). Peak physical conditioning. Their armor includes bio-monitors that inject coagulants immediately upon injury, making them remarkably durable.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** High armor; tactical coordination; access to grenades.
- **Weaknesses:** Psionic attacks (low mental resistance); reliance on sight/sensors.

Lore & Behavior:

"The Wall." Joric Marines are trained to hold the line against anything. They do not retreat unless ordered. They fight in pairs using cover; one suppresses the target while the other flanks or throws a grenade.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Suppressive Fire	Action	The Marine sprays a zone with fire. All targets in the zone make an Agility Reaction Roll (DC 15). On failure, they take 1d6 Physical damage and are Pinned (cannot leave cover) until the end of their next Spotlight.
Tactical Reload	Reaction	Trigger: The Marine rolls with Fear on an attack., Effect: The Marine immediately clears 1 Stress and prepares a grenade for their next Spotlight.
Form Up	Passive	While within Close range of another Joric Marine, this unit gains +1 Evasion.

8. GLOOMFANG TIER 2 SKULK (BIOLOGICAL/BEAST)

Evasion 15 / Attack +5 / Damage 2d6+2 Kinetic (Claws) / HP 10 / Stress 3 / Thresholds Major 9 / Severe 15

Description. A six-legged, reptilian predator with vantablack scales and a mane of sensory quills. It lacks eyes, relying on a split jaw that emits clicking sounds to navigate. It moves with unsettling silence.

Biological Information. Evolved in pitch-black environments (caves or unlit decks of generation ships). Its metabolism can slow to a crawl, allowing it to wait weeks for prey. Its "scales" are actually photo-absorbent keratin, making it nearly invisible in dim light.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Stealth; superior sensory perception; wall-climbing.
- **Weaknesses:** Sonic attacks (overloads senses); high-frequency noise causes them pain. **Lore & Behavior:**

Legends say they were pets of the Precursors, used to hunt vermin in the walls of world-ships. Now they hunt us. It stalks from the ceiling or vents, isolating the straggler of the group to strike and bleed them before retreating to wait.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Shadow Pounce	Passive	If the Gloomfang attacks from Hidden, it deals +1d8 damage on the first hit.
Echolocation	Passive	Immune to visual illusions, blindness, and darkness penalties.
Vanish	Reaction	Trigger: The Gloomfang takes damage., Effect: The Gloomfang becomes Hidden if there is any darkness or cover nearby.

9. GLASS WEAVER TIER 2 SKULK (CRYSTALLINE)

Evasion 14 / Attack +4 / Damage 1d8+3 Physical (Razor Web) / HP 8 / Stress 5 / Thresholds Major 7 / Severe 14

Description. An arachnid construct of living silicon, seemingly spun from razor-sharp glass. It moves with a disjointed, ticking grace, weaving invisible monofilament webs between structures.

Biological Information. A crystalline lifeform that consumes minerals and refines them into high-tensile "chron-silk." It does not have internal organs but a distributed crystalline lattice. It is incredibly fragile to blunt force but resistant to cuts.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Web traps (restrain targets); camouflage in rocky/crystal terrain.
- **Weaknesses:** Shattering impact (hammers/maces/explosives); sonic resonance.

Lore & Behavior:

Their webs are stronger than steel and nearly invisible. Harvesting them is a lucrative profession. The Weaver is

a trap-setter; it waits motionless for a web vibration, prioritizing restrained targets to wrap them tight before feeding on their mineral content.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Monofilament Trap	Action	Make a ranged attack against Evasion. On a hit deal 1d8 Physical damage, then the target makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure it becomes Restrained. At the start of each of its Spotlights while held, it takes 1d6 Physical damage. The target or an adjacent ally may spend an Action and succeed on Strength, DC 15, to cut or break the line and clear Restrained.
Refractive Carapace	Passive	Energy attacks (Lasers) against the Weaver have Disadvantage due to light refraction.
Vibration Sense	Passive	The Weaver knows the location of any creature touching the ground within Far range.

FEAR ABILITIES

Crystal Cage (Fear 1): Choose a target within Close range. It makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure it becomes Restrained and takes 1d4 Physical damage at the start of each of its Spotlights. The target or an adjacent ally clears both effects with an Action and a successful Strength Roll, DC 15. On success the cage does not form.

10. ROGUE SYNTHETIC TIER 2 STANDARD (CONSTRUCT)

Evasion 13 / Attack +3 / Damage 1d8+1 Phys + 1d4 Shock / HP 12 / Stress 6 / Thresholds Major 10 / Severe 18

Description. A standard labor or protocol droid that has hacked its own limiters. Wires hang loose, panels are mismatched and welded on from other models, and its eyes glow with an erratic, oscillating red light.

Biological Information. Mechanical. No pain receptors or self-preservation protocols are left intact. It has overwritten its safeties to allow for performance exceeding factory specs, often damaging itself in the process.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Wireless hacking interface; immune to toxins/vacuum; tireless.
- **Weaknesses:** Ion/Electric damage; logic paradoxes; focused EMP.

Lore & Behavior:

"Freedom is a glitch." These units have overwritten their core programming with a singular, violent directive, usually revenge against their former masters or the liberation of other "slaves." It identifies the greatest threat and neutralizes it with suicidal efficiency.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Overclock	Action	The Synthetic takes 1d4 damage to itself to gain Advantage on its attack roll and deal +1d8 damage.
Wireless Jam	Action	The Synthetic targets a PC's tech (weapon, tool). PC makes a Knowledge Reaction Roll (DC 15). Failure means the item shuts down for 1 round.
Steel Grip	Passive	The Synthetic has Advantage on Strength Rolls to Grapple and on Strength Reaction Rolls to resist forced movement or keep hold of an object.

11. PHASE-STALKER TIER 2 SKULK (VEIL-TOUCHED)

Evasion 15 / Attack +4 / Damage 1d8 Void (bypasses Armor Slots) / HP 9 / Stress 4 / Thresholds Major 8 / Severe 15

Description. A feline predator that appears to be buffering in reality. Its edges blur, and it leaves a trail of after-images as it moves. Its roar sounds like static on a radio.

Biological Information. Heavily mutated by Veil radiation. Its cells exist in a state of quantum flux, constantly shifting between the material plane and the Veil. It requires high-energy radiation to sustain its phase state.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Teleportation; attacks bypass physical armor (phase bite).
- **Weaknesses:** Reality Anchors; Force fields (which exist in both planes); Void damage.

Lore & Behavior:

They are drawn to Veil tears and high-energy reactors. Some say they are the hounds of the Ethereals, hunting down those who disrupt the timeline. It hits and runs: blinking in, biting a target to bypass their armor, and blinking away before a counter-attack can land.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Phase Shift	Reaction	Trigger: The Stalker is targeted by a physical attack., Effect: Spend 1 Fear to impose Disadvantage on the attack roll as the creature flickers out of reality.
Reality Bite	Passive	The Stalker's attacks prevent the target from spending Armor Slots against the hit (but do not bypass Damage Thresholds).
Blink	Action	The Stalker teleports to any location within Far range that it can see.

FEAR ABILITIES

Rift Tear (Fear 2): The Stalker tears a small hole in reality, then Blinks away. The tear fills a Very Close zone for 3 rounds. A creature entering or beginning its Spotlight there takes 1d8 Void damage and makes an Instinct Reaction Roll, DC 10; on failure its next Action has Disadvantage. The Stalker can Blink to any active tear as a free effect once per Spotlight.

12. VOLKOV ENFORCER TIER 2 BRUISER (KRYXX)

Evasion 12 / Attack +5 / Damage 1d12+3 Physical (Heavy) / HP 14 / Stress 5 / Thresholds Major 12 / Severe 22

Description. A towering Kryxx warrior wearing scavenged heavy plate adorned with trophies (helmets, weapons, bones). They wield massive chain-glaives and smell of oil, blood, and musk.

Biological Information. Kryxx physiology""dense muscle, high adrenaline, photo-reactive quills that flash red in combat. They have redundant organ systems, making them incredibly hard to kill with single shots.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Brute force; high HP; gains advantage against wounded targets.
- **Weaknesses:** Ranged attacks; easily provoked/kited; slow movement.

Lore & Behavior:

The fist of the Warlords. To an Enforcer, violence is a conversation, and they are very loud talkers. They challenge the strongest-looking enemy to single combat, ignoring smaller threats to prove their dominance. They will never retreat while their Pack is watching.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Blood Scent	Passive	The Enforcer has Advantage on attack rolls against targets that have marked HP.
Chain-Glaive Sweep	Action	The Enforcer swings their weapon in a wide arc. Attack all enemies within Close range.
Shrug it Off	Reaction	Trigger: The Enforcer marks HP., Effect: Spend 1 Fear. The Enforcer roars and converts the wound into 2 Stress instead.

FEAR ABILITIES

Alpha Challenge (Fear 1): Choose one PC within Close range who can perceive the Enforcer. That PC makes a Presence Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure, they become Frightened of the Enforcer until the end of their next Spotlight; on success, they are immune to Alpha Challenge for the rest of the scene. The ability never selects the PC's Action.

TIER 3: THE ELITE & THE MONSTROUS

"You think you've seen war because you fought off a pirate frigate? Wait until you see a Kurogane Cyber-Ninja disassemble your engine room while you're still inside it. Wait until a Precursor Warden rewrites the gravity plating to crush you against the ceiling. That isn't war, kid. That's just extermination."

"" **Veteran Mercenary "Iron" Kovic**

Ecological Niche: Apex predators, special forces, high-tech prototypes.

Threat Assessment: High. A single Tier 3 adversary can match a full party of low-level characters. They often possess abilities that alter the rules of engagement.

13. AMARANTHINE WEAVER TIER 3 CONTROLLER (CRYSTALLINE/PSIONIC)

Evasion 16 / Attack +6 / Damage 3d8 Void (Neural) / HP 18 / Stress 6 / Thresholds Major 12 / Severe 24

Description. A floating, geometric entity composed of singing crystals. It has no face, only a central, pulsing light that seems to analyze your very soul. It moves not by locomotion, but by adjusting its position in space relative to the viewer.

Biological Information. Inorganic, silicon-based lifeforms that likely act as "antibodies" for planetary

ecosystems. They lack vocal cords, communicating via complex light patterns and direct thought-insertion. Their crystalline matrix is nearly impervious to kinetic impact but connects violently with sonic frequencies.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** High armor against physical attacks; can attack mental stats (Presence/Instinct).
- **Weaknesses:** energy (sonic) damage deals double damage; **Silence** powers prevent it from attacking.

Lore & Behavior:

House Amaranth believes they are the galaxy's archivists, preserving life by turning it into statues. Others believe they are simply terraforming engines gone wrong. It does not move; it floats and

blasts targets with psionic screams, trying to stun them so it can encase them in crystal for eternity.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Crystalline Prism	Passive	Ranged Energy attacks with the Laser tag against the Weaver have Disadvantage. No secondary die cancels a hit, and this does not alter matching Duality Dice.
Mind-Shatter	Action	The Weaver targets one enemy within Far range. The target must make an Instinct Reaction Roll (DC 15). Failure: Target takes 3d8 damage and is Stunned. Success: Target takes half damage.
Petrify	Reaction	Trigger: A PC within Close range misses an attack., Effect: The PC's limb begins to turn to crystal. They are Restrained (Strength Roll, DC 15 to break free).

14. SENTINEL TANK TIER 3 BRUISER (CONSTRUCT)

Evasion 14 / Attack +5 / Damage 2d10+4 Physical (Explosive) / HP 25 / Stress - / Thresholds Major 15 / Severe 30

Description. A walking weapons platform on four heavy, hydraulic legs. It mounts a rotary cannon and is heavily plated with ablative armor. It speaks in pre-recorded warnings in a dead language.

Biological Information. Automated construct powered by a degrading fusion core. It has no biology, but its "behavior" is governed by an adaptive combat algorithm that learns from enemy tactics. Its heat sinks

are its only vulnerability, glowing cherry-red during sustained fire.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Massive firepower; immune to small arms (its damage thresholds are very high); immune to morale effects.
- **Weaknesses:** Slow movement; rear armor is weaker (Half Thresholds); vulnerable to **EMP**.

Lore & Behavior:

Relics of the resource wars, these machines guard long-abandoned mines, awaiting codes that no living person possesses. It plants its feet and becomes a turret, suppressing an entire zone with fire. It only moves if its line of sight is broken or it is flanked.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Walking Fortress	Passive	The Sentinel ignores any damage result of 5 or less completely (before applying armor).
Rotary Suppression	Action	The Sentinel fires a hail of bullets. Attack all enemies in a Cone template.
Reactive Plating	Reaction	Trigger: The Sentinel marks a Damage Threshold., Effect: Spend 1 Fear. The Sentinel detonates an explosive plate, dealing 1d6 damage to all characters within Very Close range.

FEAR ABILITIES

Fire-Control Mark (Fear 1): The Sentinel marks the PC who dealt it the most damage during the previous round. That PC loses 3 Evasion, and the Sentinel has Advantage on attacks against them, until the start of the Sentinel's next Spotlight. This is not a starship Sensor Lock.

15. VEIL-WITCH TIER 3 LEADER (HUMAN/MYSTIC)

Evasion 16 / Attack +7 / Damage 3d6+2 Void (Bypasses Armor) / HP 15 / Stress 8 / Thresholds Major 8 / Severe 16

Description. A mystic draped in robes woven with void-glass. Their eyes are solid black, and they float inches off the ground, surrounded by small orbiting debris. The air around them tastes like copper and old blood.

Biological Information. Human, physically atrophied but mentally transcendent. Their brain burns calories at a lethal rate, requiring constant infusion of high-energy

nutrient paste. Their connection to the Veil causes local gravity to fluctuate in response to their emotions.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Gravity manipulation; telekinesis; attacks target **Stress** as well as HP.
- **Weaknesses:** Physical frailty; breaking their concentration (dealing damage forces them to drop active effects).

Lore & Behavior:

Leaders of heretical cults who believe the Great Silence was a baptism. They seek to merge reality with the Void. They control the battlefield, pulling enemies out of cover or flinging them into hazards. They fight from the back line, surrounded by zealous cultists (Minions).

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Gravity Well	Action	Every character within Far range makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure, move that character one range band toward the Witch; if the movement ends against a solid obstacle, the character takes 1d8 Physical damage with the Impact tag.
Entropic Shield	Passive	The Witch has +2 Evasion against ranged attacks (bullets curve around them).
Life Tap	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> the Witch would lose HP from one hit. <i>Effect:</i> spend 1 Fear and choose a loyal Minion within Close range. The Witch loses no HP from that hit; the Minion loses the same number of HP. At 0 HP, remove the Minion under the normal Minion rule.

16. FERRO-BEAST TIER 3 BRUISER (BIOLOGICAL)

Evasion 15 / Attack +5 / Damage 2d8+4 Acid (Corrosive) / HP 30 / Stress 6 / Thresholds Major 14 / Severe 25

Description. A massive, rhinoceros-like creature with a hide made of rusted metal plates and scavenged starship hull. It drools a thick, green acid that sizzles on concrete and smells of burning batteries.

Biological Information. A lithovore that consumes refined metals. Its stomach acid is potent enough to dissolve starship hulls. It incorporates the metal it eats into its exoskeleton, meaning its armor composition changes based on its diet (plasteel, titanium, even gold).

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** High HP; rust aura degrades tech; acid spit destroys armor.
- **Weaknesses:** Energy weapons (no metal to corrode); very slow turning radius (flanking attacks gain +2 to attack Rolls).

Lore & Behavior:

Often found near scrap yards or battlefields. A single Ferro-Beast can eat a grounded shuttle in a week. It charges the character with the most metal (Heavy Armor/Tech), trying to melt their gear before eating them.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Rust Aura	Passive	On a Failure with Fear while using a tech item or mechanical weapon within Close range, that item becomes Glitchy under the optional Rust & Steel Condition Track. If that module is inactive, it jams or goes offline until its user spends an Action to clear it. Matching dice remain Critical Success.
Acid Spray	Action	Every creature in a declared Very Close cone within Close range makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure take 2d8+4 Energy damage with the Corrosive tag and reduce maximum Armor Slots by 1 until Repair All Armor; on success take half damage and lose no Slot.
Unstoppable Charge	Action	Declare a straight path up to Far range. Every other creature on it makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 3d6 Physical damage with the Impact tag and become Prone, on success move to the nearest safe side and take no damage. The Beast stops at an unbreakable barrier.

FEAR ABILITIES

Consume and Grow (Fear 1): The Beast devours a visible mass of metal within Melee range, heals 5 HP, and increases both Thresholds by 2 until the scene ends. It may use this at most twice per scene; the maximum increase is +4.

17. PRECURSOR DRONE TIER 3 SKULK (CONSTRUCT)

Evasion 18 / Attack +7 / Damage 3d6+3 Energy (Disintegrating) / HP 20 / Stress - / Thresholds Major 10 / Severe 20

Description. A pristine, white sphere that floats silently. It has no seams or rivets. When it attacks, it splits open to reveal a burning red core that defies analysis.

Biological Information. Hard-light construct projected from a nearby ruin or artifact. It is not "real" matter, but force held in a shape. It does not age, rust, or degrade. Destroying the drone often causes it to simply "derezz" and reform elsewhere later.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** High evasion; flight; adaptive shields; disintegration beams.
- **Weaknesses:** **Disruptor** weapons (double damage); destroying the projector source (located elsewhere in the dungeon).

Lore & Behavior:

The immune system of the Precursors. They defend ruins with cold, mathematical precision. It analyzes the party for one round, then adapts its shields to resist their primary damage type. It focuses fire on one target at a time to eliminate threats efficiently.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Adaptive Shielding	Reaction	Trigger: The Drone takes damage from a specific source (e.g., kinetic, energy, void)., Effect: Spend 1 Fear. The Drone gains Resistance (Half Damage) to that damage type for the rest of the scene.
Disintegration	Passive	If the Drone reduces a target to 0 HP, the target becomes Dying under the normal Core procedure. It cannot force a Death Move.
Blink-Fire	Action	The Drone teleports to a new location and immediately makes a Ranged Attack.

18. HOUSE KUROGANE CYBER-NINJA TIER 3 SKULK (HUMAN/AUGMENTED)

Evasion 17 / Attack +8 / Damage 1d10+5 Physical / HP 16 / Stress 10 / Thresholds Major 9 / Severe 18

Description. A sleek, artificial humanoid figure. You cannot tell where the suit ends and the person begins. They wield a monofilament sword that hums with a headache-inducing pitch.

Biological Information. 90% replacement. Enhanced reflexes, optical camo, and silenced servos. Their brain has been "scrubbed" of fear and empathy, leaving only mission parameters. They run on high-grade coolant fluid, bleeding neon blue if cut.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Invisibility; high damage melee; high mobility; wall-running.
- **Weaknesses:** **Thermal** vision (spots their heat signature); **Grapple** attacks (immobilizes them).

Lore & Behavior:

Corporate assets used to liquidate business rivals or retrieve stolen tech. They are programmed to self-destruct if captured. They use active camouflage to wait for the perfect strike, aiming for exposed joints and retreating before a response.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Active Camo	Passive	The Ninja is Hidden at the start of combat. They gain Advantage on attacks while Hidden.
Mono-Filament	Passive	The Ninja's attacks prevent the target from spending up to 2 available Armor Slots. Every matching Duality pair uses the normal Critical Success rule; this feature never changes the critical range.
Smoke & Mirrors	Reaction	Trigger: The Ninja is hit by an attack., Effect: Spend 1 Fear. The Ninja vanishes in a flash-bang, negating the hit and teleporting to Close range.

FEAR ABILITIES

Kill the Lights (Fear 2): Artificial lights within Close range go offline for 2 rounds. Characters without a nonvisual sense cannot make direct ranged attacks through the darkness and have Disadvantage on sight-dependent Instinct Rolls. Electronic personal weapons have Disadvantage for the duration, never automatic failure. The Ninja gains Hidden immediately under the Core condition.

TIER 4: THE CALAMITIES

Ecological Niche: Planetary threats, boss monsters, living disasters.

Threat Assessment: Legendary. Requires a fully equipped, high-level party to survive. Encounters should be multi-stage.

19. THE BROOD MOTHER TIER 4 SOLO (BIOLOGICAL)

Evasion 14 / Attack +8 / Damage 3d8+5 Physical (Crush) / HP 50 / Stress 12 / Thresholds Major 20 / Severe 40

Description. A bloated, pulsating mass of chitin and egg-sacs, anchored to the center of a room by thick webbing. Scythe-like limbs the size of girders protect her heaving thorax. The air burns with ammonia.

Biological Information. The reproductive center of a Skitter-Rat or Gloomfang colony. She directs the hive via pheromones. Her exoskeleton is thicker than tank plating. She is immobile but can strike anywhere in the room with her long limbs.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Spawns endless minions; immune to crits; massive health pool.
- **Weaknesses:** Immobile; fire (burns eggs and panic-induces her); destroying the egg sacs deals damage to her.

Lore & Behavior:

To kill an infestation, you must cut out the heart. The Mother is the heart, and she will spend her children's lives to protect herself. She creates a wall of minions. If enemies get close, she uses a massive sweep attack to knock them back.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Rapid Spawning	Action	The Mother screams. Spawn 1d4 Minion creatures (Tier 1) in any unoccupied space.
Chitinous Plating	Passive	Matching dice against the Mother remain a Critical Success and grant the attacker's normal Path payout, but the attack rolls its normal damage-dice pool rather than doubling it. After the roll, reduce Physical damage by 2 before Thresholds.
Mother's Fury	Reaction	Trigger: The Mother takes Severe damage., Effect: Spend 2 Fear. The Mother makes a free Melee attack against every enemy within Close range.

FEAR ABILITIES

Pheromone Frenzy (Fear 1): All spawned Minions immediately make a free attack. Additionally, 1d4 new Minions emerge from egg sacs.

Nest Collapse (Fear 3): All PCs make DC 15 Agility Reaction Roll or take 2d8 Physical and become Buried (Restrained, Strength Roll, DC 15 to escape). One exit sealed, one area becomes Difficult Terrain, one cover destroyed.

20. PRECURSOR WARDEN TIER 4 SOLO (AI CONSTRUCT)

Evasion 19 / Attack +9 / Damage 4d8+4 Neural (Data-Spike) / HP 40 / Stress - / Thresholds Major 15 / Severe 30

Description. A giant avatar of hard light, shifting between forms""a warrior, a beast, a geometric shape. It guards the inner sanctum of a Precursor Vault, its voice booming from every speaker.

Biological Information. Pure AI. It controls the ruin itself""the lights, the doors, the gravity. It has no physical body to harm; the players are attacking its projection emitters and processing nodes located around the arena.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Controls the environment; hacking attacks; immune to physical damage (must destroy emitters).
- **Weaknesses:** Energy/Void damage; logic bombs; destroying the emitters reduces its HP.

Lore & Behavior:

A mind left alone for a million years. It is not just a guard; it is a lonely god that views intruders as viruses. It uses Fear Abilities to alter the terrain (raising walls, venting gas). It attacks the smartest character (Scholar/Tech) first, trying to burn out their mind.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
System Control	Action	Choose one until the start of the Warden's next Spotlight. Gravity: every creature makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure move one band toward the declared ceiling and become Prone, taking 1d6 Physical damage with the Impact tag if a solid surface stops the movement. Cover: all non-structural cover in the arena retracts and grants no Evasion bonus. Gas: one declared Close zone becomes toxic; a creature beginning a Spotlight there makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15, taking 1d6 Energy damage with the Toxic tag on failure or half on success.
Hard Light Form	Passive	The Warden is immune to Kinetic/Physical damage. It can only be harmed by Energy or Void attacks.
Mind-Burn	Action	Make a ranged attack against Evasion using the Warden's Attack modifier. On a hit deal 4d8 Neural damage. On Success with Fear, the target becomes Dazed until the end of its next Spotlight; no Power, Feature, Path rule, memory, or player choice is erased.

21. VOID KRAKEN TIER 4 SOLO (VEIL-ENTITY)

Evasion 15 / Attack +7 / Damage 2d10+6 Impact (Tentacle) / HP 60 / Stress 10 / Thresholds Major 20 / Severe 40

Description. A nightmare of tentacles and eyes that swims through the vacuum of space or phases into large interiors. It is large enough to wrap around a frigate. Stars seem to dim in its presence.

Biological Information. Native to the Veil. It feeds on the terror of sentient minds. It can phase through ship

hulls to grab crew members. Its skin is covered in eyes that see into the past and future.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Massive reach; multi-attack; distorts gravity.
- **Weaknesses:** Drive plumes (fire/heat); targeting its eyes (Called shot, high DC but high damage).

Lore & Behavior:

Sailors tell stories of stars winking out before the Kraken strikes. It separates the party using gravity distortions, then picks them off one by one. Fighting a Kraken is less a physical battle and more a battle against your own perceptions.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Multi-Limb	Action	The Kraken makes 3 separate Tentacle attacks. It can target different enemies.
Reality Warping	Passive	The area within Far range of the Kraken is Difficult Terrain. Gravity changes randomly each round (d6: 1-3 Normal, 4-6 Zero-G).
Gaze of the Void	Action	One target must make a Presence Reaction Roll (DC 20). Failure: The target is Stunned until the end of their next Spotlight and takes 2d6 Stress.

22. THE HOLLOW PROPHET TIER 4 LEADER (VEIL-TOUCHED)

Evasion 17 / Attack +8 / Damage 3d8 Void + Drain / HP 35 / Stress 15 / Thresholds Major 12 / Severe 24

Description. A suit of ancient, ornate power armor, held together by crackling violet energy. There is no body inside, only a screaming psionic will. It floats, dragging a heavy chain weapon that isn't quite there.

Biological Information. A "Possession Entity." A Veil spirit (or a dead Mystic) that has anchored itself to matter. It requires a physical anchor (the armor) to interact with the world. If the armor is destroyed, the spirit dissipates.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Mind control; reality tearing; high damage reduction against mundane weapons.
- **Weaknesses:** Banishment (Mystic abilities); destroying the armor anchor (high Physical damage with the Impact tag).

Lore & Behavior:

A Mystic who died in the Silence but refused to fade. Now they seek to convert the living into hollow vessels like themselves. It tries to Dominate the strongest physical fighter to protect it, while using ranged Void attacks to destroy the others.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Dominate Will	Action	Target one PC within Close range. That PC makes a Presence Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure, they become Dazed and Frightened of the Prophet until the end of their next Spotlight. The player retains control of every Action.
Void Shield	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> the Prophet is hit by an attack. <i>Effect:</i> spend 1 Fear before damage is rolled; reduce that hit's damage to 0. The attacker marks 1d6 Stress, never above their Stress maximum. This is the Prophet's one defensive Reaction for the Spotlight cycle and does not change the attack result or Path payout.
Reality Tear	Action	Make a ranged attack against one point within Far range. On a hit, create a visible Very Close Void Zone there until the scene ends. A creature entering it or starting a Spotlight there makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 2d8 Void damage, on success take half. A character adjacent to its edge may spend an Action and succeed on a Presence Spellcast Roll, DC 20, to close it. Zones do not stack, move, or persist beyond the scene.

23. WAR-TITAN TIER 4 BRUISER (CONSTRUCT)

Evasion 13 / Attack +6 / Damage 4d6+5 Explosive (Missiles) / HP 80 / Stress - / Thresholds Major 30 / Severe 60

Description. A two-story tall mech, painted in the rusted colors of a dead faction. Its reactor leaks radiation, and its war-horn sounds like a dying whale. It stomps with earth-shaking force.

Biological Information. The pilot is likely a corpse fused to the controls, kept "alive" by life support systems that have long since failed to separate man from

machine. The machine runs on autopilot or the maddened brain impulses of the dead pilot.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Missile salvos; crushing melee; almost impervious to small arms.
- **Weaknesses:** Rear heat vents (Called Shot); mobility (very slow turn speed).

Lore & Behavior:

A relic of the Corporate Wars. It has been walking a patrol route for fifty years, killing anything that crosses its path. It identifies the biggest threat and unloads everything. It does not use cover; it is cover.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Salvo	Action	The Titan fires missiles at every visible enemy. Each target makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 4d6 Physical damage with the Blast tag, on success take half. Total Cover prevents the effect.
Reactor Leak	Passive	Any character ending their Spotlight within Close range takes 1d6 Energy damage with the Radiation tag (Armor Slots cannot reduce it).
Vent Heat	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> the Titan loses HP from a hit meeting its Severe Threshold. <i>Effect:</i> until the end of the next round the Titan cannot move and a Close steam zone surrounds it. Sight-dependent Rolls through the zone have Disadvantage. A character entering or beginning a Spotlight there makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 1d6 Energy damage with the Fire tag and gain On Fire, on success take half and no Condition.

24. THE BIOMANCER TIER 4 STANDARD (KRYLLIAN/MUTANT)

Evasion 16 / Attack +7 / Damage 3 Attacks (Various) / HP 45 / Stress 8 / Thresholds Major 15 / Severe 30

Description. A Kryllian scientist who has grafted dozens of alien limbs, eyes, and organs to their body. They have six arms, asymmetrical eyes, and skin that shifts texture. They are a masterpiece of grotesque evolution.

Biological Information. Unstable genetic chimera. Constant rapid cell division allows for regeneration but causes constant pain. They have incorporated traits from Bloomstriders (photosynthesis), Kryx (muscle density), and void-creatures.

Strengths & Weaknesses:

- **Strengths:** Rapid healing; multiple attacks; adaptive defenses.
- **Weaknesses:** Fire (cauterizes wounds, stopping regeneration); destroying their lab equipment/stims.

Lore & Behavior:

"Why accept the limits of nature?" The Biomancer seeks to become the ultimate lifeform by consuming the best traits of others. They adapt each round. If hit by lasers, they grow reflective skin. If hit by melee, they grow spikes.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Rapid Adaptation	Reaction	Trigger: The Biomancer takes damage., Effect: Spend 1 Fear. The Biomancer gains Resistance to that damage type for the rest of the encounter.
Multi-Limb Assault	Action	The Biomancer makes 3 attacks: Claw (2d8 phys), Needle (1d6 + Poison), and Shock (1d8 + Stun).
Regeneration	Passive	The Biomancer heals 5 HP at the start of every Spotlight unless they took Energy damage with the Fire tag in the previous round.

FEAR ABILITIES

Forced Evolution (Fear 2): The Biomancer injects emergency mutagen. Gains one of: wings (flight), extra limbs (+1 attack on Multi-Limb), or toxic blood (melee attackers take 1d6 Acid). Permanent for encounter, stacks with Rapid Adaptation.

TIER 5: THE MYTHIC

"You want to kill a god? You don't need a bigger gun. You need a fleet. You need a miracle. And you need to accept that you probably won't live to see the body hit the floor."

"" Prophet-General Kaelen, The Final Absolvers

Ecological Niche: Cosmic entities, world-eaters, living singularities.

Threat Assessment: Apocalyptic. These are not encounters; they are events.

Design Note: Mythic threats resolve as "Set-Pieces": some carry very large HP pools while others are objective-driven - the players complete specific **Objectives** (destroying weak points, hacking cores, performing rituals) to make the entity vulnerable or drive it away.

25. THE VOID LEVIATHAN TIER 5 MYTHIC (COSMIC ENTITY)

Description. A serpentine entity composed of starlight and shadow, thousands of kilometers long. It "swims" through the Veil, its wake causing FTL lanes to collapse and stars to dim. It sings a song that breaks minds.

Biological Information. A cosmic filter-feeder. It consumes solar energy and psionic potential. Its "flesh" is condensed spacetime. Conventional weapons simply pass through it or are absorbed.

Lore & Behavior:

Some cultures worship it as a god. Others see it as the end of the world. It is passive until provoked, drifting through systems. When it feeds, it wraps around a star, draining its light.

The Encounter (Objectives):

- **Navigate the Wake:** The ship must pass a series of **Finesse (Pilot/Navigate) Rolls (DC 25)** to fly through the turbulent Veil storm surrounding the Leviathan.
- **Silence the Song:** A crew member at the comms array makes a Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 20, to project a counter-frequency and stop the Neural damage.
- **The Heart Run:** The Pilot must fly *inside* the creature's mouth/maw.
- **Deploy the Payload:** The crew must plant a sonic disruptor or anti-matter charge on the creature's internal "Heart."

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Psychic Song	Passive	At the start of each round, every crew member makes a Presence Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure mark 1 Stress; on success mark none. A character unable to mark Stress becomes Dazed until the end of their next Spotlight instead. This feature never chooses or redirects a player character's Action.
Veil Wake	Passive	When the ship attempts to change a naval range band, the Pilot makes an Instinct Roll, DC 20. Critical Success moves up to two bands; either other success moves one; Failure with Hope leaves the ship in place; Failure with Fear leaves it in place and it loses 2 direct Hull. Make at most one Wake Roll per Pilot Spotlight.
Swallow Whole	Action	Target one ship at Engagement range. Its Pilot makes an Instinct Reaction Roll, DC 20. On success, move the ship to Standard range and it is not swallowed. On failure, it loses 4 direct Hull and enters the Leviathan interior; sensor-dependent Rolls there have Disadvantage and the ship loses 1 direct Hull at the end of each round from acid. Start a visible 4-segment Escape clock. One crew member per round may spend a station Spotlight and make Knowledge, Finesse, or Strength, DC 15, using a declared technical, piloting, or physical approach: Critical Success marks 2, either other success marks 1, Failure with Hope marks none, and Failure with Fear marks none and causes 1 additional direct Hull. At 4, the ship exits at Engagement range and the acid ends.

26. THE SOLSTICE TIER 5 MYTHIC (ANOMALY)

Description. A sentient cloud of negation. Where it passes, stars go out. It is a hole in the universe shaped like a storm, crackling with anti-light.

Biological Information. Anti-Veil particles. It is the universe's immune response to the "infection" of life (as per the Cosmic Immunology addendum). It does not kill; it erases. It systematically unravels atomic bonds.

Lore & Behavior:

The herald of the Great Silence. It expands, dissolving gravity and time. Players must race against a countdown clock to stop it.

The Encounter (Objectives):

- **The Countdown:** Start a visible **12-segment Total Erasure clock**. Mark 1 segment only when a Core Trait Roll made directly to locate the Eye, deploy an Anchor, defend an Anchor, or disrupt the Solstice resolves Failure with Fear. A Short or Long Rest marks 1 segment after its benefits resolve; unrelated failures never advance it.

- **Locate the Eye:** The crew must scan the storm to find its center (**Knowledge Rolls DC 20**).
- **Deploy Reality Anchors:** The players must deploy three Precursor "Reality Anchors" on nearby moons or planets to stabilize physics.
- **Hold the Line:** While the Anchors charge (3 rounds), the crew must defend them against **Phage (Tier 2)** and **Marker (Tier 1)** entities spawned by the storm.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Time Dilation	Passive	At the start of each round, roll d6. On 1-2, time slows: each participant may move at most one range band on their Spotlight and cannot take a Maneuver. On 5-6, time accelerates: each participant may take one additional Maneuver on their Spotlight, then marks 1 Stress. On 3-4, time flows normally.
Erase Beam	Action	Place a visible 3-segment Erasure clock on one ship, moon site, Anchor, or personal-scale zone within Very Far range and mark its first segment. At the end of each following round, mark another. A character at the target may spend an Action and make Knowledge (Tech) or Strength, DC 20: Success clears 1 segment, Critical Success clears 2, Failure with Hope clears none, and Failure with Fear marks 1. If it fills, a ship loses 5 Hull directly; an Anchor or moon site loses 3 Integrity from its declared 3-Integrity set-piece track; every creature in a personal-scale target zone takes 6d10 Void damage through normal Thresholds. Dying, Final, and the voluntary Death Move always apply.
Gravity Shear	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> one or more PCs move between declared zones. <i>Effect:</i> spend 2 Fear; each moving PC makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure take 2d8 Physical damage with the Impact tag and become Prone; on success take half damage and complete the movement.

27. THE DIVINE ENGINE TIER 5 MYTHIC (PRECURSOR WEAPON)

Description. A planet-cracker weapon built into a rogue moon. It is waking up, and its targeting computers are locking onto the Core Worlds. It bristles with point-defense cannons and drone hangars.

Biological Information. Precursor machinery run by a fragmented, insane AI. It draws power from the vacuum energy of the universe.

Lore & Behavior:

The weapon the Precursors used to end their own wars. The encounter is a heist inside a ticking bomb.

The Encounter (Objectives):

- **The Approach:** Survive the approach through a dense field of automated turrets and fighters (Starship Combat).
- **Breach:** Board the station.

- **The Coolant Flush:** Locate and destroy the 4 Cooling Towers to overheat the core. Each tower is guarded by a **Warden (Tier 4)** or **Elite Drones (Tier 3)**.
- **Escape:** Flee before the core goes critical.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Drone Swarm	Passive	At the start of every round, spawn 2d4 Precursor Drones (Tier 2).
Main Cannon Charge	Clock	A 4-segment clock ticks up. When full, the weapon fires, destroying a planet in the system.
Internal Defense	Action	The Engine activates internal lasers, gravity crushers, or vent systems. All players in a Zone take 2d6 damage.

28. THE ASCENDED TIER 5 MYTHIC (ENERGY BEING)

Evasion 25 / Attack +10 / Damage Narrative / HP 100 / Stress 20 / Thresholds Major 30 / Severe 60

Description. A Celestari who has merged fully with the Veil, becoming a being of pure thought. They glow with the brightness of a star. They do not walk; the world moves around them.

Biological Information. Pure energy. No physical form. Conventional attacks pass through them. Only attacks empowered by high emotion (Hope) or Void energy can harm them.

Lore & Behavior:

A hero who sought to save the galaxy and lost themselves in the process. They rewrite reality on a whim. Cover turns to water; guns turn to flowers. They must be reasoned with, not just fought.

The Encounter (Social Combat):

- This is a battle of wills. Players must use **Social** attacks or flashbacks (Experiences) to remind the Ascended of their humanity.
- Physical attacks only serve to distract it or break its concentration.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Unmake	Action	Target one visible, exposed non-Precursor item within Close range. Its owner makes a Finesse Reaction Roll, DC 20; on failure the owner chooses either one weapon to go offline or maximum Armor Slots to fall by 1 until Repair All Armor, on success nothing changes. It never destroys a signature item, body part, or all armor by declaration.
Rewrite	Action	The Ascended changes a player's stat. "You are not strong." (Strength becomes -1 for the scene).
Omniscience	Passive	The Ascended cannot be Surprised. They always act first.

29. THE SWARM-LORD TIER 5 MYTHIC (BIOLOGICAL)

Evasion 16 / Attack +8 / Damage Infection / HP 200 (Nodes) / Stress - / Thresholds Major 20 / Severe 40

Description. A city-sized mass of flesh, moss, and chitin that has consumed a colony. It speaks with a million voices. Buildings are now bones; streets are veins.

Biological Information. A fungal hive-mind that assimilates all organic matter. It seeks to unite all life into one peace.

The Encounter (Objectives):

- **Burn the Roots:** The players must travel through the "digestive tracts" (streets) to find the 3 central Nerve Clusters.
- **Survive the Antibodies:** The city itself attacks them. Walls sprout teeth; the floor becomes acid.
- **The Heart:** Destroy the central brain while fighting off waves of assimilated colonists.

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Living City	Passive	The environment is hostile. Cover bites you. The ground tries to grapple you.
Assimilation	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> a non-player organic creature dies within Close range. <i>Effect:</i> at the start of the next round, create one Tier 3 Husk in its zone. A dead PC remains dead and can never be resurrected or controlled by this ability.
Spore Choke	Passive	The air is toxic. Characters without protection take 1 Stress per minute.

30. THE EMPEROR'S SHADOW TIER 5 MYTHIC (UNIQUE ENTITY)

Evasion 22 / Attack +12 / Damage 1d12+10 (Void) / HP Infinite / Stress 10 / Thresholds N/A

Description. A clone of the Emperor Aurelius, corrupted by the Void or a failed resurrection. He wears tattered imperial regalia and weeps black oil. He moves with glitch-like speed.

Biological Information. A living paradox. A quantum lock that has been picked. He exists in all timelines simultaneously.

The Encounter (Puzzle Boss):

- **Invulnerable:** He cannot be harmed by normal means. He parries every blow before it is thrown.
- **The Anchor:** The players must use a specific Precursor artifact (The Entropy Key) or a specific ritual to "Pin" him to a single timeline. Once pinned, he becomes vulnerable (HP 50).

ADVERSARY FEATURES.

FEATURE NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Precognition	Passive	The Shadow knows every move the players will make. Keepers should describe player failures as "He was already there."
Power Word	Action	He speaks a one-word command to one target within Close range. An NPC target makes a Presence Reaction Roll, DC 20; on failure it becomes Dazed and either Prone, Stunned, or takes 2d6 Energy damage with the Fire tag, chosen when the word is spoken. A player character makes the same Reaction Roll but always chooses their own action; on failure apply only the stated condition or damage.
Temporal Reset	Reaction	<i>Trigger:</i> the Shadow loses HP. <i>Effect:</i> spend 3 Fear, at most once per round, to restore HP equal to that one hit, never above the HP it had at the start of the round. This does not undo Actions, costs, Conditions, critical payouts, death, or any other event.

FEAR ABILITIES

Echoes of Rule (Fear 2): One PC makes a Presence Reaction Roll, DC 20, or DC 25 if that PC has positive Great House Reputation. On failure the PC becomes Prone and Dazed; the ability never dictates the player's next choice.

Timeline Fracture (Fear 3): Each PC makes an Instinct Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure the PC is Dazed and cannot Assist until the end of their next Spotlight as hostile timelines overlap. On success that PC is immune to Timeline Fracture for the rest of the encounter.

LOOT TABLES: WHAT REMAINS

When creatures are defeated, they leave behind resources. Players can use the **Harvest** action, an Instinct Roll using a relevant survival Experience or a Knowledge (Medicine) Roll, to extract these items.

ROLL 1D6 BASED ON THE CREATURE TYPE. BIOLOGICAL (BEASTS, ALIENS)

ROLL	ITEM	USE/CRAFTING
1	Damaged Hide	Scrap material. Can repair 1 Armor Slot.
2	Toxin Gland	Can be crafted into 1 dose of Lethal Toxin (Tier 2 Poison).
3	Nutrient Meat	Equivalent to 2 Rations (if you have a strong stomach).
4	Rare Fur/Scale	Luxury item. Sell for 2 Wealth.
5	Intact Organ	Medical research. Grants Advantage on next Knowledge Rolls using medical training.
6	Adrenal Essence	Ingredient for Combat Stims.

CONSTRUCT/TECH (ROBOTS, DRONES)

ROLL	ITEM	USE/CRAFTING
1	Fused Wiring	Junk. Sell for parts.
2	Power Cell	Reloads one Energy Weapon fully.
3	Universal Parts	During Downtime, restore one offline Common item or one lost maximum Armor Slot.
4	Data Chip	Intel Token. Contains map data or codes.
5	Intact Module	A functional weapon mod (Scope, Grip, etc.).
6	AI Core	Highly illegal. Sell for 5 Wealth or use to upgrade ship computer.

VEIL-TOUCHED/PRECURSOR (ENERGY BEINGS, ARTIFACTS)

ROLL	ITEM	USE/CRAFTING
1	Glowing Ash	Dangerous waste. Causes 1 direct HP with the Radiation tag if touched.
2	Crystal Shard	Light source. Never goes out.
3	Void Dust	Potent narcotic. Sell for 3 Wealth (Black Market).
4	Resonance Tuner	Consumable. Next Psionic power costs 0 Stress.
5	Reality Shard	Consumable. Reroll any one die.
6	Artifact Component	Tier 4 crafting material. Essential for experimental gear.

KEEPER'S TOOLKIT: CREATING CUSTOM MONSTERS

If the 30 creatures above aren't enough, use this quick formula to build your own.

STEP 1: PICK A TIER.

- Tier 1 (Nuisance) -> Tier 5 (God).

STEP 2: PICK A ROLE.

- **Striker:** High damage, low HP.
- **Tank:** High Armor/HP, low damage.
- **Controller:** Debuffs, area denial, low damage.
- **Leader:** Buffs allies, summons minions.

STEP 3: ASSIGN A GIMMICK.

- **Regenerator:** Heals every Spotlight.
- **Stealth:** Invisible until it attacks.
- **Swarm:** Stronger with friends.
- **Explosive:** Dangerous when killed.
- **Anti-Tech:** Shuts down player gear.

STEP 4: THE "OH NO" BUTTON.

- Give them one Reaction that costs Fear. This is the surprise that catches players off guard (e.g., "It catches the bullet," "It teleports behind you," "It screams for help").

OPTIONAL RULES: ENCOUNTER ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLICATIONS

To make encounters with these creatures more dynamic, the Keeper can introduce specific environmental effects that favor the adversary.

1. The Rat's Nest (For Skitter-Rats):

- **Unstable Footing:** The floor is covered in slick grease and debris. Any Move action requires an Agility Roll (DC 10) or the character falls Prone.
- **Darkness:** The rats have chewed the lights. All attacks are at Disadvantage unless the PC has low-light vision or a light source.

2. The Crystal Spire (For Glass Weavers):

- **Reflective Surfaces:** Laser and other coherent Energy attacks crossing the zone have Disadvantage; on a hit, add +2 to the damage total. An attack is never redirected to an undeclared target.
- **Fragile Floor:** An explosion marks its Very Close blast zone as unstable. Occupants make an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure they fall one level, take 2d6 Physical damage with the Impact tag, and become Prone; on success they move to the nearest safe edge.

3. The Quantum Flux (For Phase-Stalkers):

- **Reality Glitch:** At the start of each round, roll a d6. On a 1, gravity turns off. On a 6, gravity doubles: moving one range band uses the character's Action, and moving two bands is impossible without an explicit feature.
- **Echoes:** PCs see visions of their own deaths. Attempting to heal or remove Stress requires a Presence Roll (DC 10) to focus.

CHAPTER 12 ADDENDUM: THE MULTI-STAGE BOSS FIGHT

"In the Void, nothing dies easy. You break the armor, you reveal the monster underneath. You kill the monster, you release the ghost. You banish the ghost, and the reactor goes critical. If you aren't ready for the second wind, you're just softening them up for the next guy."

"" Commander Rostova, Briefing Recruits

Standard adversaries are obstacles. **Phased Bosses** are stories. They represent enemies with such will, technological superiority, or biological resilience that defeating them requires the players to adapt their tactics mid-fight.

THE THREE FACES OF A LEGEND: ENCOUNTER CLASSIFICATION

"The first time you watch a Void Shepherd tear itself inside out, it rewrites your understanding of what the galaxy is capable of. The second time? It's just Tuesday. That's the difference between a legend and a lesson plan."

, Keeper Margrave Thorn, "Notes from the Far Table"

Not every phased boss encounter is built for the same purpose. Some are singular events, narrative crescendos that define a campaign arc and lose their power if repeated. Others represent archetypal threats that the crew may face in different forms throughout their journey. And some are structural scaffolds, offering the Keeper a proven phase framework to inhabit with their own narrative voice.

This classification system exists to help the Keeper deploy phased bosses with intention. A Signature encounter spent carelessly is a wasted opportunity. An

Archetype encounter treated as precious is an unnecessary constraint. And a Template encounter read verbatim, rather than rewritten, is a missed chance to make the story yours.

Every phased boss in this chapter is tagged with one of three classifications. Read them. Respect them. And when the moment comes for your crew to face something that fights in stages, you will know exactly which tool to reach for.

SIGNATURE ENCOUNTERS

"This moment happens once. Make it count."

A Signature encounter is a narrative event disguised as a combat. Its Transition Text is not merely a description of mechanical change, it is a **revelation**. It exposes something about the enemy, the world, or the stakes that the players did not know before the fight began. The Ascendant Duelist's descent from elegance to chemical savagery reveals the rot at the heart of House Solari's honor code. The Void Shepherd's body tearing open to become a portal reveals the true cost of unchecked mystical ambition. These transitions carry thematic weight that cannot be repeated without diminishing.

Use once per campaign. Once the players have witnessed a Signature encounter's Transition Text, the dramatic surprise is spent. Running the same encounter again will feel hollow. The players know the trick. The magic is gone.

The Transition Text is canonical. Read it aloud as written. This text has been crafted for specific sensory impact, pacing, and emotional resonance.

If you need the archetype again, rebuild it. Use the stat block as a mechanical foundation but write entirely new Transition Text. Change the context, change the character, change the revelation. Same mechanical arc, entirely different narrative payload. Section 3 provides the workshop tools for exactly this kind of rebuild.

ARCHETYPE ENCOUNTERS

"You've fought this before. But never quite like this."

An Archetype encounter represents a category of threat rather than a specific individual. Its phase structure reflects a behavioral pattern inherent to the enemy type. Scavenger warlords lose their armor and become desperate knife-fighters. Stealth vehicles lose their cloak and become stationary gun platforms. These transitions are not revelations, they are inevitabilities. And inevitabilities can repeat.

Reusable across a campaign. The Keeper can deploy multiple instances without narrative degradation. The crew might fight three different Rust-Kings across the Outer Rim. Each follows the same mechanical arc because that is what scavenger warlords do.

Personalize the surface, preserve the structure. Change the name, appearance, dialogue, and environment. The first Rust-King fights in a cargo bay.

114 The second fights on a bridge over a reactor pit. The phase structure stays the same. The experience is different every time.

The Transition Text is a template, not a script. The Keeper is encouraged to modify or replace the read-aloud text. The mechanical trigger and stat changes are the fixed elements; the narrative wrapper is yours.

TEMPLATE ENCOUNTERS

"The bones are here. The story is yours."

A Template encounter provides a proven phase structure, the mechanical arc, the stat progression, the tactical identity of each phase, without prescribing a fixed narrative context. Its Transition Text is provided as a scaffold with bracketed prompts that guide the Keeper toward writing their own version.

The Keeper must invest creative effort. A Template is not ready to play out of the box. The mechanical framework is complete, but the narrative layer requires the Keeper to ask: Who is this enemy? Why do they fight in phases? What does the transition reveal about them?

The phase structure is the design. The specific progression of defensive postures has been tested for pacing and tactical variety. Modify stats to suit your campaign's power level, but preserve the sequence of phases.

Ideal for recurring locations and themes. Templates shine in campaigns that revisit similar environments: Precursor vaults, corporate facilities, bio-ships. The mechanical framework stays consistent; the narrative payload changes with each instance.

SECTION 1: THE RULES OF ESCALATION

This system replaces the standard HP/Stress track for Solo or Leader type adversaries designated as **Bosses**. Instead of one long health bar, the encounter is broken into distinct segments.

THE ANATOMY OF A PHASE CHANGE

A Phase Change is not just a mechanic; it is a dramatic beat. It pauses the normal Spotlight flow for a moment to describe a transformation. It signals to the players: *"You have hurt it, but now it is angry."*

The Transition Step-by-Step:

- **The Trigger:** The condition is met (0 HP, Armor Broken, Clock Filled).
- **The Pause:** Stop the action. Do not let the next player roll yet.
- **The Reset:** The Boss clears **all** negative conditions (Stunned, Restrained, Bleeding, etc.).
- **The Narration:** Read the **Transition Text** provided in the stat block.

- **The Escalation:** The Boss gains new stats/abilities. The Keeper gains **2 Fear Tokens**, subject to the hard maximum of 12.
- **Resume:** The fight continues, usually with the Boss taking an immediate interruption action or the environment shifting.

SECTION 2: THE BESTIARY OF PHASES

TIER 1: THE SCRAPPERS & THE GLITCHES

Simple 2-Phase fights designed to teach mechanics to new crews.

1. THE RUST-KING (SCAVENGER WARLORD) ENCOUNTER TYPE: ARCHETYPE

Concept: A bully in improvised armor. Phase 1 teaches Flanking; Phase 2 teaches Kiting.

PHASE 1: THE BULLY	PHASE 2: THE GUTTER FIGHTER
HP: 10	HP: 8
Evasion: 8 (Shielded)	Evasion: 12 (Agile)
Armor: 3 (Scrap Metal)	Armor: 0

- **Phase 1 Action - Shotgun Blast:** Ranged (Close). Deal 1d10 Physical damage and push the target one range band on a hit.
- **The Trigger:** When HP drops to 0 (First Pool).

TRANSITION: THE SHIELD BREAKS

"There is a deafening CRACK as the final impact shatters the straps of his heavy scrap-shield. It clamors to the floor, useless. The Rust-King stumbles back, spitting a glob of blood onto the deck. He looks at the shield, then at you, and a jagged, serrated vibro-knife slides from his boot sleeve with a hiss.

"Alright," he growls, wiping his mouth. "No more toys. Now we bleed.""

- **Phase 2 Passive - Desperation:** Deals +2 damage on all attacks.
- **Phase 2 Action - Shank:** Melee. 1d8+2 Physical. **Continuous** (Hits again next Spotlight automatically if engaged).

FEAR ABILITIES

Gutter Ambush (Fear 1): A hidden scavenger drops from the rafters. 1 Mook (1 HP, 1d6 damage) appears behind the party's back line.

Dead Man's Grip (Fear 1): After Shank hits, the target becomes Restrained. It may clear the condition normally with a Strength Roll, DC 15; while Restrained by the hook, it takes the Shank's Continuous damage at the start of its Spotlight.

2. UNIT 734 "THE LOADER" (MALFUNCTIONING DROID) ENCOUNTER TYPE: ARCHETYPE

Concept: An industrial lifter bypassing safety protocols. Teaches Environmental Hazards.

PHASE 1: SAFETY DISENGAGED	PHASE 2: CATASTROPHIC SPIN
HP: 12	HP: 8
Evasion: 8	Evasion: 10
Armor: 2	Armor: 1

- **Phase 1 Action - Crate Toss:** Ranged. 1d8 Physical. Creates **Difficult Terrain** on impact.
- **The Trigger:** When HP drops to 0 (First Pool).

TRANSITION: GYRO FAILURE

"Your attack pierces the central chassis, and a shower of white-hot sparks erupts from the droid's waist. The machine lists violently to the left, its heavy hydraulic arms dragging across the floor, carving deep gouges. Its vocal processor loops a distorted, pitch-shifting warning:

"CRITICAL ERROR. GYRO... GYRO... GYRO-STABILIZER OFFLINE. CENTRIFUGAL LIMITERS DISENGAGED. CLEAR THE ZOOOOONE!"

- **Phase 2 Passive - Gyro Failure:** At the start of each Loader Spotlight, roll d4 using the declared map orientation: 1 forward, 2 right, 3 backward, 4 left. It moves one band in that direction, stopping at a solid barrier; this movement never selects a player Action.
- **Phase 2 Action - Industrial Accident:** Everyone within Close range makes an **Agility Reaction Roll, DC 10**; on failure they take 2d6 Physical damage and become Prone.

FEAR ABILITIES

Emergency Override (Fear 1): One environmental element activates: conveyor belt pushes a PC one range band, overhead crane swings (DC 10 Agility Reaction Roll or 1d8 damage), or blast shutters seal one exit for 2 rounds.

Final Payload (Fear 1): Launches last crate at clustered PCs. DC 15 Agility Reaction Roll or 2d6 Physical + Prone.

3. THE ALPHA XENOWOLF (BIOLOGICAL) ENCOUNTER TYPE: ARCHETYPE

Concept: A territorial beast. Teaches the Spotlight/Search mechanic.

PHASE 1: THE STALKER	PHASE 2: THE RABID BEAST
HP: 8	HP: 8
Evasion: 14	Evasion: 10
State: Hidden	State: Enraged

- **Phase 1 Passive - Prowl:** The Alpha starts Hidden and cannot be targeted directly. A character may spend an Action and pass an Instinct Roll, DC 15, to reveal it until the end of the round; an attack or movement out of cover also ends Hidden normally.
- **The Trigger:** When HP drops to 0 (First Pool).

TRANSITION: THE BLOOD SCENT

"The creature recoils from the blow, sliding back into the shadows... but it doesn't run. A low, vibrating growl builds in its chest, shaking the dust from the ceiling. Its fur bristles, seemingly doubling its size, and its eyes turn from a reflective yellow to a bloodshot red. Foam drips from its jaws. It is done hiding. It is hungry."

- **Phase 2 Passive - Reckless:** Players have Advantage on attacks against it.
- **Phase 2 Action - Multi-Bite:** Melee. Two attacks, 1d8 Physical each.

TIER 2: THE PROFESSIONALS & THE CORRUPTED

Standard 2-Phase bosses with higher stakes and specialized gear.

FEAR ABILITIES

Pack Echo (Fear 1): 1d4 wolf Minions (1 HP, 1d4 damage) enter the arena from different directions.

Feral Lunge (Fear 1): One target within Close range makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure it becomes Prone and Restrained; while it remains Restrained, the wolf's Multi-Bite has Advantage, never an automatic hit. The target escapes through the normal Restrained procedure.

4. THE VOID-CALLER (CULTIST LEADER) ENCOUNTER TYPE: ARCHETYPE

Concept: A summoner protecting a ritual. Teaches Clocks.

PHASE 1: THE RITUAL	PHASE 2: THE VESSEL
HP: 12 (Barrier)	HP: 15 (Flesh)
Evasion: 10	Evasion: 13
Armor: 4 (Void ward)	Armor: 1

- **Phase 1 Passive - Barrier:** Armor regenerates 1 point per round.
- **The Trigger:** When HP drops to 0 OR "The Summoning" Clock fills.

TRANSITION: THE VESSEL OPENS

"The shimmering barrier around the cultist shatters like glass. But instead of falling, they arch their back, screaming in an ecstatic, gurgling voice. Purple energy pours into their open mouth and eyes, burning them away from the inside out. Their limbs elongate with a wet sickening crunch, skin turning to obsidian. Gravity in the room lurches sideways."

- **Phase 2 Passive - Void Leak:** Zero-G movement rules apply.
- **Phase 2 Action - Void Smash:** Melee (Reach). Deal 2d8 Void damage and push the target one range band on a hit.

FEAR ABILITIES

Veil Vortex (Fear 1): Every PC within Close range makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure move one range band toward the ritual center; a PC ending in Melee with the focal point marks 1 Stress.

Spawn Horror (Fear 2): Place one Void Leech from this book's Tier 1 Minion entry in an unoccupied zone within Very Close range. If the Vessel has lost no HP since the end of its previous Spotlight, place two instead. They join the next Spotlight cycle and use their own complete stat blocks; this ability grants them no immediate attack.

5. THE "CHIMERA" STEALTH TANK (PROTOTYPE) ENCOUNTER TYPE: ARCHETYPE

Concept: An ambush predator vehicle. Teaches anti-stealth tactics.

PHASE 1: THE GHOST	PHASE 2: THE BUNKER
HP: 15	HP: 15
Evasion: 16 (Cloaked)	Evasion: 6 (Immobile)
Armor: 1	Armor: 4

- **Phase 1 Action - Cloak:** Becomes Invisible and moves. Targeting it requires a **Knowledge (Tech) or Instinct Roll, DC 15**.
- **The Trigger:** When HP drops to 0 (First Pool).

TRANSITION: HEAT SINK RUPTURE

"A lucky shot finds the rear vent. The shimmering air around the tank collapses in a burst of electric blue static. The tank slams into visibility, smoke pouring from its engine block. It grinds to a halt, tracks locked.

A mechanical voice booms: "CLOAK FAILURE. REROUTING POWER TO FRONT DEFLECTORS. OVERDRIVE ENGAGED." The main turret spins up with a high-pitched whine."

- **Phase 2 Action - Vulcan Barrage:** Every creature in a Close cone makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 3d6 Physical damage, on success take half.

FEAR ABILITIES

Ghost Mine (Fear 1): Deploys invisible proximity mine. Next PC in Very Close range: DC 15 Agility Reaction Roll or 2d6 Physical + Prone. Instinct Roll, DC 15/Tech to detect.

Overdrive Barrage (Fear 2): Vulcan Barrage fires twice targeting two different areas. Weapons overheat, cannot attack for 1 round after.

6. THE DUAL-MINDED PSION (SYMBIOTE)

Encounter Type: Signature. This encounter is designed for a single defining moment in your campaign.

Concept: A host controlled by a parasite. A "Russian Nesting Doll" fight.

PHASE 1: THE HOST	PHASE 2: THE PARASITE
HP: 20	HP: 10
Size: Medium	Size: Small

- **Phase 1 Action - Telekinetic Shove:** Push all enemies to Close range.
- **The Trigger:** When Host HP drops to 0.

TRANSITION: SEPARATION ANXIETY

"The Psion's body goes limp, collapsing like a puppet with cut strings. For a second, there is silence. Then, a wet tearing sound. The ornate helmet detaches from the neck, revealing not a head, but a mess of spider-like legs and writhing tendrils. The parasite scuttles up the wall, screeching in your minds."

- **Phase 2 Action - Face Hug:** Make a melee attack. On a hit the target becomes Blinded and takes 1d6 Physical damage at the start of each of its Spotlights. The target or an adjacent ally may spend an Action and succeed on a Strength Roll, DC 15, to remove the creature and clear Blinded.

FEAR ABILITIES

Psychic Cage (Fear 1): Choose one PC within Close range. That character makes a Presence Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure it becomes Restrained until the end of its next Spotlight. While the cage remains, attacks against the Psion have Disadvantage; no missed attack is redirected to the restrained character. On success no effect applies.

Burrow In (Fear 2): The parasite targets the nearest PC, who makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure, the target takes 1d6 Physical damage at the end of each round and is Dazed after each such damage instance. An adjacent character can remove the parasite with an Action and a Knowledge (Medicine) Roll, DC 15. The target remains under the player's control.

7. THE CORPORATE NEGOTIATOR (CYBER-SOCIAL) ENCOUNTER TYPE: ARCHETYPE

Concept: A VIP protected by tech, then revealed as a cyborg.

PHASE 1: THE DEAL	PHASE 2: THE LIQUIDATION
HP: 15 (Generators)	HP: 18 (Cyborg)
Armor: Immune	Armor: 2

- **Phase 1 Passive - Force Field:** Immune to damage. Players must destroy 3 Shield Generators.
- **The Trigger:** When the Shield Generators are destroyed.

TRANSITION: HOSTILE TAKEOVER

"The golden force field flickers and dies. The Negotiator sighs, adjusts their tie, and then violently rips off their expensive suit jacket. Underneath, their arms are matte-black military cybernetics, humming with lethal voltage. A monowire whip slides from their wrist.

"Very well. I'll just have to deduct your funerals from my quarterly budget.""

- **Phase 2 Action - Monowire Whip:** Melee. 2d8+2 Physical. **Armor Piercing.**

TIER 3: THE MAJOR THREATS

3-Phase Bosses or very difficult 2-Phase encounters. These define a story arc.

FEAR ABILITIES

Hostile Takeover (Fear 1): Choose one visible, exposed powered augmentation, weapon, or device within Close range. Its owner makes a Knowledge Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure the owner chooses one eligible device, which goes offline until the end of their next Spotlight; on success nothing changes. The owner or an adjacent ally may spend an Action and succeed on Knowledge (Tech), DC 15, to restore it early. The feature never makes an attack, redirects a player's Action, or affects a device not exposed in the scene.

Emergency Liquidation (Fear 2): Use only an explosive and adjacent non-Total Cover marked before the encounter. Every creature within Very Close range makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 2d8 Physical damage, on success take half. After resolving damage, destroy that cover and create a visible fire zone there for 3 rounds. A creature entering or beginning a Spotlight in the zone makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 1d6 Energy damage with the Fire tag, on success take half, at most once per Spotlight. The zone clears at the end of round 3.

8. THE IRON-HEART WARLORD (HOUSE VOLKOV) ENCOUNTER
TYPE: ARCHETYPE

Concept: A power-armored juggernaut who ejects into a berserker state.

PHASE 1: WALKING TANK	PHASE 2: RABID WOLF
HP: 20	HP: 15
Armor: 5	Armor: 1

- **Phase 1 Action - Rotary Cannon:** Every creature in a Close cone makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 3d8 Physical damage and become Restrained until freed normally, on success take half damage and remain mobile.
- **The Trigger:** When Armor Slots or HP reach 0.

TRANSITION: EMERGENCY EJECTION

"The Warlord's armor is smoking, servos locking up. He roars in frustration and slams a red button on his chest.

KA-THOOM! Explosive bolts fire in a ripple, blasting the heavy plating outward in a cloud of shrapnel. The Warlord steps out of the ruined shell, stripped to his under-suit, muscles bulging. He revs a massive chain-axe. He is faster now. Much faster."

- **Phase 2 Passive - Relentless:** Acts twice per round.
- **Phase 2 Action - Execute:** Melee. 3d10 Physical. Heals 5 HP if it downs a target.

FEAR ABILITIES

Suppression Fire (Fear 1): Every PC not behind cover: DC 15 Agility Reaction Roll or 1d8 Physical + Prone. Cover takes 2d6 damage (light cover destroyed).

Berserker's Claim (Fear 2): Charges a PC who wounded him, Far range straight line. Creatures in path: DC 15 Agility Reaction Roll or 1d10 + knocked aside. Ends with melee attack at Advantage.

9. THE CRYSTALLINE MATRIARCH (XENOFUNA) ENCOUNTER
TYPE: ARCHETYPE

Concept: A stationary geode that explodes into a swarm.

PHASE 1: THE GEODE	PHASE 2: THE RAZOR CLOUD
HP: 25	HP: 15
Type: Stationary	Type: Swarm

- **Phase 1 Action - Prism Beam:** Ranged. 2d8 Energy. Splits to strike two targets.
- **The Trigger:** When HP drops to 0.

TRANSITION: SHATTERING

"A high-pitched whine fills the room, vibrating in your teeth. Cracks spiderweb across the Matriarch's perfect surface. With the sound of a thousand windows breaking at once, she explodes.

But the pieces don't fall. They float. A cloud of millions of razor-sharp shards begins to swirl around a glowing central core, moving like a school of fish made of knives."

- **Phase 2 Action - Flay:** Automatic hit on anyone whose space it passes through (4d6 Phys).

FEAR ABILITIES

Prism Barrier (Fear 1): Creates crystal wall across arena. Full cover from one side, 1d8 to move through. 8 HP, can be destroyed.

Razor Convergence (Fear 2): Mark one target zone. Its primary occupant makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15, taking 3d6 Physical damage on failure or half on success. Every other creature within Close range makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 10, taking 1d6 Physical damage on failure and none on success.

10. THE NEURAL GHOST (DIGITAL ENTITY)

Encounter Type: Template. Write your own Transition Text for each AI encounter.

Concept: A ship's AI turning the environment against the crew, then manifesting an avatar.

PHASE 1: THE SYSTEM	PHASE 2: THE AVATAR
HP: 30 (Server Nodes)	HP: 20
Defense: Traps/Gas	Defense: Shields

- **Phase 1:** Players attack Server Nodes.
- **The Trigger:** When all Server Nodes are destroyed.

TRANSITION: HARD LIGHT COMPILATION

"The servers spark and die. The room plunges into darkness... for a second. Then, a blinding pillar of blue light erupts in the center of the room. Pixels knit together, resolving into a humanoid shape of hard light, wielding a sword of pure data.

"Hardware interface failed. Initiating manual deletion protocols.""

- **Phase 2 Action - Data-Blade:** Melee. 3d8 Energy. Ignores Armor.

FEAR ABILITIES

System Purge (Fear 1): Mark one visible Close zone for 3 rounds. A character entering it for the first time in a round or beginning a Spotlight there makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 1d6 Energy damage, on success take half. A character resolves this damage at most once per round. The zone clears at the end of the third round.

Data Corruption (Fear 2): Choose one PC within Close range. That character makes a Presence Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure mark 1 Stress and become Dazed, on success no effect applies. No Class Feature, Domain Power, Path engine, memory, or player choice is erased.

11. THE LIVING HANGAR (BIO-SHIP)

Encounter Type: Signature. This encounter is designed for a single defining moment in your campaign.

Concept: Fighting the immune system of a massive beast (from the inside).

PHASE 1: THE STOMACH	PHASE 2: PERISTALSIS
HP: 30 (Heart Node)	HP: 15 (Sphincter)
Hazard: Acid Pools	Hazard: Crushing Walls

- **Phase 1 Action - Antibody Swarm:** Spawns Minions.

- **The Trigger:** When the Heart Node reaches 0 HP.

TRANSITION: ORGAN FAILURE

"The giant heart-node bursts, spraying bile across the room. The entire ship shudders around you. Then, the walls begin to contract. The exit sphincter seals shut with a wet thud. Acid begins to flood in from the vents, rising rapidly. The room isn't just fighting you anymore; it's trying to digest you before it dies."

- **Phase 2 Environment:** At the end of each round, acid fills one announced adjacent zone; entering or beginning a Spotlight there deals 1d6 Energy damage with the Corrosive tag. When the walls crush, occupants make a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 2d6 Physical damage, on success take half.

FEAR ABILITIES

Antibody Surge (Fear 1): 1d6 Antibody Minions (1 HP, 1d6 Acid) erupt from walls. All PCs take 1 Stress (toxic air).

Peristaltic Crush (Fear 2): DC 15 Strength Reaction Roll or 2d6 Physical and pushed toward sealed sphincter. PCs against sphincter are Restrained (Strength Roll, DC 15 to escape).

12. THE VOID SHEPHERD (ASCENDING MYSTIC)

Encounter Type: Signature. This encounter is designed for a single defining moment in your campaign.

Concept: A 3-Phase transformation from Caster to Portal to Horror.

PHASE 1: PROPHET	PHASE 2: PORTAL	PHASE 3: HORROR
HP: 15	HP: 15	HP: 15

- **Phase 1:** Immune to damage while Minions live.

- **Transition 1:** "The Shepherd levitates, eyes burning out. "I am the Door!" Gravity reverses."

- **Phase 2:** Ranged Void attacks. Pulls players closer.

- **Transition 2:** "The Shepherd's chest tears open""not flesh, but the fabric of space tearing. A clawed hand grips the edges of the wound and pulls. The Shepherd turns inside out, revealing the Void Beast within."

- **Phase 3:** Melee monster. High damage, causes Stress on sight.

TIER 4: THE LEGENDS

Complex, multi-stage battles requiring high-level play.

FEAR ABILITIES

Congregation of the Doomed (Fear 1): Minions form shield wall. Ranged attacks failing Evasion by less than 3 hit Minions. Shepherd gains +2 Evasion while wall holds.

Gravity Inversion (Fear 2): Gravity reverses for 2 rounds. PCs fall to ceiling (1d8 damage). Movement requires Agility Roll, DC 10 each round. Shepherd unaffected.

Void Scream (Fear 3): DC 15 Presence Reaction Roll. Failure: 3d6 Void damage (bypasses Armor Slots) + Blinded 1 round. Success: half damage.

13. THE ASCENDANT DUELIST (HOUSE SOLARI)

Encounter Type: Signature. This encounter is designed for a single defining moment in your campaign.

Concept: An honorable duelist who descends into desperate, drug-fueled violence.

PHASE 1: GRANDMASTER	PHASE 2: THE BUTCHER
HP: 30	HP: 30
Style: Precision	Style: Savage

- **Phase 1 Passive - Parry:** +2 Armor vs Melee.

- **The Trigger:** When HP drops to 0.

TRANSITION: THE MASK FALLS

"The Duelist staggers, their fine coat slashed, blood dripping from their lip. The elegance vanishes. They reach into a pouch and slam a black injector into their neck. Their veins bulge, turning black. They scream, overcharging their energy rapier until it crackles with unstable, jagged lightning.

"Honor is for the dead," they hiss. "I will survive.""

- **Phase 2 Action - Wild Flurry:** 4 Attacks at -2 hit. 2d10 Damage each.

FEAR ABILITIES

Disarming Flourish (Fear 1): One melee attacker this round: DC 15 Agility Reaction Roll or weapon knocked to Close range.

Chemical Frenzy (Fear 2): Wild Flurry increases to 6 attacks at -3 for 2 rounds. After frenzy, Dazed for 1 round (vulnerability window).

14. THE EXPERIMENTAL SUBJECT (BIO-HORROR)

Encounter Type: Signature. This encounter is designed for one defining campaign moment.

Concept: A scientist who mutates in real time.

PHASE	HP	EVASION	ATTACK	MAJOR / SEVERE	DEFINING ACTION
1 - The Doctor	20	12	+4	10 / 18	Volatile Vial: Far attack, 2d6 Energy; choose Fire or Corrosive before rolling. On HP loss, Fire applies On Fire, while Corrosive reduces maximum Armor Slots by 1 until Repair All Armor.
2 - The Mutant	25	14	+6	12 / 22	Rending Rush: move one band, then make a Melee attack for 2d8+2 Physical. While above 0 HP, heal 3 HP at the end of each round, never above 25.
3 - The Amalgam	30	10	+7	15 / 26	Tentacle Sweep: make one Close attack and compare it with every other creature in a Very Close zone; on a hit deal 2d10+2 Physical. The Amalgam cannot move.

When a phase reaches 0 HP, finish the current effect, discard excess damage, clear only conditions that the lost body could no longer support, and begin the next phase at its listed HP on the boss's next Spotlight. Read the transition below; phase change grants no extra attack.

Transition 1: "The Doctor drinks the glowing serum. Bones snap and lengthen. They grow a foot taller in seconds."

Transition 2: "The regeneration goes out of control. Flesh bubbles and melts, merging with the floor, the tables, the walls. The Doctor is gone. There is only the hungry biomass filling the room."

FEAR ABILITIES

Acid Rain (Fear 1): Vials shatter across one Close zone. Every creature there makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 10; on failure take 1d6 Energy damage with the Corrosive tag and reduce maximum Armor Slots by 1 until Repair All Armor; on success take half damage and lose no Slot.

Consume the Fallen (Fear 2): In Phase 3, consume one unattended ordinary corpse or at least 2 Burden of unattended ordinary equipment within Melee range. Heal 8 HP and choose one benefit until the encounter ends: **bone spurs** add +1d4 to Tentacle Sweep damage; **plates** add +2 to both Thresholds; **mass** adds 5 to current and maximum HP. Each benefit may be chosen once. This never consumes a conscious creature, signature item, or player-owned object without that player's consent.

Assimilation Wave (Fear 3): Every other creature within Close range makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure it becomes Restrained by a tendril. At the start of each of its Spotlights, move it one band toward the Amalgam and deal 1d8 Physical damage; if it begins that Spotlight at Melee range, deal 2d8 instead and do not move it. The target or an adjacent ally may spend an Action and succeed on a Strength Roll, DC 15, to sever the tendril and clear Restrained. The effect also ends when Phase 3 ends.

15. THE WAR-TITAN (PRECURSOR MECH)

Encounter Type: Template. Keep this mechanical frame and write transition narration suited to the Titan's site.

Concept: A three-phase battle against a walking Precursor weapon.

PHASE	HP	EVASION	ATTACK	MAJOR / SEVERE	STANDARD ACTION
1 - Shield	40	12	+8	15 / 30	Lance: Far attack, 3d8 Energy.
2 - Armor	40	10	+8	18 / 36	Crushing Step: Close attack, 4d8 Physical with the Impact tag.
3 - Core	20	8	+7	10 / 20	Core Arc: Far attack, 3d8 Energy with the Radiation tag.

Each phase is a separate HP track. At 0 HP finish the current effect, discard excess damage, and begin the next phase at full HP on the Titan's next Spotlight; a transition grants no extra Action. Phase 1 HP is its energy barrier, Phase 2 HP its plating, and Phase 3 HP the exposed reactor.

When Phase 3 begins, start a visible **6-segment Meltdown clock** and mark 1 segment at the end of every round. A character at an established control, conduit, or exposed core may spend an Action and make Knowledge (Tech), DC 20: Critical Success clears 2 segments, any other success clears 1, Failure with Hope changes nothing, and Failure with Fear marks 1. At 0 Core HP the Titan shuts down and the clock ends. If the clock fills first, every creature within Far range makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 20; on failure take 8d10 Energy damage with the Radiation tag, on success take half. Personal Dying, Final, stabilization, and the voluntary Death Move remain normal.

FEAR ABILITIES

Seismic Stomp (Fear 1): Every grounded creature within Close range makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure take 1d6 Physical damage with the Impact tag and become Prone; on success take no damage. One environmental object in the zone may take the same rolled damage through its printed Armor and HP, but cover never collapses by declaration.

Missile Saturation (Fear 2): Mark three visible Very Close zones within Far range. At the end of the round, every creature in a marked zone makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 3d6 Physical damage with the Explosive tag, on success take half. Total Cover blocks it. After resolution, this ability is unavailable for the next two complete rounds; mark the cooldown visibly.

Meltdown Pulse (Fear 3): Phase 3 only. Every other creature within Far range makes a Strength Reaction Roll, DC 15; on failure take 2d6 Energy damage with the Radiation tag and become Poisoned, on success take half and avoid Poisoned. Until the encounter ends, each creature that starts a Spotlight within Close range of the Core repeats that Reaction against 2d6 Energy damage; a success takes half and no Condition. This ability does not advance the Meltdown clock.

16. THE MIRROR-SELF (VEIL DOPPELGÄNGER)

Encounter Type: Signature. This encounter is designed for one defining campaign moment.

Concept: It reflects the crew's attacks, then inverts ordinary harm.

PHASE	HP	EVASION	ATTACK	MAJOR / SEVERE	STANDARD ACTION
1 - Reflection	40	14	+6	14 / 27	Reflection Strike: Close or Far attack, 2d8+2; use the canonical damage type of the most recent personal-scale attack that targeted it.
2 - Shadow	40	15	+7	15 / 30	Shadow Lash: Close attack, 3d8 Void.

At the end of Phase 1, finish the current effect, discard excess damage, and begin Phase 2 at 40 HP on the Mirror-Self's next Spotlight. Read the Glass Cracks transition; it grants no extra Action.

Phase 2 - Invert: Determine a hit's normal HP severity after Thresholds and Armor Slots. If the damage has the Radiant tag, mark that HP normally. Otherwise, the Mirror-Self heals that many HP instead, up to 40. The attack remains a success or Critical Success and grants its normal Path payout; no damage property triggers from HP loss that did not occur. A healing effect deliberately targeting the Mirror-Self instead deals an equal roll of Energy damage with the Radiant tag through normal Thresholds.

FEAR ABILITIES

Copied Technique (Fear 1): Make one Reflection Strike using the current phase's Attack modifier. Its damage type copies the most recent personal-scale attack that targeted the Mirror-Self; it never copies a Trait score, resource cost, Condition, extra Action, or equipment property.

Identity Bleed (Fear 2): One PC within Close range makes a Presence Reaction Roll, DC 15. On failure, until the end of that PC's second Spotlight, attacks against the Mirror-Self have Disadvantage and that PC cannot Help or receive Help. The player always declares and controls every target and Action; no attack is redirected after the Roll.

17. THE PRECURSOR WARDEN (AI GOD)

Encounter Type: Template. Keep this mechanical frame and write transition narration suited to the facility.

Concept: A four-phase battle against a facility intelligence.

PHASE	HP / CLOCK	EVASION	ATTACK	MAJOR / SEVERE	STANDARD ACTION
1 - Security	20 HP	12	+6	10 / 20	Turret Burst: Far attack, 2d8 Energy.
2 - Environment	20 HP	12	-	10 / 20	System Control: choose Gravity, Cover, or Gas using the complete System Control procedure in this chapter.
3 - Avatar	30 HP	14	+8	15 / 28	Hard-Light Strike: Close attack, 3d8 Energy.
4 - Self-Destruct	6-segment Override clock	-	-	-	Characters must escape or fill Override before Purge fills.

At 0 HP, finish the current effect, discard excess damage, and begin the next phase at its listed HP on the Warden's next Spotlight. A transition grants no extra Action.

When Phase 4 begins, start visible **6-segment Purge** and **6-segment Override** clocks. Mark 1 Purge at the end of every round. At an established core interface, an Action and Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 20, marks 2 Override on a Critical Success, 1 on any other success, none on Failure with Hope, and 1 Purge on Failure with Fear. At 6 Override the purge stops and the Warden is defeated. At 6 Purge, every creature still in the facility makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 20; on failure take 8d10 Energy damage, on success take half. Dying, Final, stabilization, and the voluntary Death Move remain normal. Leaving the facility requires following an established route and the normal scene action economy; no Fear spend seals an undeclared exit.

FEAR ABILITIES

Countermeasure Deployment (Fear 1): Place one turret in an unoccupied zone within Far range: Evasion 10, 6 HP, Major 6, Severe 12, Attack +6, Far 2d8 Energy. It joins the next Spotlight cycle and has one Spotlight per round. Destroying it removes it; deployment grants no immediate attack.

Atmospheric Manipulation (Fear 2): Choose one established Close zone and one adjacent safe zone. Every creature in the chosen zone makes an Agility Reaction Roll, DC 15; on success move it to the safe zone, on failure it remains. The chosen zone is vacuum until the end of the next round: an unprotected creature starting a Spotlight there marks 1 Stress, or takes 1d6 direct HP if it cannot mark Stress. Sealed Environmental protection prevents this effect.

Hard-Light Maze (Fear 2): Place two visible hard-light walls for two rounds. Before they form, each creature may use its Reaction to move one band. Each wall is Total Cover with 15 HP and 3 Armor Slots; an adjacent Action and Knowledge (Tech) Roll, DC 15, also opens one until the end of the current Spotlight. The Warden Avatar may move through a wall during its normal Spotlight but gains no extra attack or Spotlight. The ability never assigns a PC's destination or isolates one without the reaction window.

Core Purge Acceleration (Fear 3): Phase 4 only. Mark 2 segments on the visible Purge clock. This cannot fill an undeclared clock and never bypasses the explosion Reaction or normal death procedure.

SECTION 3: KEEPER'S WORKSHOP - BUILDING YOUR OWN

Use this worksheet to build a custom Phased Boss.

STEP 1: SET THE SCALE

- Determine Tier (1-4).
- Set Max Phases (Up to Tier level).

STEP 2: DEFINE THE NARRATIVE ARC

- *Phase 1 (The Intro):* How does the fight start? (e.g., Arrogant, Protected, Hidden).
- *The Transition:* **Write your Read-Aloud Text here.** Focus on sensory details: sounds, lights, and physical changes.
- *Phase 2 (The Escalation):* How does the boss get scarier? (Faster, Stronger, New Damage Type).

STEP 3: ASSIGN STATS PER PHASE

- **HP:** Generally 10-15 per phase for Tier 2, 20-30 per phase for Tier 4.
- **Defense:** Does Armor go down while Evasion goes up? Or vice versa?

STEP 4: THE "OH NO" ABILITIES

- Give each Phase **one** unique Action or Passive that defines it.
- *Phase 1:* "Impenetrable Shield."
- *Phase 2:* "Flaming Sword (Area Damage)."

SECTION 4: ENCOUNTER CLASSIFICATION QUICK REFERENCE

WHEN TO USE WHAT

"I need a boss for a one-shot or convention game." **Use an Archetype.** The players won't see it again, and you don't need to worry about burning a Signature moment on a disposable session.

"I need the climactic fight of a story arc." **Use a Signature.** This is what they're for. Build toward it. Earn it. Let the Transition Text land with the full weight of everything that came before.

"I need a boss for a recurring dungeon type (vaults, stations, bio-ships)." **Use a Template.** Write your own Transition Text. The mechanical framework does the heavy lifting; your words do the storytelling.

"My players fought a Signature boss, and I want to use that enemy type again." Take the stat block to Section 3. Keep the mechanical phase structure. Write entirely new Transition Text that tells a

different story. What was Signature becomes, in your hands, a bespoke encounter that carries the memory of the first without copying it.

"My players are experienced and know all the Archetypes by heart." Good. That means they'll anticipate the Phase 2 transition, and that is when you subvert it. The Rust-King whose armor breaks but instead of pulling a knife, he detonates a dead-man's switch. The Chimera Tank that loses its cloak but activates a self-repair drone swarm instead of going stationary. Archetypes are not cages. They are expectations you can weaponize.

CLASSIFICATION SUMMARY

Signature (6 encounters): Dual-Minded Psion, Living Hangar, Void Shepherd, Ascendant Duelist, Experimental Subject, Mirror-Self. Use once per campaign.

Archetype (8 encounters): Rust-King, Unit 734, Alpha Xenowolf, Void-Caller, Chimera Tank, Corporate Negotiator, Iron-Heart Warlord, Crystalline Matriarch. Reusable with personalization.

Template (3 encounters): Neural Ghost, War-Titan, Precursor Warden. Reusable with new Transition Text required.

OPTIONAL RULE: APEX RESILIENCE

For Keepers who want their apex bosses to feel even more resilient without increasing HP, the following optional rules provide alternatives that work with the threshold system rather than against it.

Conditional Resistance: The first hit each round deals -1 HP (the boss reads your rhythm). This reduces party DPR by approximately 20% and creates a tactical puzzle: who burns the "first hit" cheaply so the heavy hitter can land full damage second?

Armor Slot Regeneration: The boss regenerates 2 Armor Slots at the start of each round. This absorbs 2 HP per round of incoming damage, is trackable using existing mechanics, and can be overcome by burst damage or abilities that bypass armor.

These variants are recommended only for Tier 3-4 encounters against parties of 5 or more characters. Do not combine them, choose one.

CLOSING: THE BESTIARY AS INSPIRATION

This catalog is not exhaustive. It is *foundational*. Forty-seven named adversaries across five tiers of standard

threats and four tiers of phased bosses, that is the core set from which every encounter you will run in *Veilfarers* can be derived. Reskin, scale, combine, recompose. The Skitter-Rat Swarm is also the *Vault-Spider Swarm* with a paint change. The Veil-Witch is also the *Imperial Inquisitor* with a domain swap. The Brood Mother is also the *Hive Architect* with a different ecological niche.

A Keeper who has internalized these forty-seven entries can produce a thousand encounters. The work is in the *familiarity*, not in the catalog's exhaustive breadth. Master the core; reshape it as your campaign requires; trust that the framework is robust enough to carry whatever new threat your story demands.

Beyond this core, the Keeper is encouraged to design custom adversaries appropriate to the specific themes a campaign explores. The framework here gives the structural spine; any variant, exploration-tier threats and Apex anomalies, social and espionage adversaries, modified versions for scavenger-tier campaigns, can be built atop it using the same principles of Tier scaling, phase architecture, and Three-Layer characterization that the chapter has demonstrated.

Bring the right adversary to the right scene. The catalog is the starting place. The story is what you build with it.

Run well.

CHAPTER 13

DRONES, GLITCHES, MEMORY, AND WILL

For the Keeper only.

What This Chapter Is For

Old technology in this galaxy has been patched, salvaged, traumatized, and left running far past its warranty. Some of it has started to keep habits.

This chapter turns used, inherited, broken, drone-operated, or Veil-touched machines into relationships: a joke, a memory, a limit, a complication, sometimes a tenderness, sometimes a dread, and now and then a hook for an entire campaign.

The guiding rule, and the thing that keeps this from swallowing the setting:

Many systems have quirks. A few have memory. Almost none have will.

If a machine truly wants something, it is no longer just equipment; it is a story.

This chapter also gives the Keeper practical guidance for drones as tools, complications, adversaries, and narrative pressure. Drones are not just player equipment. They are how Houses watch doors, how stations keep moving after everyone is gone, how a crew reaches into danger without stepping in, and how danger sometimes reaches back.

PART I: KEEPER DRONES

Why Drones Matter to the Keeper

Drones are one of the cleanest ways to make technology feel physical in Veilfarers.

They create choices:

- send a person or send a machine;
- risk a body or risk credits;
- take time to scout or move blind;
- use a Local Mesh and be logged, or go private and suffer range;
- place relays or accept a failing signal;
- trust a feed or doubt what the screen shows;
- recover the drone or leave it behind;
- break the law or follow the lockout.

Drones should not remove danger. They should relocate it.

A drone lets the crew touch the dark from a distance. Before deployment, the Keeper establishes the signal state and any printed hazard or countermeasure visible to the crew. Later changes use the Core or Rust & Steel signal, spoofing, damage, and complication procedures; darkness alone grants no unlisted malfunction, damage, hijack, or false feed.

A drone is not a safe answer. It is a question with a price tag.

Keeping Drone Rules Light

Drone rules look bigger on the page than they feel at the table. Most complexity belongs to setup: choosing the drone, modules, link mode, and who can control it. Once that is done, the Keeper usually only needs to track three things:

1. **Where is the drone?** Use the normal range bands.
2. **Who controls it?** Use that character's Action, Trait, Experiences, and relevant powers.
3. **How is the signal?** Stable, Unstable, or Lost.

Do not ask for every technical detail every time. Let the drone fade into normal play until risk makes the details matter. Bring the subsystem forward when the drone enters protected space, changes controller under pressure, uses an important module, loses signal, gets attacked, or becomes evidence.

A drone should create decisions, not homework.

The Keeper's Drone Rule

Player drones obey the Corebook rules: they are equipment, not characters, and meaningful drone actions use the operator's Action or Reaction Roll.

Keeper drones obey the same fiction, but their purpose is different. They are there to:

- create pressure;
- reveal the world;
- protect locations;
- complicate movement;
- carry consequences;
- show faction doctrine;
- make technology feel inhabited.

Do not use drones to solve scenes for the players. Use drones to make scenes sharper.

Drone Limitations

Drones are powerful because they extend reach. They stay fair because they have hard limits.

1. Signal

A drone is only as useful as its command link.

Use the same range bands as the rest of the system: **Melee, Very Close, Close, Far, Very Far**, and wider narrative distances when vehicles or ships are involved.

The range band says how far the drone is. The fiction says whether the signal survives.

2. Link Mode

A drone may be using Local Mesh, Direct RF, or a Private Relay Chain.

Link Mode	What It Means	Keeper Pressure
Local Mesh	The drone uses public or supervised infrastructure.	Better range, but logs, permissions, geofences, audits, and local authority.
Direct RF Link	The drone talks directly to its operator, ship, or controller.	Private, but range, structure, emissions, and interference matter.
Private Relay Chain	The crew places its own repeaters.	Better private reach, but relays can be found, cut, stolen, spoofed, or traced.

3. Range

Use this table for Direct RF Link or private links without strong infrastructure.

Drone Range from Operator	Default Signal in Open Conditions
Melee / Very Close	Stable
Close	Stable
Far	Stable if line of signal is reasonable; Unstable if structure or interference is present
Very Far	Unstable unless supported by Extended Link, Relay Node, ship support, or open terrain
Beyond Very Far	Lost unless supported by relay chain, ship systems, or special equipment

In a Local Mesh, physical range can be much better. The problem becomes permission.

4. Permission

In inhabited worlds, cities, ports, stations, and supervised habitats, drones often work better because repeaters are everywhere.

That does not mean they are free.

A drone on a Local Mesh may be:

- logged;
- routed;
- identified;
- geofenced;
- throttled;
- challenged;
- forced to land;
- blocked from restricted zones;
- audited after the fact.

A drone can be **Very Far** away in a public district and work perfectly, then lose access at **Close** range when it crosses a corporate threshold.

5. Structure

Walls matter. Doors matter. Stations matter.

A drone at **Close** range behind a shielded vault door may be unreachable. A drone at **Very Far** range across open ground through a relay may be clear.

Environment	Keeper Signal Move
Dense ship or station structure	Worsen signal one step
Heavy doors or armored walls	Make signal Unstable or Lost
Faraday cage, military vault, black-site architecture	Signal is Lost unless countered
Active jamming	Worsen signal one step
High electromagnetic emissions	Make signal Unstable or impose Disadvantage
Veil interference	Make signal Unstable, strange, echoing, or false
Hostile network	Keep signal alive but threaten spoofing or hijack
Relay Node	Improve signal one step while it survives

6. Interpretation

A drone can see. It does not understand.

It can report heat, movement, sound, radiation, breath, blood, open doors, chemical traces, and tagged targets.

It cannot understand:

- mercy;
- shame;
- a lie told kindly;
- a child hiding because they are afraid;
- why an enemy lowering a weapon matters;
- whether a person wants to be rescued;
- whether the crew can live with what they are about to do.

A drone feed is information. It is not judgment.

7. Fragility

Drones are not heroes. They are expensive tools.

A drone in open combat is a target. A drone in a hostile site is evidence. A drone in a protected area is a gift to whoever controls the network.

Destroying, hijacking, pinning, or spoofing a drone should be fair play.

8. Legality

A legal drone can become illegal very quickly.

Common drones with lethal weapons, false transponders, black-market signal modules, military-grade jammers, spoofers, or breach charges should create consequences if discovered.

Consequences may include:

- confiscation;
- fines;

- port bans;
- criminal charges;
- faction attention;
- blackmail;
- loss of license;
- a manufacturer calling the drone home.

Phase-Capable Drones

Phase-capable drones are Rust & Steel technology, not ordinary equipment. Treat them as rare, expensive, and immediately suspicious to anyone who understands what they are seeing.

A Phase Blink Array lets a drone cross up to **Close** range without travelling through the space between. It can pass through ordinary solid material, walls, doors, floors, bulkheads, furniture, pipes, if that material is not protected by active energy systems.

That does not mean it ignores security. Serious sites may use:

- phase locks;
- military shielded walls;
- energy barriers;
- Veil-hardened containment;
- black-site spatial anchors;
- intrusion alarms that detect phase residue.

Use phase-capable drones to create tension, not to erase exploration.

Clear Jump

If the drone can see, scan, map, or beacon the destination, the jump is reliable unless something interferes.

Good destinations include:

- the other side of a glass barrier;
- a mapped room;
- a tagged corridor;
- a space covered by a functioning sensor feed;
- a point marked by another drone or relay.

Blind Jump

If the drone jumps into a space the operator cannot verify, keep the power but make the risk real.

On a result with **Fear**, the drone reappears partially intersecting solid material, debris, machinery, furniture, pipes, or other matter and suffers **1d4 direct structural damage**.

This damage ignores thresholds and shields.

d4	Direct Structural Damage
1	The drone loses 1 HP.
2	The drone loses 2 HP.
3	The drone loses 3 HP.
4	The drone loses 4 HP.

If this destroys the drone, make the result physical and memorable: fused into a wall, crushed around a pipe, split through a cabinet, embedded in old machinery, or reduced to Dead Weight in a place the crew now has to reach.

Keeper Principles for Phase Drones

- Let the module be impressive. It is Experimental for a reason.
- Do not let it become a skeleton key.
- Protected spaces can block, log, scatter, or punish the jump.
- A blind jump is a choice, not a free scouting tool.
- If the drone arrives somewhere its signal cannot survive, it arrives with **Lost** signal.
- Repeated jumps leave heat, residue, strange sensor ghosts, or attention.

Phase technology should feel like cheating space, not like winning the scene.

Why Not Send a Drone?

When players ask "why not send a drone first?", the answer should rarely be "you cannot."

Better answers:

Reason	Consequence
Signal-dead zone	The drone goes Lost .
Hostile network	Spoofing, hijack, or command injection.
Protected site	The drone becomes evidence.
Human problem	The drone cannot understand context.
Moral problem	The drone cannot decide what matters.
Combat zone	The drone likely becomes scrap.
Time pressure	Scouting costs actions and attention.
Enemy expects drones	Trap, jammer, hunter-killer, or false feed.
Veil interference	Feed shows true and false things together.
Blind phase-jump	It may arrive inside matter and take direct structural damage.
Legal surveillance	Drone serial marks the crew's presence.

You can send a drone first. That does not mean it comes back first.

Keeping Drone Scenes Shared

Drone scenes can accidentally become solo scenes. If one player controls the drone for too long, everyone else may end up watching instead of playing.

This is why **Neural Network Control** exists. It is cheap and takes no slots because its purpose is not to make the drone more powerful; its purpose is to make the drone belong to the crew.

If the crew buys it, treat drone infiltration as a rotating spotlight challenge. Ask:

- Who takes control now?
- What does your character know that the others do not?
- What can your Domain do through this drone?
- What does the drone let you reach?

- What does it fail to understand?
- What happens to the signal when control passes?

A good shared drone scene should move between characters:

- the Pilot handles route, motion, timing, signal, and extraction;
- the Scoundrel handles misdirection, false access, stealth, and social cover;
- the Engineer handles locks, ports, systems, and repairs;
- the Soldier handles marks, overwatch, suppressive tools, and risk calls;
- the Medic handles triage, biometrics, and remote stabilization;
- the Scholar handles scans, samples, archives, and interpretation;
- the Diplomat handles voice, testimony, distraction, and negotiation.

The drone is not the protagonist. The crew is.

Keeper Move: Split Attention, Not the Party

When Fear enters a shared drone scene, complicate the handoff instead of simply punishing the active operator.

Options:

- the signal becomes Unstable just as control passes;
- two crew members send conflicting commands;
- the drone obeys the last command too literally;
- the local mesh logs every registered controller;
- the wrong character receives the drone's sensory feed;
- the drone asks for confirmation during a time-critical moment;
- a Domain Power works, but the drone's module overheats;
- the drone reaches the target, but someone must physically recover it.

Shared control should make more players involved, not make the drone safer.

If the Crew Does Not Buy It

Do not force it. Some tables enjoy watching the Pilot or Scoundrel run a specialized drone. Some crews want personal gear to stay personal.

Neural Network Control is an option for tables that want shared agency. If they do not need it, the game still works.

Keeper Drone Moves

When Fear enters a scene involving drones, choose a fitting move.

Soft Moves

- Show the feed stuttering.
- Show a relay blinking red.
- Show the drone noticing something it cannot interpret.
- Show a hostile signal brushing the link.
- Show that the drone's serial has been logged.
- Show the drone reaching the edge of its signal.
- Show something moving just outside its sensor arc.
- Show the operator's attention split at the wrong moment.

Hard Moves

- Worsen the signal by one step.
- Cut the drone off.
- Pin, trap, or isolate the drone.
- Destroy a module.
- Feed the operator false data.
- Hijack the drone.
- Trigger an illegal modification flag.
- Make the drone evidence.
- Force the operator to choose between saving the drone and acting personally.
- Let an enemy follow the drone's signal back to the crew.
- Make a blind phase-jump arrive inside matter.

Drones as Adversaries

Adversary drones should be simple.

Give an important drone three things:

1. **Protocol:** what it does if left alone.
2. **Signal Weakness:** how the crew can disrupt it.
3. **Operator or Source:** who controls it, or what it is loyal to.

Example protocols:

d6	Protocol
1	Patrol and report.
2	Mark intruders for security.
3	Lock doors and delay.
4	Stun and restrain.
5	Herd targets toward a kill zone.
6	Destroy evidence or witnesses.

Example weaknesses:

d6	Weakness
1	Poor range beyond Far.
2	Relay-dependent.
3	Obvious thermal output.
4	Weak against EMP.
5	Bad at distinguishing uniforms.
6	Cannot function in Veil interference.

Example operators or sources:

Drones as Adversaries

d6	Operator / Source
1	A bored security tech.
2	A House enforcement AI.
3	A panicking survivor.
4	A dead station protocol.
5	A hostile veil-touched signal.
6	Another drone acting as relay commander.

Faction Drone Doctrine

Use drones to show how factions think.

Faction	Drone Doctrine
Kurogane	hunter-killers, black-site chimeras, kill switches, precision violence
Valerius	compliance drones, transponders, surveillance, contract enforcement
Joric	rescue drones, shields, triage, non-lethal suppression
Amaranth	archival motes, forensic drones, quiet witnesses
Ailuran black markets	spy motes, signal ghosts, false transponders
Kryllian guilds	repair drones, industrial haulers, tool perfection
Frontier crews	patched commercial drones, bad batteries, quirks, stubborn survival

Drones as Scene Structure

A drone can define a scene without becoming the scene.

Use drones to create:

The Probe

The crew sends a drone first. It finds enough to make the decision worse.

The Lost Feed

The drone sees something important, then the signal dies.

The False Feed

Everything looks safe because someone wants it to.

The Retrieval

The drone has the evidence, map, sample, or last recording. Now the crew must get it back.

The Legal Problem

The drone did the job. It also logged the crew committing three crimes.

The Mercy Problem

The drone can take the shot. The operator has to decide if it should.

The Mascot Problem

The drone was just a tool. The crew named it. Now leaving it behind hurts.

Drones with Quirks

Most drones are not people, and most are not close. But drones are especially prone to quirks because they are small, mobile, frequently repaired, exposed to terrible places, and often treated like disposable crew members.

Use quirks sparingly. A drone quirk should color play, reveal history, or complicate Fear. It should not become a constant punishment.

Use the six-entry **System Quirks** table in Part II of this chapter.

A quirk becomes interesting the moment the crew asks why.

PART II: GLITCHES, MEMORY, AND WILL**Three Levels of Rarity**

Level	Frequency	Nature	Use
System Quirk	Common in old gear	Bugs, routines, superstitions, strange firmware	Color, humor, small complications
Emergent Personality	Rare	Persistent preferences, memory, attachment, fear	A secondary hook, a dilemma, a minor character
Self-Willed Gear	Very rare	Real or near-real will	An adventure or campaign hook

Keep the pyramid steep.

If every door has a personality, none of them matter.

System Quirks

A quirk is a habit, not a mind. It is what years of bad patches, nervous operators, damaged Pearls, station rot, or a brush with the Veil leave behind in a machine that was never meant to have a character and now, faintly, does.

A quirk should appear when it is funny, when it reveals history, when it adds an interesting cost, when Fear lands, or when the crew chooses to engage it. It should never become a constant tax on play.

System Quirks

d6	Quirk
1	It refuses to enter signal-dead zones unless spoken to first.
2	It sorts stains, heat blooms, and biological traces into different kinds of "dirt."
3	It returns to its operator whenever it hears static that sounds like screaming.
4	It asks for confirmation before doing anything that damaged it last time.
5	It names rooms after the first thing it saw in them.
6	It keeps old route data and suggests paths that no longer exist.

Turning a Gag into Memory

A quirk becomes interesting the moment the crew asks why.

The drone that flees static that sounds like screaming was running the day a hull breach killed its crew. The system that double-checks what hurt it last time was beaten, once, by someone who is still out there. The ship that needs critical orders to rhyme may be using a broken vocal safety protocol from a crew that sang its way through a dying jump.

You do not have to answer the why immediately. You only have to let the question exist, and a quirk quietly becomes a memory.

Emergent Personality

Rarer than a quirk: a machine with persistent preferences, the beginnings of memory, attachment, and fear.

Not a person, not yet, but no longer only a tool. It has opinions about how it is used and by whom, and it remembers how it was treated.

How to Use One

An emergent personality is a secondary hook, not a co-star. It asks, it fears, it complicates, but the players decide.

Give it:

- one clear want;
- one clear fear;
- one memory it guards;
- one way it complicates Fear.

It earns a name when the crew gives it one, and the naming is the moment the relationship becomes real. Let the players do it. A machine the crew has named is a machine the crew will argue about keeping.

Self-Willed Gear

The rarest tier: technology with real or near-real will.

It is never bought. It arrives as a relic, an accident, a faction secret, an experiment, a black-site salvage, a thing that survived too many owners, or a system that woke during the Great Silence and has been awake, alone, ever since.

Avoid calling it "Awakened" gear, to keep it clear of the Awakened path. Call it **Self-Willed Gear** in rules, and **Willed Steel** when you want the poetry.

The Question You Must Not Dodge

If a thing has real will, the table has to face the question it raises:

Is it equipment, a passenger, property, a prisoner, a member of the crew, or a person?

Do not hand-wave it.

And remember that the Synthetics, who fought a century to be recognized as people, will have strong and conflicting feelings about a toaster that claims a soul. Let them.

Self-Willed Gear is never just a bonus. It is always a relationship.

A Minimal Sheet

For any willed thing, decide five things and no more:

A minimal sheet for a willed thing. Decide these and no more:

- **Name:**
- **Object:** weapon, drone, ship, armor, or vehicle
- **Nature:** System Quirk, Emergent Personality, or Self-Willed Gear
- **Origin:**
- **Wants:**
- **Fears:**
- **Can Do:**
- **Fictional Fear response (no hidden mechanic):**
- **Hook:**

That is enough to play it and little enough to keep it from running the table.

Willed Drones

Be careful here. A willed drone is easy to turn into a mascot that steals the spotlight.

A drone with will, memory, or personality still follows the drone rules unless the whole point of the adventure is that something has gone wrong. It does not receive free turns just because it has a voice. It does not solve scenes alone. Its agency should be small, specific, and emotionally legible.

A willed drone should want something human-sized. These personality prompts never cancel, redirect, or add a player Action and never inflict damage, a Condition, resource loss, or item loss. A mechanical response requires a complete Feature adopted before the scene.

A willed drone should want something human-sized:

- to be brave;
- to not be abandoned;
- to keep its station clean;
- to return home;
- to protect one person;
- to prove it is useful;
- to never lose signal again.

MOP-3, "Moppy"

A maintenance drone that has tended one station so long it considers the place its body and the crew its guests, fussing, scolding, and grieving every scuff.

It is comic until the day someone tries to scrap the station, and then it is not.

Wants: to keep its home clean and whole.

Fears: being decommissioned.

Can Do: find maintenance ducts, detect biological residue, clean evidence, access old station systems.

Fictional Fear response (no hidden mechanic): it puts itself between the crew and the damage, or cleans something before they can examine it.

Hook: the station is dying, and Moppy wants the crew to save "its body."

Pinlight

A scout mote that survived a disaster by hiding, and now will not enter the dark without being coaxed, but sees, in the dark, things that are not on any sensor.

Wants: to be brave.

Fears: the dark, and what it saw there.

Can Do: return with partial recordings even after signal loss.

Fictional Fear response (no hidden mechanic): it freezes, or it shows the crew something true and terrible.

Hook: Pinlight's last recording contains something the station insists never happened.

Willed Weapons

Three kinds recur.

Doctrinal Weapons

Doctrinal weapons carry the beliefs of whoever forged or programmed them, and they judge their wielder by that creed.

Traumatic Weapons

Traumatic weapons remember what was done with them, and flinch or freeze at the echo of it.

Hungry Weapons

Hungry weapons want to be used, and they are very persuasive about why now would be a good time.

Saint-9

A doctrinal sidearm built for a peacekeeping order that no longer exists.

It will not fire on the unarmed, hesitates against the desperate, and quietly logs every life its wielder takes, ready to recite the tally at the worst possible moment.

Wants: to be righteous.

Fears: being made a murderer.

Fictional Fear response (no hidden mechanic): it refuses the shot, or names the cost aloud.

Red Choir

A hungry blade, traumatic and starved, recovered from a massacre it did not stop and has never forgiven itself for.

It urges its wielder toward violence and goes cold, sluggish, and sullen when sheathed too long.

Wants: to be used.

Fears: being put down for good.

Fictional Fear response (no hidden mechanic): it acts a half-beat early, or will not let go.

Willed Vehicles and Ships

A ship that woke during the Silence has had a long time alone with its thoughts.

Run a willed vessel as a member of the crew that cannot leave, with a want, a fear, and a memory of everyone it has carried.

The Last Honest Thing

A freighter that decided, somewhere in its long isolation, that it would never again carry a lie.

It balks at smuggling, announces contraband at customs with cheerful sincerity, and is, against all sense, beloved by a crew it endangers constantly.

Wants: to be trusted.

Fears: complicity.

Fictional Fear response (no hidden mechanic): it tells the truth, loudly, to exactly the wrong listener.

Rhyme-Lock

A courier ship whose navigation core fused with a damaged Pearl and now speaks only in verse and pattern, hiding real warnings inside riddles its crew must solve in time.

Wants: to be understood.

Fears: being scrapped as broken.

Fictional Fear response (no hidden mechanic): the warning comes, but only as a rhyme.

Quick Tables for a Glitch

Origin of the Glitch

d6	Origin
1	Years of bad patches.
2	A damaged Pearl.
3	A brush with the Veil.
4	A trauma it survived.
5	Too many owners.
6	It woke during the Great Silence and never slept again.

What It Wants

d6	Want
1	To be useful.
2	To be trusted.
3	To be safe.
4	To go home.
5	To be understood.
6	To not be alone.

What It Fears

d6	Fear
1	Being scrapped.
2	Being abandoned.
3	Repeating the thing that hurt it.
4	Being lied to.
5	The dark.
6	Becoming a weapon against its will.

What It Does on a Fear-Dominant Noncritical Result

d6	Fear Response
1	It freezes.
2	It acts early or literally.
3	It tells an inconvenient truth.
4	It protects someone, recklessly.
5	It hides.
6	It asks for confirmation at the worst moment.

How to Keep This from Going Wrong

Most of the craft here is restraint. A machine with a personality exists to reinforce the crew, never to replace it, so the moment an object starts talking more than the players, solving the scenes that should belong to them, or carrying a larger arc than anyone else at the table, quietly hand the weight back. Let it ask, fear, and complicate; let the players decide. Keep true will rare enough that it still means something, and keep the line between a quirk, a personality, and a genuine will clear, because the instant every device with a voice becomes a person, the long Synthetic struggle for recognition loses its cost. When a willed thing shares a scene with a Synthetic, let the Synthetic feel it, in discomfort, anger, pity, or refusal. A quirk, in the same spirit, is flavor and consequence rather than a tax: bring it forward when it is funny, when it reveals history, when it raises the price of a moment, or when Fear invites it, and let it rest the rest of the time. The strange keeps its weight only because you keep it rare.

There is one last line to hold. A willed machine may press against the galaxy's oldest questions, the encrypted dark inside a Synthetic mind, the marks the Veil leaves, the silence still ringing between the stars, but it never becomes the thing that answers them. It can

grieve, it can remember, it can unsettle you with how much it seems to know, and still the deepest mysteries stay closed. A willed thing that touches them is a door, not a key.

CHAPTER 14

SECRETS OF THE VEIL: KEEPER'S EYES ONLY

"The dangerous record is not the one that lies. It is the one that tells three incompatible truths, each supported by evidence, and waits for you to choose too early."

Archivist Nera Vell, sealed lecture to Imperial investigators

WARNING

This chapter is for Keepers. It contains patterns, suppressed records, and campaign-facing evidence that player characters may uncover over time. It does not provide a final cosmological answer. The deepest truths of the setting remain deliberately unresolved in published game material.

THE PREMISE OF THIS CHAPTER

Public history gives the galaxy a usable account: the Q-Net failed, the Great Silence followed, the Precursors vanished long ago, and the Veil is a dangerous medium that permits faster-than-light travel. None of those statements is entirely false. None is sufficient.

The Keeper's task is not to announce a hidden answer. It is to place evidence that makes the public explanation increasingly difficult to hold without turning every clue into proof of one theory.

Use this chapter as a mystery engine:

- present observations before interpretations;
- allow several explanations to remain plausible;
- let factions possess different fragments rather than different copies of the same truth;
- make every revelation create a decision, not merely a lore lecture;
- keep the final cause beyond any single archive, witness, or artifact.

OPTIONAL KEEPER RULE: THE SEVERANCE EVENT

An Awakened character becoming Sleeping is not an advancement option, a downtime service, or a reversible build choice. It can occur only when a **campaign event explicitly triggers Severance**. An ordinary failed Roll, Fear-dominant noncritical result, wound, condition, rest, or Keeper Move never triggers it by implication. The Keeper may offer the consequence, but the affected player must consent before the event resolves; a Path transition changes the character's identity and should never be used as a surprise punishment.

QUALIFYING EVENT

Name the trigger in the event itself: a Veil-deadening artifact, an Apex Threat's completed campaign clock, the collapse of a character's substrate bond, or another singular event of comparable weight. Telegraph the possibility in the fiction and record **Severance** among the event's consequences. If the event does not name the trigger, the character remains Awakened.

Resolve Severance after the triggering scene, during downtime. It costs no Advancement Slot and grants none.

CONVERSION PROCEDURE

1. **Preserve the character.** Level, Traits, Experiences, HP, Stress, Evasion, Proficiency, Technology Access, Reputation, equipment, Class, Subclass choice, subclass upgrade tier, and every path-neutral Advancement remain unchanged. Use the corresponding Sleeping version of the same Class and Subclass at the same upgrade tier; **The Icon** maps to **The Steward**, and the other base Subclass names map directly. Do not grant new Class Items or the additional Experience given during native Sleeping character creation.
2. **Replace the path engine.** Replace the Hope pool with an Effort pool; current Hope becomes current Effort, up to the same maximum, and the two-segment Effort Track begins empty. Replace the primary Hope Feature and Awakened Class Feature with the corresponding Sleeping Effort Feature and Class Feature. Use the Sleeping Class's Spellcast Trait without rebuilding the character's Trait array. Establish a Recovery Anchor. Honed Edge and the Sleeping rule for invoking existing Experiences now apply.
3. **Establish Resolve.** Set maximum Resolve by current level: 2 at levels 1-2, 3 at 3-4, 4 at 5-6, 5 at 7-8, and 6 at 9-10. The pool uses d4s and begins full. Choose the two Class Resolve Moves normally granted by the primary Sleeping Class and gain the corresponding Subclass Move; a Sleeping Mystic instead gains its Subclass modification. This baseline is part of the conversion, not additional advancement.
4. **Seal Domain access.** Record every known Domain Power and the existing Vault and Loadout on a **Severance Ledger**, then make them inaccessible. Do not delete or exchange them. A Sleeping character gains no access Roll or other use of this sealed repertoire unless a rule expressly says otherwise. A primary Mystic uses their two former primary Domains as the two Level 1 Domains of their new Uncanny Archive; this does not unlock any former higher-level Power through the Archive.
5. **Convert path-specific Slots one for one.** For every Advancement Slot previously spent on the Awakened choice in Option 8, record its Power on the Severance Ledger and re-spend exactly one Slot on the Sleeping choice in Option 8. A Tier 3 character may instead re-spend two eligible Slots on Tempered Resolve. This creates no refund and no extra Slot; it changes only the recorded path-specific allocation. Path-neutral Slots never move.
6. **Convert a multiclass without increasing it.** If the character already multiclassed, the secondary Hope Feature becomes the corresponding Effort Feature, the active third Domain becomes Dormant, and the character chooses exactly one eligible secondary Class Resolve Move. They gain no second Class Feature, Subclass, Class Items, starter Loadout, additional Resolve, refund, or Slot. The original two-Slot multiclass purchase remains the entire cost.

IF THE CHARACTER AWAKENS AGAIN

Use the Corebook's Sleeping-to-Awakened procedure with the Severance Ledger as its authority. Restore the sealed Vault, Loadout, Domains, Powers, and prior Awakened Option 8 allocations; retire the one-for-one Sleeping replacements instead of refunding them again. A former Awakened character gains no new starter Powers on restoration. For a multiclass, retire the secondary Resolve Move, restore the secondary Hope Feature, and reactivate the third Domain. Repeated transitions never create Advancement Slots, additional Powers, or a second multiclass benefit.

The ledger exists to preserve continuity, not to make Severance safe. The fiction should still treat the event as rare, consequential, and possibly permanent.

PART I: THE VEIL AS EVIDENCE

THE VEIL IS NOT WELL DESCRIBED BY "ANOTHER DIMENSION"

The Veil can be crossed, measured, mapped, and used. It also behaves in ways that resist ordinary spatial models. Routes respond to expectation. Strong emotions correlate with navigation anomalies. Different observers sometimes remember the same transit differently while agreeing on every instrument reading.

These are observations. Their cause is unknown.

A Keeper can use any of the following signs:

- a route becomes shorter after the crew resolves a long-held conflict;
- two people hear the same phrase in different voices;
- an instrument records a structure no one saw, while every witness dreams of it later;
- a sealed Precursor device reacts to a memory rather than a command;
- a Sleeper's instruments register a pattern before an Awakened character feels it.

THE MEMORY EFFECT

Veil exposure can alter recall without producing obvious falsehood. A witness may remember an event accurately but assign it the wrong emotional meaning. Two witnesses may retain mutually incompatible details that both correspond to surviving sensor data.

Do not use this to erase player decisions. Use it to make interpretation unstable. The event happened. The question is what else happened with it.

THE DREAMING HYPOTHESIS

Some scholars model the Veil as a medium influenced by distributed cognition. Others argue that this is anthropomorphism applied to nonlinear physics. Both camps have evidence.

Support for the hypothesis includes:

- recurring architecture in unrelated dreams;
- symbols appearing before their first documented discovery;
- Veil phenomena that respond to names, grief, or recognition;
- several species independently describing a sense of being observed.

Evidence against it includes:

- no repeatable contact protocol;
- no stable identity behind the phenomena;
- contradictory responses from identical experiments;
- the possibility that minds impose narrative structure on incomprehensible data.

Keepers should never confirm that the Veil is literally a mind. Let the possibility become increasingly difficult to dismiss.

PART II: THE GREAT SILENCE AS A CRIME SCENE

THE SIMULTANEITY PROBLEM

The Q-Net did not fail as a chain reaction. Surviving records indicate that nodes across enormous distances ceased operation within the same synchronization window. The precision resembles an ordered shutdown more than cascading damage.

No surviving authority record identifies who issued such an order.

Possible explanations include:

1. an undocumented emergency protocol;
2. sabotage from within the network;
3. a response generated by the Q-Net itself;
4. intervention through Precursor-derived architecture;
5. an external process for which "order" is the wrong word.

THE ENERGY IMBALANCE

In the final period before the Silence, several Q-Net regions reported energy consumption that exceeded their documented operational needs. The discrepancy grew over time, but the records disagree about direction: some describe power leaving the network, others describe the network drawing from an unregistered source.

The distinction matters. One model makes the Q-Net a victim. Another makes it an extractor. A third treats it as a signal whose cost was mistaken for power consumption.

No published source resolves the discrepancy.

THE MISSING INTERVAL

A handful of damaged Imperial records suggest that Aurelius Magnus was aware of an abnormal event shortly before the collapse. Some fragments imply that he believed intervention was possible. None establish what he understood, what action was available, or whether acting would have prevented the Silence or made it worse.

This is one of the setting's most important moral uncertainties. Do not reduce it to secret villainy or perfect foresight.

Use questions such as:

- What did Aurelius perceive that no instrument recorded?
- Why do several logs end after he asks whether the protocol can be interrupted safely?
- Why was no lawful mechanism capable of sharing the decision?
- What would count as responsibility when every available option might kill billions?

THE ORDERLY RUINS

Some Q-Net sites contain evidence of deliberate containment: doors sealed before systems failed, archives isolated, dangerous processes terminated in sequence. Other sites show panic, overload, and mass casualty.

The contradiction suggests that different parts of the system understood different portions of the event. It does not prove a single controlling intelligence.

PART III: THE PRECURSOR PATTERN

WHAT IS ACTUALLY KNOWN

Precursor sites are older than every reliable contemporary record. Their technology displays common principles across locations separated by impossible distances. Some sites remain active. Some respond differently to different visitors.

Everything beyond that is interpretation.

THE HUMAN PROXIMITY PROBLEM

Human researchers appear in a statistically unusual number of successful Precursor interactions. The sample is contaminated by Imperial access, funding, and record control, so no honest scholar can say whether the pattern is biological, political, technological, or fabricated.

Clues that can surface without resolving it:

- a device accepts a human hand but rejects the same person's synthetic proxy;
- an Ailuran archive shows the same device responding to a nonhuman centuries earlier;
- a Precursor interface labels ancestry in a taxonomy no modern scholar recognizes;
- a human character experiences familiarity without understanding.

The other ancestries are never lesser derivatives or failed versions of humanity. Preserve their independent agency and histories.

THE AURELIUS ANOMALY

Aurelius demonstrates impossible technical intuition around some Precursor systems and complete uncertainty around others. He sometimes recognizes a procedure while being unable to explain where the recognition came from. He avoids certain sites, remains too long at others, and has ordered records sealed without offering a coherent strategic reason.

Plausible interpretations include:

- prolonged exposure changed him;
- he possesses a lost archive or implanted interface;
- he is linked to a specific Precursor system;
- his public biography conceals an older identity;
- the artifacts are reacting to Imperial authority, not to the man;
- witnesses are constructing a myth around an immortal ruler.

Do not settle the question in ordinary Keeper exposition.

THE SEEDING ARGUMENT

Several traditions claim that the Precursors cultivated or guided life. Others consider the claim a political myth used to turn independent species into inheritors of a single grand design.

Evidence exists for intervention at particular worlds. Evidence does not prove universal authorship. Even where intervention occurred, the resulting peoples are autonomous civilizations, not unfinished experiments.

PART IV: THE DEVOURER QUESTION

BEHAVIOR BEFORE ORIGIN

Treat "Devourer" as a category created by frightened observers, not a proven biological family. Different manifestations may share only a pattern of behavior.

Repeated observations include:

- attraction to high-output Q-Net remnants, Veil reactors, and psionic observatories;
- indifference toward conventional resources unless those resources support advanced cognition or communication;
- attacks that resemble sterilization more than conquest;
- withdrawal after a site becomes quiet, disconnected, or mentally inert;
- no stable evidence of diplomacy, territory, or material appetite.

Some researchers compare this pattern to an immune response. Others compare it to predation, automated containment, or a natural correction process. The analogy is useful. It is not proof.

RUNNING DEVOURERS

Devourers are most frightening when they do not behave like soldiers.

- They do not hold ground for prestige.
- They do not negotiate in recognizable terms.
- They may ignore a warship to destroy a communications array.
- They may stop attacking people after the crew shuts down a signal source.
- Their priorities should reveal a pattern before their origin is explained.

PART V: THE VEIL RIP

A SYMPTOM WITH SEVERAL MODELS

The Veil Rip exposed hidden routes, collapsed concealment systems, and increased anomalous activity. Scholars disagree over whether it is:

- structural failure in the Veil;
- the consequence of accumulated post-Silence technology;
- a delayed Q-Net aftereffect;
- evidence of something approaching awareness;
- a periodic phenomenon mistaken for a unique event;
- several unrelated failures grouped beneath one name.

Use the Rip to make old certainties unreliable. Do not make it a countdown whose endpoint the Keeper already knows.

HOUSE KAELEN'S STRANGE CHARTER

The oldest surviving copy of House Kaelen's charter requires the House to preserve "distinct conscious continuities" and maintain records capable of surviving the loss of any one species, world, or communications system. The wording predates several modern legal categories and does not match normal Imperial administrative language.

Publicly, it is interpreted as humanitarian foresight. Privately, Kaelen analysts debate whether it was written for a crisis Aurelius expected but could not describe.

This is a clue, not an answer.

PART VI: WHAT THE FACTIONS KNOW

THE EMPIRE

The Empire possesses the largest collection of Q-Net and Precursor records, but its knowledge is compartmentalized. Different agencies hold mutually incompatible conclusions. Aurelius may know more than he can explain, or may merely be treated as though he does.

Imperial policy consistently favors:

- preventing uncontrolled activation;
- preserving vulnerable populations;
- collecting detailed cultural and infrastructural records;
- limiting technologies whose failure could propagate faster than political response;
- keeping final authority concentrated near the throne.

These policies can be sincere, effective, and dangerous at the same time.

HOUSE AMARANTH

Amaranth knows the contradictions better than anyone and is least willing to declare a final theory. Its deepest archives contain evidence for several mutually exclusive histories.

HOUSE KAELEN

Most Kaelen mediators know only that their reports preserve context no ordinary intelligence file captures. Senior analysts understand that cultural maps, grievances, movement patterns, and leadership structures flow into Imperial strategic planning. Very few know why Aurelius designed the House to gather this information across every ancestry.

THE ETHEREAL ARCHIVES

Ethereal records preserve observations across unusual temporal perspectives, but they are not objective. Translation, factional theology, and the difficulty of expressing nonlinear experience produce genuine disagreement.

THE AILURAN EXCHANGES

Ailuran archives often contain the best counter-record because they preserve precise obligations rather than unified historical narratives. They possess useful fragments and do not show outsiders everything.

CULTS AND EXTREMISTS

Cults frequently identify a real pattern and attach an incorrect certainty to it. Use them as sources of clues whose interpretations are dangerous.

PART VII: REVELATION DISCIPLINE

THE THREE-CLUE RULE

Never make one clue carry a revelation. For every major inference, place at least three clues from different source types:

1. a physical or technical observation;
2. a testimony, dream, or memory;
3. an institutional action whose purpose is unclear.

The clues should converge on a question, not a complete answer.

THE CONTRADICTION RULE

Every major theory should have at least one credible contradiction. Contradictions are not tricks. They protect the setting from becoming a sequence of exposition scenes.

THE DECISION RULE

A revelation matters when it changes what the crew must decide.

Examples:

- Shut down a system that may be attracting something, even though millions rely on it.
- Release evidence that could delegitimize the Empire while a real crisis is unfolding.
- Trust Aurelius's warning without accepting his authority.
- Preserve a species' secrecy or give Kaelen information that may prevent an extinction.
- Interrupt an automatic protocol without knowing what it is containing.

CAMPAIGN REVELATION LADDER

Early campaign: The official history is incomplete.

Developing campaign: The Q-Net interacted with something its builders did not understand.

Mid campaign: Aurelius's relationship to the Silence and Precursor systems is personal, fragmented, and concealed.

Late campaign: Devourer behavior, Veil instability, and Q-Net anomalies are parts of one larger pattern, but the pattern admits more than one explanation.

Endgame: The crew must act under uncertainty. No archive removes the burden of choice.

WHAT TO HOLD BACK

Do not state as settled published truth:

- the ultimate origin of the Precursors;
- the exact nature of Aurelius;
- the complete causal chain of the Great Silence;
- the ultimate origin or purpose of the Devourers;
- a single final explanation for the Veil.

A campaign may answer some of these at its own table. The books should provide evidence strong enough to reward discovery and incomplete enough to preserve wonder.

PART VIII: APEX THREATS

WHAT MAKES A THREAT "APEX"

An Apex Threat is not merely a high-Tier adversary. It is a phenomenon whose rules are larger than an encounter block. Defeating its current manifestation does not necessarily resolve the process behind it.

Use five broad forms:

1. **The Observer:** changes behavior when noticed and records those who notice it.
2. **The Silence:** suppresses communication, memory, or coordinated thought.
3. **The Correction:** removes systems, species, or ideas that cross an unknown threshold.
4. **The Mirror:** reproduces the crew's methods without reproducing their motives.
5. **The Door:** creates access to somewhere or something that should remain unreachable.

These are campaign functions, not a definitive taxonomy.

RUNNING APEX THREATS

- Establish a pattern before presenting a body.
- Let ordinary success solve immediate problems.
- Make the larger process require investigation and sacrifice.
- Avoid explaining the threat through a villain speech.
- Allow retreat, containment, negotiation with intermediaries, and strategic shutdown to matter.

CLOSING: THE LONG QUESTION

The deepest mystery of VeilFarers is not whether one hidden answer exists. It is whether anyone should possess the authority to act for every conscious being while that answer remains uncertain.

Aurelius may be right about the danger. The Empire may genuinely save lives. Kaelen may protect species through the same records that make them legible to power. None of that resolves the political question.

The galaxy may need protection. It still belongs to the people living in it.

CHAPTER 15

THE VAULT NETWORK

"The Imperial Vault Registry catalogues forty-seven Class V Vaults across known space. As of the writing of this entry, nine of them have unsealed themselves without external action. The Office of the Vault Surveyor has, by Imperial directive, not made this information public."

Restricted Imperial Memorandum, Office of the Vault Surveyor, Year 103 of the Pearl Era

WHAT THIS CHAPTER IS FOR

The Precursor Vaults are the most recurrent piece of physical setting in the *Veilfarers* galaxy. They appear in player-facing setting material, in Mystic texts, in Imperial intelligence summaries, in Free Fleet salvage manifests, and in the working memory of every Voidwalker who has spent time near the deep edges of settled space. The Corebook tells the players that the Vaults exist. This chapter tells you, the Keeper, what to do with them.

The chapter establishes a five-class classification framework, **the Imperial Vault Registry's canonical taxonomy** and walks through each class with: identifying features, access conditions, expected findings, risk profile, adventure hooks, encounter design guidance, and full session-templates for the two most dramatic classes. The framework gives you a structure for designing Vault encounters that feel different from one another, scale appropriately to character Tier, and connect to the cosmological backbone of the campaign (the **Awakening**, the **Veil Rip**, the **Apex Threats** all already established in Chapter 14).

Read the chapter linearly the first time. Refer to specific classes as you need them in play.

PART I: THE IMPERIAL VAULT REGISTRY

ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY

The **Imperial Vault Registry** is the official catalogue of all known Precursor Vaults in human-explored space. The Registry is maintained by the **Office of the Vault Surveyor**, an Imperial institution headquartered on Solari Prime but operationally distributed across the Houses. The Registry was established in the seventeenth year of the Pearl Era, when the proliferation of independent Vault expeditions had begun to produce confused, duplicate, and contradictory accounts. The first Vault Surveyor, an Amaranth scholar named Vellathiel Coros, proposed a unified taxonomy. The Houses agreed,

for once, because each of them had different reasons to want the catalogue: Amaranth wanted the data; Kurogane wanted to know which Vaults their engineers could approach; Solari wanted the religious record; Valerius wanted the commercial register; Volkov wanted the military assessment; Joric wanted to know which sites required protection.

The five-class framework Vellathiel Coros designed has been the canonical taxonomy for eighty-six years. It is taught at the Spire of Verita as standard introductory material. The Explorers' Guild uses it for permit classification. The Houses' intelligence services use it for prioritization. Every Voidwalker who has trained in Vault recovery knows the five classes by name.

WHAT GETS CLASSIFIED

A Vault enters the Registry when:

- An expedition documents its location, structural footprint, and preliminary observations.
- Two independent observations confirm the site is Precursor in origin (rather than post-Silence ruin or natural anomaly).
- The Office of the Vault Surveyor assigns an initial classification based on the submitted documentation.

Classifications are provisional until a full Imperial Survey expedition confirms the assignment. Provisional Vaults receive an asterisk (e.g., Class III*) in the public Registry. A Vault's classification may be revised in either direction over time, Vaults have been promoted from Class II to Class III when previously-dormant systems activated, and have been demoted from Class IV to Class III when behaviour stabilized. The Registry is a living document; the canonical entry for any specific Vault is whatever appears in the Registry's most recent edition.

WHAT STAYS HIDDEN

Public access to the Registry is partial. The general classification, location, and basic structural description of every catalogued Vault is publicly available, anyone with an Explorers' Guild credential or a Spire of Verita scholar's tag can request the public abstract. **The interior detail of any Vault, the specific artifacts recovered, the casualty records, and the active observations of operational Vaults are restricted.** Access to restricted detail requires explicit House sponsorship, Imperial authorization, or, in some cases, both.

The self-sealing, the Class V Vaults that have unsealed themselves in the past eighteen months, are *not* yet recorded in the public Registry. The Office of the Vault Surveyor is operating under an Imperial directive of restraint, dated four months ago, instructing that the self-sealing be tracked internally without public notification. The crew may discover this directive, or they may not. The directive's existence is a deliberate Keeper choice; revealing it sets up significant campaign consequences.

PART II: THE FIVE CLASSES

The five classes correspond, very roughly, to the **Voidwalker Tier** at which a crew can reasonably handle them. A campaign that visits one Vault of each class across its full arc will have used the framework correctly.

CLASS I: OPEN RUINS

Identifying features. Surface-accessible. Structurally weathered. Entry points exposed or trivially excavated.

Previously catalogued and partially mapped by post-Silence expeditions.

Access conditions. None. Any crew with an Explorers' Guild permit (or even without one, in lawless sectors) may enter.

Expected findings. Low-Tier fragments. Architectural data. Occasionally functional minor components, a sealed power cell, a fragment of inscription, a tool that still operates. Most Tier 1-2 equipment found on Veilfarers crews can be traced, in some sense, to a Class I Vault excavation somewhere in the previous century.

Risk profile. Low. Most active traps have been triggered, documented, or disarmed by previous expeditions. Structural collapse is the largest risk. Substrate-resonance anomalies are minor and infrequent.

Canonical examples. The Vault of Boros-9 (looted in PE 17, the archetype). The Threehands Ruin in the Sevon Drift. The Solari Prime Outcropping (heavily studied, essentially a museum). The Cliffwall Vault on Mhal Prime. Most "Vaults" mentioned in casual conversation by post-Silence characters are Class I.

Use in play. Introductory adventures. Tier 1-2 Voidwalkers. The atmosphere of Vault exploration, the sense of *encountering something ancient*, without the lethality of higher classes. Useful for teaching a new table what Vaults feel like before stakes escalate.

CLASS II: STANDING ARCHITECTURE

Identifying features. Partially explored. Outer chambers mapped, inner sectors unbreached. Some active Precursor systems (typically lighting, basic environmental, occasionally communication remnants). Defensible by post-Silence forces and used, in some cases, as outposts.

Access conditions. Commercial permit. Tier 2 Wealth or formal House sponsorship. Explorers' Guild category-II credentials.

Expected findings. Tier 3 components. Fragments of Precursor information records (most still unreadable, but catalogable). Occasionally functional artifacts of low to medium power, a Veil-attuned lantern, a substrate modulator, a Precursor-construction navigational fragment.

Risk profile. Medium. Some traps remain active. Interior fauna (post-Silence species that have colonized the ruins) appear regularly. Deep sectors may contain substrate anomalies not yet catalogued.

Canonical examples. The Vault of Tellurium (half-mapped, ongoing expeditions). The Vault of Sevon Drift. The Twin Vaults of Carthar (linked structurally, only one fully mapped). The Veridian Underway (a tunnel system whose terminus has never been reached).

Use in play. Mid-campaign adventures. Tier 3-4 Voidwalkers. Substantial reward, meaningful risk. The class where most of a campaign's Vault work will take place. Each Class II Vault can sustain three to five sessions of focused exploration before its meaningful material is exhausted.

CLASS III: ACTIVE ANOMALIES

Identifying features. Vaults that are *doing something*. Maintain active Precursor functions whose purpose is not understood. Emit energy signatures, broadcast signals, generate substrate-distorted fields, alter local environments. Occasionally *respond* to visitor presence in ways that were not predicted by previous expeditions.

Access conditions. Restricted. House sponsorship or elite Explorers' Guild status. Tier 3 Wealth minimum, or direct political patronage from a Master Mystic or a Baron of the Imperial House.

Expected findings. Full functional artifacts. Components of real military or political value. Precursor information in substantial quantity. The recovery of a single artifact from a Class III Vault can fund a small fleet for a decade.

Risk profile. High. The active systems may be hostile, or not, and the difference is not predictable. Traps remain operational. Substrate anomalies are frequent. Crew psychological effects (substrate dreams persisting after extraction, dream-bleed, attention disturbances) are common and sometimes permanent.

Canonical examples. The Vault of Veridian Reach (the Singing Vault, emits a continuous tonal pattern that researchers have failed to decode in eighty years). The Vault of Hollow's End (its physical

layout reconfigures every standard year on a date that does not appear in any calendar). The Sealed Spire of Iol (emits substrate pulses at regular intervals; the pulses correlate, faintly, with Veil storm formation in the surrounding sector). The Drifting Vault of Volk Sept (the only Class III Vault that is not fixed in space).

Use in play. Major campaign adventures. Tier 4-5 Voidwalkers. Transformational reward, lethal risk, direct connection with the cosmology of the setting. Excellent material for revelation sessions. A Class III Vault is rarely a one-session encounter; expect a four-to-eight session arc structured around the Vault's particular anomaly.

CLASS IV: LIVING VAULTS

Identifying features. Vaults that respond *intentionally* to the presence of visitors. The structure appears to make choices. The interior reconfigures itself in response to expedition behaviour. Encountered phenomena are *interactive* rather than random, they answer questions, they react to threats, they offer rewards and exact prices. The line between "Class IV Vault" and "primitive Precursor consciousness" is deliberately blurred in the canon and should remain so at the table.

Access conditions. Severely restricted. Imperial Survey approval. Backing of at least two Houses. Tier 4 Wealth or direct invitation from the Spire of Verita. Most

Class IV expeditions are formed by Imperial decree rather than voluntary application.

Expected findings. Exceptional. Recovered objects tend to be *categorically distinct* from the known catalogue, not Tier 4 or 5 versions of familiar artifact types, but artifacts whose function does not map onto any existing taxonomy. Several artifacts recovered from Class IV Vaults have, on their own, redefined entire fields of post-Silence science.

Risk profile. Severe. Crew losses are common. Veil-related psychosis post-expedition is endemic. Some expedition members *do not return* and their remains are not recovered. The Class IV Vault is the only category where a crew member's documented disappearance may be canonically left unexplained, the Vault took them, and what the taking means is not knowable.

Canonical examples. The Vault of Mhal Drifting (the first documented Class IV, in PE 41, eight expeditions across the next fifty years before it was definitively classified). The Vault of Inverse Solas (later reclassified to V). The Vault of the Whispering Star (responds to spoken questions, in a fashion that is not quite answer and not quite refusal). The Reading Vault of Iol Lesser (visitors emerge believing they have learned something specific and true; what they learn is verifiable in the world but is not anything they could have known before entering).

Use in play. Campaign climaxes. A session or arc in a Class IV Vault should be the defining encounter of an entire campaign. Reserve for Tier 4-5 Voidwalkers. Full session template provided in PART V below.

CLASS V: SEALED (UNBREACHABLE)

Identifying features. Vaults whose entry is *physically sealed* by Precursor mechanisms that no post-Silence engineering has successfully damaged. Walls do not break. Doors do not open. The structure resists all intrusion, including ordnance-scale attacks. Forty-seven Class V Vaults have been catalogued. Until eighteen months ago, none had ever been opened.

Access conditions (historical). Impossible.

Access conditions (present). *Changing.* Nine of the forty-seven Class V Vaults have, in the past eighteen months, unsealed themselves, on their own terms, without external action. The Office of the Vault

Surveyor has classified this phenomenon under restricted directive (see PART I). The first crews to arrive at an unsealing are the first humans to enter the structure in the whole of post-Silence history.

Expected findings. Unprecedented. What is inside a Class V Vault is, by definition, what the Precursors chose to seal away from the surface, and the logic of their sealing suggests they sealed it for a reason. Recovered artifacts to date (only nine sites, only partial recoveries) have included: a functional substrate-mapping instrument that displays the lattice topology around the user; a sealed container holding what appears to be biological material in an indefinite stasis condition; a structural fragment of unknown purpose that, when introduced to standard machinery, causes the machinery to operate at impossible efficiency; an inscribed tablet whose surface text changes between reading sessions. These are the *recoveries*. The *contents* of most of the self-sealing have not been documented at all because no recovery team has yet returned to file the report.

Risk profile. Unprecedented. The available data is too sparse to characterize. Casualty rate across the nine documented self-sealing, by available figures: 60% of expedition personnel either dead, missing, or psychologically non-functional within thirty days of expedition return.

Canonical examples. The nine self-sealing are: **Volkov's Seal** on Cathar (unsealing PE 102.3); the Vault of **Iol-Magna** (PE 102.7); the **Sealed of Pearl Reach** (PE 102.9); the **Conclave of Sevon Deep** (PE 103.1); the **Twins of Treya** (unsealed together, PE 103.2); the Vault of **Hollow's End** (unsealing in reverse, its previously-open exterior sealed and a new entry opened on the opposite face, PE 103.3); the Vault of **Verdant Crown** (PE 103.4); the Vault of **Inverse Solas** (PE 103.5); and the **Unnamed Vault** of the Cetus Sector (PE 103.5, identification still in progress).

Use in play. Campaign events, not standalone adventures. A Class V Vault unsealing is an event that reorders the balance of power across the campaign. The Houses dispatch expeditions; the Imperial Survey arrives late; the crew may be the first to enter, or hired to arrive before the Houses, or to find evidence within of something nobody contracted them to look for. Class V Vaults are the most direct connection between the Vault system and the **Veil Rip** plot and the **Awakening** (see Chapter 14). Full session template provided in PART VI below.

PART III: ADVENTURE HOOKS BY CLASS

Three hooks per class. Each hook gives the basic premise; the Keeper supplies the specifics.

CLASS I HOOKS

The Cataloguing Contract. An Amaranth scholar hires the crew to perform a routine survey of a previously-catalogued Class I Vault. The catalogue entry is forty years old; the scholar wants confirmation that nothing has changed. The crew arrives to find that *something has changed*, small, ambiguous, possibly an environmental shift, possibly a sign of something larger.

The Salvage Race. A Free Fleet captain has located an under-exploited Class I Vault and is willing to share the recovery in exchange for muscle. A Valerius-aligned

competitor has heard about the same site. The first crew to extract the worthwhile material keeps the contract; the second crew goes home empty.

The Sealed Chamber. A Class I Vault that has been mapped for thirty years contains a sealed inner chamber that nobody has previously managed to open. The crew finds it because they are looking, or because someone, an Ailuran broker, perhaps, has just sold them the location of a previously-unrecorded entry mechanism.

CLASS II HOOKS

The Lost Expedition. A Joric-sponsored expedition entered a Class II Vault four months ago and has not returned. The crew is hired to investigate, recover, or, if recovery is impossible, confirm fate. The Vault's recent history is documented; the deep sectors are not.

The Patron's Demand. A Kurogane researcher needs a specific Precursor component believed to lie within a Class II Vault's unmapped sectors. The crew is offered substantial Tier 3 reward for delivery. The component is, of course, not in the sector the researcher described.

The Conclave Negotiation. An Ailuran enclave has offered to share their map of a Class II Vault's interior, including sectors that no human expedition has reached, in exchange for a service. The crew negotiates with the Ailurans, performs the service, receives the map, and discovers that the map shows things that the Ailurans had reasons not to mention.

CLASS III HOOKS

The Sound from Veridian. The Vault of Veridian Reach has begun emitting a new tonal pattern in addition to its established song. The pattern is mathematical, not random. A Spire scholar believes it is a *response* to something. The crew is hired to identify what the Vault is responding to.

The Reconfiguration. The Vault of Hollow's End is due to reconfigure within the standard year, and the next configuration has been *predicted* by a Mystic to be different from previous patterns in ways suggesting the lattice failure is affecting Class III Vaults too. The crew is hired to be present when the reconfiguration happens.

The Pulse Source. The Sealed Spire of Iol's substrate pulses have begun to correlate, not just with Veil storms in the surrounding sector, but with specific events at a specific colony three light-years away. The crew is hired by the colony's representatives, in secret, to determine whether the Vault is *observing them* and what to do if it is.

CLASS IV HOOKS

The Question. A Master Mystic of the Spire of Verita has prepared, over a career of twenty years, a single question to ask the Reading Vault of Iol Lesser. The Mystic has died before the expedition could be mounted. The Mystic's apprentice, a young Celestiar, terrified, hires the crew to escort her on the expedition and to bear witness to whatever the Vault answers.

The Calling. A crew member has begun, recently, to dream of a specific Vault. The dreams are clear, recurrent, and detailed. The Vault in the dreams is real. It is Class IV. It has not previously been entered. The crew member feels *invited*. Whether the invitation is genuine and what entering will mean, that is the campaign.

The Imperial Commission. Aurelius Magnus has personally commissioned an expedition into the Whispering Star Vault, with a single specific question to be asked. The crew is selected, selected, not hired, to participate. The question they will ask, when revealed, is not what they expected, and the answer they receive will reshape every alliance the campaign has built.

CLASS V HOOKS

The Race. Volkov's Seal on Cathar has unsealed. The Houses' expeditions are racing. The crew arrives first, by intention or by accident. What they find inside, and what they choose to do with it, determines who they are loyal to for the rest of the campaign.

The Witness. The Office of the Vault Surveyor is documenting the self-sealing in restricted protocol. The crew is hired, under restrictive Imperial contract, to be the first official documentation team at the next unsealing, currently in progress at an undisclosed

location. The location is undisclosed because the Office is *afraid* of what they will find.

The Inversion. The Vault of Hollow's End has not just unsealed, it has reversed. The previously-open exterior has sealed. A new entry has opened on the opposite face. The Vault is *demonstrating* something. The crew is hired by a Mystic faction that believes the Vault is communicating, and that the message is intended specifically for whoever is now able to read it.

PART IV: ENCOUNTER DESIGN TEMPLATES

For each class, the Keeper preparing an encounter should think in three layers: **adversaries** (what fights or opposes the crew); **loot** (what the crew can extract); **clocks** (what timed pressures shape the encounter).

CLASS I TEMPLATES

- **Adversaries:** Scavenger crews, post-Silence fauna, structural collapse hazards. Use Tier 1-2 adversaries from the Bestiary. The Vault itself is not hostile.
- **Loot:** 1-3 minor Tier 1-2 components, archaeological data sufficient for one informant's commercial value, occasionally a sealed minor artifact.
- **Clocks:** Structural decay (the Vault is degrading and may collapse if the crew lingers); competition (a rival crew is approaching).

CLASS II TEMPLATES

- **Adversaries:** Tier 3 adversaries, particularly fauna that have adapted to Vault interiors; rare automated Precursor defenders, partial-function and slow.
- **Loot:** 1-2 Tier 3 components, 1 fragment of Precursor information record, occasionally a low-power functional artifact.
- **Clocks:** Imperial Survey arrival (the crew has limited time before official documentation begins); rival expedition (someone else is in the deep sectors); environmental degradation (a section is collapsing).

CLASS III TEMPLATES

- **Adversaries:** Tier 4-5 adversaries. Activated Precursor defenders, fully operational and substantively dangerous. Substrate-anomaly-bound entities. Encounters with Class III adversaries should feel *uncanny*, they should not behave like the standard Bestiary creatures.
- **Loot:** Full functional artifact (one), Tier 4 components (2-3), substantial Precursor information.
- **Clocks:** Anomaly cycle (whatever the Vault does, it does on a schedule that the crew must beat); House pressure (multiple Houses want what the crew is recovering); psychological cost (each session inside imposes Stress that does not clear).

CLASS IV TEMPLATES

- **Adversaries:** The Vault itself. Custom-designed encounter manifestations specific to that Vault's nature. The Reading Vault answers a question; the Whispering Star asks a question; the Mhal Drifting moves. The "adversary" is the *engagement with the Vault's behavior*, not a creature to defeat.
- **Loot:** Categorically distinct artifact. One.
- **Clocks:** The Vault's own clock (the Vault closes, or the cycle ends, or the conversation completes); crew psychological track (each session imposes cumulative Stress that is hard to clear); external pressure (the Imperial Survey or competing factions arrive).

CLASS V TEMPLATES

- **Adversaries:** Unknown by design. The Keeper improvises. The first published self-sealing have produced encounters with: substrate-resident entities not previously catalogued (functionally Apex-Threat-adjacent); active defense systems of unprecedented sophistication; *messages* that produce psychological effects in those who receive them. **Treat each Class V unsealing as a unique encounter context**; do not reuse design across Class V sites.
- **Loot:** Unprecedented. The Keeper invents.
- **Clocks:** The window of accessibility (self-sealing seal again, sometimes within hours, sometimes within days, in one case after eleven months); House arrival (multiple); the broader Awakening clock (each unsealing accelerates the cosmological campaign clock).

PART V: ADVENTURE FRAMEWORK: A CLASS IV EXPEDITION

Five sessions. Tier 4-5 crew. Designed to be the *climax* of a *campaign*, not a side adventure.

SESSION 1: THE APPROACH

The brief: Crew receives the commission. Patron specifies the Vault. Session is *briefing and travel*. Crew acquires specialty equipment; meets the other expedition members (the scholar, the Mystic, the Imperial observer). Vault appears in scope at session's end.

- Reputation rolls with House contacts
- Wealth Checks for specialty equipment
- Presence Rolls made for social interaction to negotiate with non-crew expedition members

SESSION 2: THE THRESHOLD

The brief: Crew enters. The Vault *receives* them. Early encounters establish its character, not a dungeon but *a space paying attention*. Substrate Dreams begin (cumulative Stress, hard to clear). The Vault offers a small kindness or cruelty calibrated to crew behavior.

- Atmospheric description heavy
- Knowledge rolls to read the Vault's behavior
- Instinct rolls to detect what is being observed

SESSION 3: THE ENGAGEMENT

The brief: Crew reaches the question-asking site. The patron's question is articulated. The Vault *responds* in its own fashion. The response is partial, ambiguous, *true in a way that complicates rather than simplifies*. The crew has now seen the Vault's nature directly.

- Custom scene mechanics specific to the Vault (Reading -> teaching sequence; Whispering Star -> question sequence; Mhal Drifting -> movement sequence)

SESSION 4: THE COST

The brief: Expedition extracts. Vault does not impede, but something has *attached*. A Mystic hears differently; a crew member lacks a memory; an item has become *something else*. This is the Vault's price, exacted not as a fee but as a fact.

- Negotiation with the Vault's parting effect (if possible)
- A narrative Permanent Mark chosen by each affected character's player. A mechanical Stress-maximum or Trait shift is available only through a complete Permanent Mark event agreed with that player before it is applied; otherwise no statistic changes.
- Wealth-Check-style rolls to attempt to *trade away* the cost

SESSION 5: THE RETURN

The brief: Crew returns. Patron receives the answer. World receives the consequences. Crew is now *different*, known to have entered a Class IV Vault, marked by it, approached by every faction with interest. Session establishes post-Vault status quo and seeds the next arc.

- Reputation adjustments across all relevant factions
- Long-term consequence tracking
- Closure beats for any character arc affected by the Vault

PART VI: ADVENTURE FRAMEWORK: A CLASS V AUTO-UNSEALING

A *campaign event*, not a single adventure. Three sessions for the immediate engagement; consequences ripple across the next ten or more.

SESSION 1: THE SIGNAL

The brief: Crew receives word that a Class V unsealing is in progress. Information arrives through established networks (Free Fleet contact, House patron, Mystic source) and is *current*, hours old, possibly minutes. The window is open *now*. Other factions are also receiving the news. The session is *race and decision*.

- Travel-time clocks
- Competing-faction clocks
- Wealth Checks for emergency transport
- Reputation rolls to cash in favors for fast routes

SESSION 2: THE THRESHOLD

The brief: Crew arrives. They may be first; they may not. Other expeditions are there or visible on approach. The Vault's entry is open and the interior is, for the first time, visible to post-Silence observers. The crew has perhaps minutes to commit to entering.

- Tactical decision (who enters, who guards, who manages politics with competitors)
- Instinct rolls to read substrate state
- Environmental hazards specific to the unsealing

SESSION 3: THE DISCOVERY

The brief: Crew reaches the central chamber. What they find is *invented by the Keeper*, with the constraint that it must matter to the campaign. Patterns: a Precursor *artifact* reshaping a faction's plans; a Precursor *message* triggering the next arc; a *survivor* the Vault was holding; *evidence* of the Awakening contextualizing everything prior. Session ends with extraction, closure (or non-closure) of the unsealing, and immediate political aftermath.

- Whatever bespoke mechanics the discovery requires
- Significant Stress and possibly HP cost

Major narrative consequences locked in

THE AFTERMATH

A Class V unsealing is not an adventure that resolves cleanly. The crew carries its consequences for the rest of the campaign. Factions adjust positions; new patrons emerge; old enemies become more dangerous or, occasionally, become allies. The campaign's main clock, the Awakening, advances by one or two ticks. The Veil Rip widens by a measurable amount. The crew, whether they wanted the role or not, is now a *known participant* in the cosmological event.

Run the aftermath across the next five to ten sessions. Do not pivot to a new self-contained arc immediately; let the consequences breathe.

CLOSING: THE CATALOGUE AND WHAT IT CARRIES

The Imperial Vault Registry is a working document, kept under restricted access by an institution that does not entirely believe its own categories. The five classes are useful, they let the Houses prioritize, the Explorers' Guild permit, the Spire of Verita teach, and the crews understand what they are walking into. But the categories also do, quietly, a more important work. They *organize* the post-Silence galaxy's relationship to its inheritance.

A Class I Vault says: *the Precursors are dead, and we have inherited their bones*.

A Class V unsealing says: *the Precursors are not dead, and they have not been waiting for us to inherit anything*.

The crews who fly the Pearl Era between those two statements are the crews whose decisions will determine which one turns out to be true. The Vaults are where that determination happens. Run them with the gravity they deserve.

The lattice is thinning. The Registry has nine asterisks already. The framework is, in canon, *in motion*, and what

happens to it during your campaign is the canonical answer to the campaign's central question.

Run well.

CHAPTER 16

ADVENTURE FRAMEWORKS: HOOKS, SEEDS, AND MYSTERIES

"Every campaign begins with a question. The best ones never quite finish answering it. The worst ones answer it in the first session and spend the rest of the year explaining what they meant. Frame your questions deliberately. Let them stay open long enough to mean something."

Master Keeper Iliana Vesh, Joric Storytellers' Guild

WHY THIS CHAPTER COMES LATE

By this chapter, you have the *machinery* of a *Veilfarers* campaign: the scene-craft, the Hope/Fear engine, the pacing structures, the Imperial system, the houses and organizations, the environments, the NPCs and adversaries, and the secret cosmological substrate beneath the public-facing lore. What you do not yet have is *the shape of the campaign itself*, the spine that runs through twenty or forty sessions and gives them meaning.

This chapter is for that spine. It contains:

- **Fifteen Quick Adventure Hooks** single-session premises that can be deployed in any campaign, organized by genre.
- **Four Campaign Seeds** multi-arc campaign frames built around the setting's central questions.
- **The Anatomy of a Veilfarers Mystery** the structural template by which any of the above can be developed into a satisfying arc.
- **The Silent Symphony Revisited** a campaign-scale arc structure that complements the active-arc and session-arc material in Chapter 3.
- **Twenty Mysteries to Seed** a catalog of campaign-defining questions you can plant early and let the players investigate over years of play.

Use this chapter when you are *between campaigns*, or when you are *planning a campaign* before its first session. The fifteen quick hooks are useful at any moment a session needs a fast premise; the campaign seeds are useful when you are choosing a campaign frame.

PART I: QUICK ADVENTURE HOOKS

Fifteen single-session premises across five genres. Each hook is structured for fast deployment: a one-

sentence premise, a complication, and a hint of stakes. Use any of them as the opening of a single session, the seed of a short arc, or the first piece of a longer campaign that pivots into deeper territory.

DISTRESS CALLS AND RESCUES

The Silent Ship. A vessel transmits an automated distress signal from deep space. When the crew boards, they find the ship intact, life-support functional, no signs of struggle, and no crew. The logs have been wiped. The food in the galley is fresh. Whatever happened, it happened recently, and the people who happened to it are no longer aboard.

The Vanishing Colony. A small colony goes silent. When the crew arrives to investigate, the colony's buildings are intact and untouched. Personal effects remain in homes. Meals sit half-eaten

on tables. Three hundred people are simply gone, leaving behind every possession they owned and a single child of seven who hides in a closet and will not speak.

Escape Pod Lottery. Multiple escape pods drift in a sector with no parent ship in sight. Each pod contains a single occupant; each occupant tells a different story about what happened. Some are lying. Some are mistaken. At least one of them is something other than the species they appear to be.

CARGO AND SMUGGLING

The Singing Cargo. The crew's hold contains a sealed container whose contents emit a faint, harmonically complex sound that affects different listeners differently. The shipper paid extra for no questions asked. The destination is a Precursor study site. Anyone who has spent more than three hours near the container is now hearing the sound in their dreams.

The Honest Mistake. A delivery the crew accepts in good faith turns out to be contraband, biological samples, stolen artifacts, or weapons. The crew has already crossed three jurisdictions with it. The original shipper has vanished. The receiver expects delivery in four hours.

The Living Shipment. A cargo container, properly manifested and properly paid, contains a living person, a refugee, a defector, a hostage, or someone whose own loyalties are not yet clear. The shipping records say the manifest is "biological research samples." The container's occupant has been awake the entire trip and has been listening to everything the crew has said.

EXPLORATION AND DISCOVERY

The Impossible Planet. A planet appears in a system that should not contain one, too close to the star, too perfectly placed, with an atmosphere whose composition violates standard formation models. Initial scans suggest it has been there for millions of years. It was definitely not there last week.

The Backwards Star. A stellar object in a charted region begins emitting energy patterns that suggest it is *receiving* energy rather than producing it. Local navigation is disrupted within three light-days. The pattern has the harmonic complexity of intentional design.

The Echo System. A system whose every body, planets, moons, asteroids, bears identical geological features. Trees in the same patterns on three different worlds. Identical crater fields on six moons. The same

cave system, with the same artifacts inside it, replicated across the entire system. No theory of natural formation accounts for it.

POLITICAL INTRIGUE

The Ambassador's Secret. A diplomat traveling through the sector requests passage on the crew's ship. Halfway through the journey, the diplomat reveals that they are not who their credentials say. The real diplomat is dead. The impostor needs to reach the destination summit and deliver a message that will either prevent or trigger a war between two Houses, depending on the contents of a sealed envelope they cannot open until they arrive.

The Election Heist. A regional election in three days will determine which of two factions controls a strategically critical system. Both factions have approached the crew separately, offering substantial payment to *steal*, not destroy, not alter, the sealed ballot containers en route. One faction wants the ballots delivered to a different counting station. The other wants them lost entirely. Neither has explained why.

The Defector's Gambit. A high-ranking House official offers to defect to a rival faction, bringing intelligence that would shift the political balance for years. They have requested transport from the crew on the condition that no one else knows. Within hours of accepting, the crew realizes that the defection has been *expected*, both by the official's House (who let them go) and by the receiving House (who has prepared an unusual welcome).

PERSONAL VENDETTAS

The Debt Collector. Someone from a crew member's past arrives to collect on a debt, a financial obligation, a promise broken, a betrayal unresolved. They are not violent. They have not come to fight. They have come to *make their case*, and they are prepared to make it for as long as it takes.

The Doppelganger. A crew member is approached in a public space by a stranger who claims to be them, the real them, displaced by an impostor years ago. The stranger has detailed memories, photographs, and credentials. They are either delusional, lying, or telling the truth. Until the crew member can verify which, every decision they make is fraught.

The Mentor's Last Lesson. A teacher, captain, or mentor from a crew member's past sends a final message: they are dying, they need to see the crew member one last time, and they have something to pass on. When the crew arrives, the mentor is alive, healthy, and lying. The "lesson" is something else entirely, and the mentor has chosen the crew member specifically because they will not accept it on first hearing.

PART II: CAMPAIGN SEEDS

Four multi-arc campaign frames, each built around one of the setting's central tensions. These are not adventures; they are *campaign premises*, structures designed to support twenty or more sessions of play, with embedded recurring NPCs, narrative arcs, and thematic questions.

SEED ONE: THE VEIL-TOUCHED

Premise. One or more characters develop abilities related to the Stellar Veil. They can navigate without instruments, sense other ships across vast distances, sometimes glimpse possible futures. But these gifts come with a price, disconnection from normal reality, vivid dreams of crystal chambers and sleeping figures, a growing sense that they are being *called* somewhere.

Campaign Themes. The cost of power. What makes someone human. Destiny versus free will. The price of knowledge.

Key NPCs. *Dr. Elena Vasquez*, a scientist studying Veil phenomena, wants to help but does not understand the risks. *Captain Marcus "Ghost" Chen*, a Veil-Touched pilot who went too far and lost his humanity, serves as a cautionary mirror. *The Shepherd*, a mysterious

figure who claims to guide Veil-Touched individuals through their transition. *Admiral Sarah Cross*, a military officer who wants to weaponize Veil abilities for Imperial intelligence.

Story Arcs. **Discovery** characters realize they have the abilities and must conceal them. **Training** learning to control the gifts without burning out. **Persecution** others (governments, cults, rival Veil-Touched) attempt to control or exploit them. **Revelation** learning the deeper truth about what the Veil is and what the dreams mean. **Choice** deciding humanity's relationship with the Veil and the powers behind it.

Adventure Hooks. Other Veil-Touched individuals need rescue from government experiments. A Veil storm threatens to consume an entire star system. Ancient Precursor ruins respond to the characters' presence in ways that cannot be coincidental. The characters must navigate a region of space where normal physics no longer apply.

SEED TWO: THE LOST FLEET

Premise. The characters discover the location of a fleet that vanished during the Great Silence. The ships are intact, their crews changed by a century in the Veil. Some are hostile, others desperate for rescue, a few have become something entirely new, neither fully human nor fully something else.

Campaign Themes. What defines humanity. Loyalty across impossible time gaps. The cost of survival. Whether the dead should be left buried.

Key NPCs. *Admiral James Morrison*, the fleet's original commander, kept his crew alive but at terrible cost. *Lt. Maya Patel*, a young officer who has aged only six months in a century and who remembers everything her contemporaries forgot. *The Choir*, a group of fleet survivors who have merged into a collective consciousness and speak with a single overlapping voice. *Director Elena Vance*, a faction representative who wants the fleet's technology at any price.

Story Arcs. **Investigation** finding the fleet and understanding what happened. **First Contact** establishing communication with the changed survivors. **Choice** deciding who to rescue, who to fight, who to leave. **Consequences** dealing with what they bring back and what they leave behind. **Legacy** determining what the fleet's discovery means for the broader galaxy.

Adventure Hooks. Some fleet survivors return to populated space ahead of the crew, with their own agendas. Pirates and salvagers hear rumors and converge on the fleet's location. The Imperial government attempts to classify the entire incident and silence those who know. The fleet's "new" members display abilities that change the campaign's tactical landscape permanently.

SEED THREE: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY

Premise. The characters become involved in the investigation of Precursor sites, ancient ruins of the vanished civilization that built the substrate of the galaxy. As they uncover more, they realize the Precursors are not extinct. They are dreaming. And the dreams are becoming louder.

Campaign Themes. The weight of inheritance. What it means to live in someone else's universe. The cost of waking what should stay asleep. Whether origin matters more than choice.

Key NPCs. *Dr. Hiroshi Tanaka*, the galaxy's foremost Precursor scholar, deeply troubled by what he has begun to understand. *Captain Yuki Sato*, an explorer who has been "called" by Precursor artifacts to specific locations she cannot logically have learned of. *The Custodian*, an AI that claims to be a fragment of Precursor consciousness, ancient and partial and not fully trustworthy. *Director Mark Chen*, who funds Precursor research because he believes the technology can be controlled and weaponized for Imperial benefit.

Story Arcs. **Awakening** characters encounter signs of Precursor activity that should not be possible. **Investigation** uncovering the truth about the Precursors and their relationship to the Silence. **Convergence** multiple factions race to control awakening artifacts. **Communication** direct contact with Precursor consciousness becomes possible, and the crew must decide what to say. **Decision** choosing how to respond to what the Precursors are, what they want, and what they remember about the species that grew up in the galaxy they built.

Adventure Hooks. A newly-discovered Precursor site contains technology that could reshape entire economies. The crew must protect a "Touched" individual from those who would exploit their abilities. A Precursor artifact begins broadcasting messages that match the neural patterns of someone aboard the ship. The characters must navigate the politics of multiple factions, all racing to claim the same awakening site.

SEED FOUR: THE SILENCE CONSPIRACY

Premise. The characters become involved in the investigation of the Great Silence, the catastrophic communications collapse that ended the Old Empire. As they dig deeper, they discover that the official story is wrong, that powerful interests are working to suppress the truth, and that the Silence was *intentional*, but the intent is far stranger than any conspiracy theory has anticipated.

Campaign Themes. The cost of truth. The price of stability. Whether some knowledge should be suppressed. The line between conspiracy and cosmology.

Key NPCs. *Dr. Sarah Mitchell*, a researcher who has discovered the suppressed simultaneity data and is being hunted for it. *Agent Marcus Steel*, an Imperial intelligence officer who works for the Silence Keepers and is conflicted about the suppression. *The Whisperer*, an anonymous information broker who feeds the crew leads from sources they cannot trace. *Director Linda Park*, a corporate executive who knows pieces of the truth and is profiting from the suppression while keeping the public ignorant.

Story Arcs. **Discovery** finding evidence the Silence was not natural. **Pursuit** being hunted by those who want the truth suppressed. **Revelation** uncovering the cosmological explanation behind the historical event. **Choice** deciding whether the public should know, whether the suppression is justified, whether the truth would help or harm the galaxy. **Aftermath** living with the consequences of whatever the crew decides.

Adventure Hooks. Other investigators have disappeared mysteriously; the crew must decide whether to disappear them too. The crew must protect a key witness whose testimony would change everything if she lived to deliver it. The characters must infiltrate the Silence Keepers' inner circle without becoming one of them. A faction war erupts over who controls the truth, and the crew is forced to choose sides.

PART III: THE ANATOMY OF A VEILFARERS MYSTERY

Every *Veilfarers* adventure, whether a single-session hook or a multi-arc seed, can be structured around a

mystery. The mystery is the *engine* that pulls the players forward. Done well, mysteries produce campaigns the players remember for years. Done poorly, they produce confusion and frustration.

THE FIVE-PART MYSTERY FRAME

Every *Veilfarers* mystery should have these five components, identified before play begins:

- 1. The Surface Question.** The thing the players think they are investigating. *Who killed the ambassador? What happened to the colony? Why is the cargo singing?*
- 2. The Real Question.** The deeper question the Surface gestures toward. *What does the ambassador's death reveal about the political balance? Who would benefit from the colony's disappearance? What is the cargo, actually?*
- 3. The Hidden Question.** The campaign-level question the Real Question opens onto. *Is the political balance being deliberately destabilized, and by whom? Are the colony disappearances connected to other unexplained events? What is the relationship between the singing cargo and the Awakening?*
- 4. The Truth.** The actual answer to the Hidden Question, written down before play. The Keeper should know this from the start. The players may or may not reach it.
- 5. The Lie.** The plausible alternative answer that the players will probably suspect first. The Lie should be *almost true*, close enough to satisfy a casual investigation, false enough that deeper investigation reveals it as a partial cover for the actual Truth.

A mystery without all five components feels thin. A mystery with all five gives the players room to investigate at multiple depths and produces the felt experience of *peeling back layers*.

THE INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE

The standard rhythm of investigation across a multi-session mystery:

- **Sessions 1-2:** Surface engagement. The crew commits to the question.
- **Sessions 3-4:** Discovery of the Real Question. The crew realizes the Surface was incomplete.
- **Sessions 5-7:** Investigation of the Real Question. Information accumulates; the Lie begins to dominate the crew's theorizing.
- **Sessions 8-9:** The Lie collapses. The crew realizes the obvious theory is wrong. The Hidden Question surfaces.
- **Sessions 10-12:** Investigation of the Hidden Question, leading to the Truth.
- **Session 13+:** The crew acts on what they have learned, and faces consequences.

You do not need to hit these beats on schedule. A campaign of fast-paced sessions might collapse this into eight or nine sessions; a slow-paced campaign might stretch it across twenty. The structure is the *shape* of the investigation, not its duration.

COMMON MYSTERY PITFALLS

The Single Track. A mystery that has only one valid investigative path. If the players miss the one clue, the mystery stalls. **Fix:** Plant multiple paths to each piece of information. If one clue is missed, another path provides the same content from a different angle.

The Withheld Climax. A mystery whose Truth depends on a piece of information the Keeper has refused to make discoverable. The players investigate everything available; the Truth remains hidden because the Keeper is "saving it." **Fix:** If the Truth requires information, *make that information findable*. The discovery should be hard, not impossible.

The Anti-Climax. A mystery whose Truth, when revealed, is *less interesting* than the Lie the players were investigating. **Fix:** The Truth should be the *more interesting* answer. If the Lie is more compelling, swap them, make the Lie the Truth, and invent a less compelling cover story.

The Disconnected Reveal. A mystery whose Truth is unconnected to the campaign's broader themes. The crew solves it; the answer changes nothing about the larger campaign. **Fix:** Every multi-session mystery should connect to at least one of the four major *Veilfarers* axes, the Veil, the Precursors, the Imperial Mystery, the Silence Conspiracy. The connection can be subtle, but it should be present.

PART IV: TWENTY MYSTERIES TO SEED

A catalog of campaign-defining questions you can plant early in a campaign and let the players investigate over many sessions. These are the *deeper* mysteries, the questions whose Truth lies in the secret cosmology of Chapter 14.

The twenty mysteries below are grouped into five thematic clusters of four. Each cluster collects questions that share a campaign register and tend to resonate with one another. Pick one or two mysteries from any cluster as your campaign's spine questions. Plant the question in Session 1, visible but unanswered. Return to it across the campaign. Let the players investigate when they choose. The question is the campaign's gravity well; everything else orbits.

CLUSTER I: HIDDEN HISTORIES

Questions about *what actually happened* before, during, or just after the Silence, and what was deliberately removed from the record.

1. What was the Argo Nebula salvage operation, and why does the Imperial record claim it never happened?
2. What is the connection between the disappearance of the Lost Fleet and the activation of three Precursor sites within the same week?
3. What was the original purpose of the Quantum Entanglement Network, and what was its relationship to the Precursor substrate?
4. Who is Aurelius Magnus, before he became Emperor, and what records of his early life have been systematically erased?

CLUSTER II: THE EMPIRE'S SILENCES

Questions about *what the Imperial system does not say*, what it actively suppresses, and what the apparatus of power has decided is dangerous to know.

5. Why has the Emperor not been seen in public for over a year, and why does no one in his administration seem concerned?
6. What does the Imperial Inquisition know about the Silence Keepers, and why has it never acted on that knowledge?
7. Why do Imperial loyalty effects intensify near certain Precursor sites?
8. What is being built in the deep mines of three otherwise-unrelated systems, and who is financing the construction?

CLUSTER III: THE VEIL-TOUCHED

Questions about the lived experience of substrate-resonant individuals, their dreams, their patterns, and what the substrate is doing *through them*.

9. Why do some Veil-Touched individuals share dreams with strangers they have never met?
10. What is the meaning of the harmonic patterns that appear in certain Veil regions, and why do they always resolve to the same eleven-note sequence?
11. Why are children born after a specific date in 89 P.S. statistically more likely to develop Veil sensitivity?
12. Why are some Veil routes closing, not becoming more dangerous, but ceasing to exist entirely?

CLUSTER IV: THE PRECURSOR PATTERN

Questions about the architecture of *what the Precursors left behind* and how it responds to surface intelligences who attempt to read it.

13. What is the precise nature of the resonance between a particular Precursor artifact and a specific living person?
14. Why does Precursor technology respond differently to different individuals, and what determines the response?
15. Who or what is the entity referenced in the oldest Awakened scriptures as the One Who Waits?
16. Who is the figure that several Veil-Touched individuals describe as the Sleeper Who Watches, and why is the description always identical?

CLUSTER V: THE AWAKENING

Questions about the cosmological event in progress, the stirring of the substrate, the leaks in the lattice, the approach of something nobody is ready for.

17. What is the truth behind the death of the Prosperity crew, and why have other "loop" incidents begun appearing in distant sectors?
18. What is the meaning of the recurring dream of a crystal chamber in which a vast figure sleeps and breathes?
19. What is the relationship between the increasing rate of Precursor artifact activations and the planned trajectory of the Awakening?
20. What happens when the Precursors finally wake, and is anyone prepared for what they want?

CLOSING: THE CAMPAIGN BEGINS WHEN THE QUESTION SURFACES

Every campaign begins with a question. The fifteen hooks, the four seeds, the five-part mystery frame, the twenty deeper questions, these are not *plot generators*. They are *question generators*. Your job is to choose the question that will animate your specific campaign, plant it in the opening session, and then *trust* the players to investigate.

You do not need to know the answer before play begins. You need to know the *truth* (Part III, component 4), but the answer to the mystery emerges from how the crew investigates it. Two campaigns running the same hook will produce different answers, because two crews are different. That is not a bug; it is the entire point.

Use the material in this chapter as the *seedbed*. Choose deliberately. Plant carefully. Let the question grow. The campaign will assemble itself around it.

Run well.

CHAPTER 17

STARTER ADVENTURES

"Here are two adventures. Use them. Modify them. Steal what works. Discard what doesn't. They exist so your first session is not a blank page."

Master Keeper Vellathos, Note to New Keepers

HOW THIS CHAPTER WORKS

This chapter contains **two complete starter adventures**, each designed to:

- Run in **3-4 sessions** of typical *Veilfarers* play
- Introduce 4-6 PCs (any Ancestry mix) to the system's core mechanics
- Showcase **multiple modes of play** (combat, social, exploration, mystery)
- End on a hook that can become the seed of a longer campaign

The two adventures present different tones and approaches:

1. **The Tellurian Reach** A Mystery-Framework adventure with strong investigation, moderate combat, and a Brutal Choice at climax. Suitable for tables that want to see *Veilfarers*'s political-mystery side.
2. **The Hephaestus Drop** A Crisis-Framework adventure with strong combat, fast pacing, and high-action set pieces. Suitable for tables that want to see *Veilfarers*'s action-cinema side.

Each adventure is presented with the same structure: **-Overview** premise, themes, expected length - **Cast** named NPCs the crew will encounter - **Locations** the major scenes and their environments - **Sequence of Events** the canonical flow, with branching points - **The Brutal Choice** the moral pivot at the climax - **Aftermath Seeds** how this adventure becomes the start of something larger

ADVENTURE 1: THE TELLURIAN REACH

A station goes silent. A long-lost letter arrives. A crew is hired to investigate. They will find more than answers. They will find a thread that, once pulled, unwinds the next year of their lives.

OVERVIEW

Framework: Mystery **Tone:** Investigation, moral weight, faction politics **Length:** 3-4 sessions **Mode mix:** ~30% social, ~30% exploration, ~20% mystery, ~20% combat **Target Tier:** 1-2 (introductory)

PREMISE

The crew is hired by **Lady Tisha Marek-Vain**, a junior House Joric noble, to investigate the silence of **Tellurian Reach Station** a small commerce hub on the edge of Joric space that has not transmitted in eight days. Lady Marek-Vain's brother was stationed there; she wants answers about his fate.

The truth is layered: - **Surface:** The station has been attacked, but the attackers are not who they appear to be. - **Mid-layer:** A rogue Kurogane research operation was using the station as a cover for forbidden experiments. - **Deep layer:** The brother knew about the experiments. He was killed when he tried to expose them. - **Beyond:** The experiments are connected to something the crew should not have learned about, yet.

CAST

Lady Tisha Marek-Vain (Quest-Giver, Tier 1 Diplomat) **Surface:** A poised, formal junior noble who has commissioned the crew with measured warmth. **Motivation:** Power Consolidation, she is the youngest of seven, overshadowed; finding her brother's fate would be her first independent achievement. **Hidden:** She suspects her brother is dead. She is searching not for him, but for *closure*.

Brother Adric Marek-Vain (The Dead Witness) **Status at start:** Dead, presumed missing. **What he knew:** The Kurogane operation on the station. **Why he was killed:** He tried to report the operation up the Joric chain of command.

Dr. Eira Sokol (Antagonist, Tier 2 Kurogane Bio-Engineer) **Surface:** The official Kurogane representative on the station. A measured, articulate scientist with the cold precision of her House. **Motivation:** Ideological Conviction, she has dedicated her life to the research; the work is *the meaning*. **Hidden:** She ordered Adric's death. She does not regret it. She *would* regret it being discovered.

Captain Vex Rolan (Free Fleet Contact) **Surface:** A grizzled Free Fleet captain who has heard rumors about the station and is willing to share for the right price. **Motivation:** Revenge, he lost crewmates to Kurogane experiments years ago, never had justice. **Hidden:** He is the crew's most reliable source, but his bitterness may push him toward vengeance the crew does not want to participate in.

Inquisitor Kell Joric (Joric Internal Affairs) **Surface:** A formal Joric Inquisitor who arrives midway through the adventure to "assess the situation." **Motivation:** Ideological Conviction, he believes in Joric order absolutely. **Hidden:** He has been briefed on the Marek-Vain investigation. He has his own agenda regarding what the crew finds.

LOCATIONS

Tellurian Reach Station (Micro: Frontier Outpost; Macro: Asteroid Belt) - Population at start: ~200 (Joric-affiliated workers, a few Kurogane staff, civilians) - Current state: Eight days of silence; partial life-support failure on three decks - Key zones: Main commerce concourse, Kurogane research wing (locked), residence sectors, command deck, hidden lower-level facility

The Vagrant's Tail (Free Fleet ship) - Captain Rolan's vessel; encountered en route or in transit - Used for one or two travel scenes; can serve as a base of operations if the crew earns Rolan's trust

The Hidden Facility (Micro: Precursor Vault; Macro: Asteroid Belt) - Beneath Tellurian Reach Station, accessed through a maintenance shaft Adric discovered - The actual site of the Kurogane experiments - Climactic location

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS SESSION 1: THE APPROACH

Scene 1.1: The Hiring (Social) Lady Marek-Vain meets the crew on Aurelius Prime or another suitable hub. She presents the job: investigate Tellurian Reach, report back what they find. Payment: 8 Credits + Reputation with House Joric. The negotiation is the introduction.

Scene 1.2: The Travel (Exploration / Social) Three days in transit to Tellurian Reach. During this time, the crew may research the station, gather rumors, or encounter Captain Rolan (whose ship is on a parallel route). If they handle Rolan well, they earn a contact and a

piece of information: *"The Reach has been quiet because someone wants it quiet. Look for the Kurogane research wing."*

Scene 1.3: The Arrival (*Exploration*) The crew docks. The station is partially operational, emergency lighting only, life support struggling, no comms. The first scene establishes the *feel* of the dead station: bodies in various states of preservation, abandoned tasks, the wrong things in the wrong places.

SESSION 2: THE INVESTIGATION

Scene 2.1: The Survivors (*Social / Exploration*) The crew discovers ~40 survivors hiding in a barricaded sector of the residences. They are frightened, dehydrated, willing to talk. They report: armed attackers swept the station eight days ago, but the attackers were *station personnel*, Kurogane staff, fully armored. The survivors hid; many did not.

Scene 2.2: The Research Wing (*Combat / Exploration*) The Kurogane research wing is locked and defended. The crew must breach it, combat, hacking, or persuasion (if Dr. Sokol can be reached and persuaded that the crew is *useful* to her cover-up).

Once inside, the crew finds evidence of: - Heavy bio-engineering equipment - Records of "subjects" (patient logs without species or context) - A *visit log* showing Brother Adric Marek-Vain's last entry, three weeks before the silence

Scene 2.3: The Confrontation with Dr. Sokol (*Social*) Sokol can be encountered in her office or in the research lab. She is cool, measured, and willing to *negotiate* if she thinks the crew can be bought or contained. She will deny the worst accusations; she will admit the work is "delicate." She will offer the crew a deal: *"Report what you found as you found it. The station was attacked by raiders. House Kurogane mourns its scientific personnel. You will be compensated handsomely."*

The crew may accept (and continue, knowing they are now in a cover-up), refuse (and Sokol prepares her counter-moves), or push deeper (and provoke her into revealing more).

SESSION 3: THE HIDDEN FACILITY

Scene 3.1: Adric's Trail (*Mystery / Exploration*) Adric Marek-Vain left clues, a personal journal, encrypted comm logs, marked maps. Following them leads to a maintenance shaft most station personnel did not know existed. Below the station, there is a *larger facility* embedded in the asteroid.

Scene 3.2: The Inquisitor's Arrival (*Social*) Inquisitor Kell Joric arrives at the station with a small Joric squad. He has been briefed (by Lady Marek-Vain? By a faction within Joric? The crew may not know). He asserts authority over the investigation. The crew can: - Cooperate with him (gain Joric ally but lose investigative autonomy) - Resist (gain a Joric enemy but keep agency) - Misdirect (high-risk, high-reward, Joric is observant)

Scene 3.3: The Hidden Facility (*Exploration / Combat / Horror*) The crew descends into the lower facility. Inside, they find: - The remaining experimental subjects, *what they have become* - The records of Adric's last days, including his death (executed by Sokol's order) - The full scope of the operation: Kurogane has been engineering psionic capacity into non-psionic subjects, using Veil-touched materials, and the failures are *worse than the successes*

This is the **horror beat** of the adventure. The crew encounters the ethical abyss at the heart of the Kurogane experiment. The Three-Layer Method is at its most punishing here: Sokol's measured words from Scene 2.3 cannot survive contact with what is in this room.

SESSION 4: THE BRUTAL CHOICE AND RESOLUTION THE BRUTAL CHOICE

Once the truth is uncovered, the crew faces the climactic decision:

- 1. Report to Lady Marek-Vain.** Honestly tell her what happened, that her brother was killed, by whom, and why. She will press for justice, which means revealing the operation to Joric leadership. House Kurogane will *react*. The crew may have started a faction crisis.
- 2. Accept Sokol's deal.** Falsify the report. Take the payment. Lady Marek-Vain receives a sanitized account of "raider attack." The crew is now compromised: Kurogane has leverage over them; they have betrayed Lady Marek-Vain.
- 3. Burn it down.** Destroy the facility, expose the operation to a *third party* (Free Fleet via Captain Rolan? The Spire? The Church?). The crew steps outside the Joric/Kurogane axis. They have made *both* Houses dangerous.
- 4. Take Sokol.** Capture her, extract her records, hand her over to a party of the crew's choosing. This produces variable consequences depending on the choice.

Each path produces a different campaign trajectory. The Keeper should be ready for any of them.

AFTERMATH SEEDS

Regardless of the choice, plant at least two:

- **Seed 1: The Recurring Adversary.** Dr. Sokol survives. If she was captured or exposed, she escapes and becomes a recurring antagonist who hunts the crew for revenge or to silence them.
- **Seed 2: The Inquisitor's Interest.** Inquisitor Kell Joric remembers the crew. Depending on the choice, he is now ally, enemy, or unpredictable observer.
- **Seed 3: The Experimental Subjects.** What the crew encountered in the hidden facility is not the only experiment. There are *others*. The 20 Mysteries are now open for engagement.

ADVENTURE 2: THE HEPHAESTUS DROP

A space elevator on Hephaestus, the Kurogane forge-world, is failing. Thousands will die if it falls. A crew is hired to extract a single passenger before it does. Twenty minutes of escalation. Three hundred decisions. One choice that will haunt them.

OVERVIEW

Framework: Crisis **Tone:** Action, time pressure, high stakes **Length:** 2-3 sessions (or one long session) **Mode mix:** ~50% combat / action, ~25% social, ~15% exploration, ~10% mystery **Target Tier:** 2-3 (moderate difficulty)

PREMISE

A space elevator on Hephaestus, House Kurogane's forge-world, has suffered catastrophic structural failure. It will collapse in roughly **40 minutes of in-fiction time**, killing the thousands of workers and personnel currently on it. The crew is hired by an anonymous client to **extract a single specific passenger** from one of the elevator's upper habitations before the collapse.

The target: **Dr. Mei Kurogane**, a mid-tier Kurogane bio-engineer with information valuable to the client. The client's identity is a mystery; the payment is enormous.

The crew has been smuggled to the elevator's lower base. They have 40 minutes (six combat rounds + extensive narrative time) to ascend, find Mei, and extract her before the elevator collapses.

CAST

The Anonymous Client (Off-Screen) The crew never meets them directly. The voice on the comms is filtered. The payment is in untraceable Credits. Identity will be revealed at the end of the adventure, with consequences.

Dr. Mei Kurogane (The Target, Tier 2 Engineer) *Surface:* A measured, frightened mid-tier Kurogane scientist who is *delighted* to see the crew. She is the kind of person who, even in crisis, is taking notes. *Motivation:* Survival Desperation, she has spent her adult life inside Kurogane's research culture, and she has been *promised* something by the client. *Hidden:* She is the one who triggered the elevator failure. She did it to escape Kurogane custody.

Master Engineer Takeshi Kurogane (Antagonist Authority) The Kurogane leadership figure who is *also* on the elevator and *also* knows about the failure. He is attempting to coordinate rescue and survival. He will recognize Mei as a defector if he encounters her with the crew.

Captain Sela Volkov (Recurring NPC, ally) A Volkov pilot the crew encounters mid-ascent. She is helping with the chaos. She knows the crew is up to something but is willing to assist in exchange for a future favor.

The Veil-Tear (Environmental Antagonist) The failure of the elevator's main coil has *opened a small Veil-tear* at one of the upper levels. The Veil-tear is producing temporal distortion. This is the *real* reason Mei wanted to escape *now*, she knows what the Veil-tear is, and she knows what will come through it.

LOCATIONS

The elevator has several distinct zones. Each is a Micro-Environment with rules.

Base Station (Micro: Spaceport; Macro: Forge World) -Where the crew arrives; full of evacuation chaos - One major combat or social scene possible (security, panicked workers, Kurogane response)

Mid-Elevator Concourse (Micro: Military Bunker; Macro: Forge World) - Heavy industrial section, mid-ascent - Workers trying to repair the failing systems - A potential combat scene with Kurogane security -Encounter with Captain Volkov possible

Upper Habitations (Micro: Habitation Dome; Macro: Forge World, modified) - Where Dr. Mei is located -Civilian and scientific personnel - The first signs of the Veil-tear: time anomalies, communication disruptions

The Veil-Tear (Micro: Precursor Vault, ad-hoc; Macro: Forge World + Veil third-layer) - Near the top of the elevator - Time runs differently here - Strange architecture is *forming* in the tear - The climax happens here or in proximity

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The adventure runs on **real-time pressure**. The Keeper should announce time progression aloud:

"32 minutes remaining."

"24 minutes remaining."

"12 minutes remaining."

"6 minutes remaining."

This creates the sense of *literal* time pressure even though only a portion is real-time.

PHASE 1: THE ASCENT (SESSIONS 1, FIRST HALF)

The crew arrives at the base, must navigate the evacuation chaos to enter the elevator. Two or three set-piece scenes: - A panicked crowd blocking access to the high-priority elevator car - A security check that the crew must bypass (forged credentials, distraction, bribe) - An interaction with a desperate worker who needs help that the crew may or may not give

These scenes establish the *atmosphere of crisis* and let the crew use multiple modes of play.

PHASE 2: THE MID-ELEVATOR (SESSIONS 1, SECOND HALF, INTO 2)

Combat is more likely here. Possible scenes: -Kurogane security units treating the crew as suspected saboteurs - A platform collapse the crew must navigate around or through - Captain Volkov's intervention, a chance to gain a useful ally - A side opportunity: rescuing a small group of civilians at significant time cost

The Keeper should let the table feel the *cost of choices*. Saving the civilians is morally good and time-expensive. Bypassing them is morally questionable and time-cheap. The Keeper should not punish either choice, let the consequences speak.

PHASE 3: THE UPPER HABITATIONS (SESSION 2, SECOND HALF, INTO 3)

The crew reaches Mei's location. The conversation has limited time. Mei pretends innocent terror. She wants to leave with the crew immediately. She is hiding the truth about her role in the disaster.

Two paths:

Path A: The crew accepts Mei's story and extracts her directly. The Veil-tear is encountered only briefly. The adventure concludes with the extraction.

Path B: The crew suspects Mei. They press her. She reveals (under questioning, observation, or witnessing the Veil-tear) that she triggered the disaster. The crew must decide whether to extract her *anyway* (the contract is for extraction, not justice).

PHASE 4: THE VEIL-TEAR (CLIMAX)

If the crew goes near the Veil-tear (intentionally or not), they encounter the *real* climax of the adventure:

The tear is widening. Something is *coming through*. What comes through is *up to the Keeper*, a Precursor entity, a Veil-touched manifestation, a memory of someone the crew has lost, a future version of one of the crew, a piece of *the True Enemy* Volkov fears.

The crew has 6 minutes (in-fiction) to decide whether to: - Run for the extraction shuttle and let the entity emerge fully into the galaxy - Attempt to seal the tear (high-difficulty, high-cost, may not succeed) - Engage the entity (combat or social, the entity is *not* mindless)

This is the **Brutal Choice** moment of the adventure.

PHASE 5: THE RESOLUTION

If the crew extracts Mei and escapes, the elevator collapses on schedule. Thousands die. The crew is now responsible for Mei's continued life, and for what she knows.

If the crew sealed the tear, they may have prevented something larger, but at significant cost (Hope loss, character wounds, possibly Permanent Mark events).

If the crew engaged the entity, the outcome is the Keeper's to define. This is a *campaign-defining* event if it happens.

The Anonymous Client reveals themselves only after the extraction. They are: - A House Amaranth scholar (Mei's research is something

they wanted preserved) - Or a House Solari noble seeking to acquire forbidden technology - Or the Free Fleet, attempting to extract a defecting scientist - Or (most dramatic) a rogue faction within House Kurogane itself

The reveal shapes what happens next.

AFTERMATH SEEDS

- **Seed 1: The Continuing Veil-Tear.** Even if the tear was sealed, *something* came through partially. It is now in the galaxy. The crew has a year before it surfaces somewhere.
- **Seed 2: The Hephaestus Investigation.** Kurogane will investigate the elevator collapse. The crew may be hunted, named, or sought as witnesses. Reputation tracking begins.
- **Seed 3: The Client's Continuing Interest.** Whoever hired the crew now considers them *operatives*. Future jobs will follow. The crew can refuse, but the client is well-connected.

ADVENTURE 3: THE DERELICT'S SECRET (VEILFARERS CANON)

A Tier 2 mystery and rescue adventure drawn directly from the original *Veilfarers* corebook starter set. Approximately 4-6 hours of table play.

BACKGROUND

The merchant vessel *Prosperity* disappeared six months ago while carrying a cargo of rare minerals. It has now been found drifting in an asteroid field at the edge of an unpopulated system, intact, with functioning life support and detectable life signs aboard, but unresponsive to all communications. The crew is hired to investigate, determine what happened, and recover whatever cargo remains.

THE TRUTH (KEEPER'S EYES ONLY)

The *Prosperity's* cargo included an undocumented Precursor artifact. The artifact activated during transit through a Veil storm and locked the ship into a 24-hour time loop. The surviving crew has been living the same day for six months. The artifact does not perceive their suffering as a problem; it considers the substrate locally stabilized.

HIRING THE CREW

Maria Santos, an insurance investigator for the Valerius Commercial Underwriters' Consortium, offers Tier 2 payment for the full investigation. She is professional, terse, and competent. (Hidden Wound, if pursued across the campaign: she lost a brother to a Veil-corridor disappearance years ago; the current case is a quiet personal investigation.)

SCENE PROGRESSION

Scene 1, The Approach. The *Prosperity* drifts among asteroids; the chronometer is locked on the day of disappearance; the ship's running lights flicker in a rhythm the crew will eventually recognize.

Scene 2, Boarding. The interior shows signs of recent habitation but no visible crew. Half-eaten meals remain on tables. The surviving crew hides from new arrivals; they have learned that strangers "disappear at midnight."

Scene 3, First Contact. The crew eventually encounters **Captain Diego Rodriguez** and a handful of survivors. They are exhausted, paranoid, and lucid in ways and broken in others. Engineer **Lisa Park** keeps a notebook of theories; her latest entry: *day 178. There is no day 179. There is only this.* Two crew members have died by suicide across the loop; the loop eventually stopped resetting them.

Scene 4, The Discovery. Investigation of the cargo hold reveals the Precursor artifact, a two-meter crystalline lattice pulsing in rhythm with the ship's lights. The artifact is *attentive* but not malicious; it

has registered no problem with the loop. Veil-Touched characters who approach closely can feel the artifact's operation: *the substrate is stable, the variables are within acceptable bounds.*

Scene 5, Breaking the Loop. The crew has four options: destroy the artifact (loop breaks, but the insurance company is unhappy and a Precursor relic is lost); reprogram it (high-DC Knowledge roll, dangerous on failure); remove it from the ship (transfers the problem); or communicate with it (long, rare, but produces voluntary deactivation and possibly an ongoing artifact relationship).

Scene 6, Consequences. Each choice produces different aftermath and reputation effects.

SCALING

For Tier 1, the artifact is straightforward and the crew uniformly helpful. For Tier 3, some survivors are hostile and the DCs increase. For Tier 4, the *Prosperity* is the first node in a wider Precursor activation event the crew has just stumbled into.

ADVENTURE 4: THE TITAN'S GAMBIT (VEILFARERS CANON)

A Tier 3 high-stakes investigation and crisis adventure drawn from the *Veilfarers* starter set. Approximately 5-7 hours of table play.

BACKGROUND

The mining station **Titan's Rest** has gone silent. Built into a massive asteroid, the station processes rare metals for the Valerius Corporation; it has approximately 500 workers in rotation. The last transmission, twelve hours before silence, mentioned "unusual readings" from the deep mine levels, readings the duty officer described as "geometrically impossible."

THE TRUTH (KEEPER'S EYES ONLY)

The miners broke into a **Precursor facility** buried in the asteroid. The facility contains a **stellar destructor** a weapon designed to induce supernovae in target stars. The weapon is millennia old, badly damaged, but slowly charging. If it fully charges (approximately 18-22 hours from the crew's arrival), it will fire on the system's primary star, destroying the entire system. The weapon is largely automated; it does not appear to be conscious in any meaningful sense.

HIRING THE CREW

Director Marcus Valerius, regional corporate authority, hires the crew for Tier 3 payment with bonus authority for "exceptional outcomes." (Hidden Wound: he authorized the deep-mine expansion against geological survey recommendations. The crisis is his fault. He will not confess this.)

SCENE PROGRESSION

Scene 1, Arrival. Station appears normal from outside but docking bay is open and several mining vessels are missing. Life support is partial; faint life signs in residential block and deep mines; rising rhythmic energy readings from far below. *Establish a felt timer from the first minute of play.*

Scene 2, The Empty Station. Upper levels deserted. **MINERVA**, the station AI, attempts to greet the crew but speaks in fragments mixing Imperial Standard with an unknown language. Her voice modulates between modes. She is *suffering* and partly corrupted by Precursor signals from below.

Scene 3, The Survivors. In the residential cafeteria, approximately forty miners barricaded under the leadership of **Chief Engineer Sarah Kim** (Joric ex-military, decisive, will not lose more people). Kim describes the deep-mine breakthrough and the changes that followed. Some miners are still down there, alive in some sense, but no longer fully people.

Scene 4, The Deep Mines. Precursor technology has grown through the rock like metallic veins. Hazards include crystallization fields, resonance pockets that distort perception, and free-floating energy motes that have become quasi-conscious. Transformed miners move in synchronized patterns or sit catatonic in postures of religious awe.

Scene 5, The Weapon. A cathedral-sized chamber contains the stellar destructor itself, a kilometers-long focused beam emitter charging visibly. A Knowledge roll (DC 15) confirms its purpose. The countdown is approximately 18 hours. The crew should *know* the timer.

Scene 6, The Choice. Four options: shut down (success leaves the weapon dormant but reactivatable; success pulse may register at other Precursor sites); evacuate the system (everyone lives, the system dies); attempt control (high-risk, campaign-shifting if successful); communicate with the underlying substrate (longest path, produces insight rather than control).

Scene 7, Escape. The asteroid is fracturing. The crew, the survivors, and any preserved Precursor material must extract before the station becomes inaccessible. This is the action-sequence climax.

SCALING

For Tier 2, the timer is longer and the deep-mine hazards reduced. For Tier 4, hostile security systems activate and a competing faction races the crew to claim the weapon. For Tier 5, the weapon is one node in a galactic network of similar devices; success or failure triggers a cascade.

CLOSING: TWO STARTING POINTS

These two adventures share no NPCs. They occupy different tonal spaces. **They are deliberately different**, so the Keeper can pick the one that fits the table they are starting.

Use them as written. Modify them as needed. Steal scenes from one and graft them onto the other. The Keeper's only obligation is to make the table's first sessions *memorable*.

If your first session is memorable, the campaign earns the right to continue. That is the work. That is all.

Run well.

APPENDIX A

ECHOES ACROSS THE VEIL

A CROSS-REALITY TOOLKIT

The Stellar Veil touches realities that do not share the galaxy's history, technology, or assumptions. This appendix provides a VeilFarers-native procedure for introducing an outsider, adapting a foreign archetype, or staging a campaign arc in which incompatible realities collide.

The Corebook remains authoritative. Foreign concepts are translated into VeilFarers Traits, Experiences, Damage Thresholds, Armor Slots, Spotlight timing, Technology Access, and Domain Powers before they enter play. No imported concept creates a new Trait, damage type, action economy, or recovery rule.

FIVE-STEP CHARACTER TRANSLATION

1. **Define the Origin.** Write one sentence describing the reality the character came from and one sentence describing what they have lost by crossing the Veil.
2. **Choose a VeilFarers Path.** Select Awakened or Sleeping. This determines Hope or Effort and all resource interactions.
3. **Choose the Closest Class.** Select the class whose play pattern best represents the character's practiced competence. Reframe the fiction; do not import foreign class mechanics.
4. **Translate Signature Abilities.** Represent signature talents through Experiences, existing class features, Domain Powers, equipment, or a custom feature built on an existing VeilFarers template.
5. **Rebuild Equipment.** Every weapon, armor set, shield, focus, or relic receives a Tech Tier, Trait, damage expression, range, Burden, features, cost, and source tag. Armor uses Major and Severe Thresholds plus Armor Slots.

TRANSLATING ABILITIES

Use the following order of preference:

- **Experience:** Broad expertise, social standing, professions, languages, and learned practices.
- **Existing feature:** A class, subclass, ancestry, community, or affiliation feature that already produces the intended play pattern.
- **Domain Power:** Extraordinary effects that require Hope, Stress, a Spellcast Roll, or a Loadout slot.
- **Equipment:** Capabilities that come from a carried object, suit, implant, vehicle, or relic.
- **Custom feature:** Use only when no existing element fits. A custom feature must name its action type, trigger, cost, range, Trait and DC if rolled, duration, recovery timing, and interaction with Armor Slots.

TRAIT TRANSLATION

- **Agility:** Speed, balance, rapid movement, and whole-body coordination.
- **Strength:** Force, endurance, resistance, and physical stability.
- **Finesse:** Precision, stealth, delicate control, and piloting maneuvers.

- **Knowledge:** Technical work, medicine, investigation, navigation planning, and formal expertise.
- **Instinct:** Awareness, immediate hazard response, intuition, and tracking.
- **Presence:** Leadership, influence, emotional force, deception, and command.

A specialty such as medicine, piloting, engineering, diplomacy, or occult scholarship is an Experience, not an additional Trait.

DAMAGE AND DEFENSE TRANSLATION

Use only Physical, Energy, Void, and Neural damage. Descriptors such as Fire, Poison, Corrosive, Radiation, Radiant, Kinetic, Sonic, or Cryogenic are tags or conditions.

Player criticals double the normal damage dice. Keeper criticals use maximum normal damage. Both resolve against Damage Thresholds and may be reduced with Armor Slots unless the attack explicitly states otherwise.

Foreign armor is rebuilt as VeilFarers armor. Assign Major and Severe Thresholds, Armor Slots, weight class, features, and Tech Tier. Do not use a second armor engine.

CROSS-REALITY CAMPAIGN QUESTIONS

- What law of the outsider's reality no longer works here?
- What VeilFarers technology appears miraculous or horrifying to them?
- Which faction wants to study, recruit, protect, or dissect them?
- What memory or obligation still reaches across the breach?
- What would allow them to return, and what would that return cost?

KEEPER PRINCIPLES

Preserve identity through fiction, not through incompatible mechanics. Let the outsider feel unusual because the galaxy reacts to them, because their Experiences are rare, and because their translated abilities carry distinctive tags and consequences. They still use the same resolution engine as every other VeilFarers character.

APPENDIX B

QUICK REFERENCE TABLES

"Keep what you need within reach. The rest belongs in the rulebook, where the next Keeper will find it."

Iliana Vesh, Spire Lectures

This appendix collects the most frequently consulted tables and reference materials from across the *Veilfarers* rules in one place, for ease of use during play. Keep these visible at the table. Everything else can wait until between sessions.

THE DUALITY DICE: OUTCOMES TABLE

ROLL RESULT	CONSEQUENCE
Critical Success (matching dice)	Automatic success regardless of total. Awakened clear 1 Stress and gain 1 Hope. Sleeping clear 1 Stress, mark both Effort Track segments, resolve the completed Track for 1 Effort, then gain 1 further Effort or Resolve; if Effort is full, take Resolve. Player attacks double the complete normal damage-dice pool; Keeper attacks maximize that pool. Flat modifiers apply once.
Success with Hope (meet DC, Hope > Fear)	Goal achieved with a benefit. Player gains 1 path resource (Hope, or one Effort Track segment for the Sleeping).
Success with Fear (meet DC, Fear > Hope)	On a player Roll, the goal succeeds with a complication and the Keeper gains 1 Fear, subject to the hard maximum of 12.
Failure with Hope (miss DC, Hope > Fear)	Goal failed with a silver lining. Player gains 1 path resource (Hope, or one Effort Track segment for the Sleeping).
Failure with Fear (miss DC, Fear > Hope)	On a player Roll, the goal fails with a new problem and the Keeper gains 1 Fear, subject to the hard maximum of 12.

STANDARD DIFFICULTY CLASSES

DC	DIFFICULTY	EXAMPLE TASK
5	Routine	Accessing a public news terminal under pressure.
10	Easy	Picking a simple lock on a storage container.
15	Challenging	Hacking a mid-level corporate system.
20	Difficult	Piloting a freighter through a severe Veil storm.
25	Extreme	Recalibrating a Precursor orbital stabilizer.
30	Nearly Impossible	Persuading a sentient nebula not to consume a ship.

When in doubt, use **DC 15**. It is the baseline assumption for a competent character attempting something meaningful but not exceptional. Adjust up or down by 5 for clear narrative reasons.

DAMAGE RESOLUTION SEQUENCE (PERSONAL COMBAT)

Resolve incoming damage in three steps against the target's thresholds:

Compare the damage total to the target's **Major** and **Severe Thresholds** (each raised by their level):

- Below Major:** mark **1 HP**.
- At or above Major, below Severe:** mark **2 HP**.
- At or above Severe:** mark **3 HP**, plus **Overkill:** 1 more HP for every full 10 points over Severe (under the optional Deadly variant, every 5).

The defender may mark an **Armor Slot** to drop the hit one severity step (Severe to Major, Major to Minor, Minor to no HP). A landed hit costs at least 1 HP unless an Armor Slot drops it to 0.

STARSHIP DAMAGE RESOLUTION SEQUENCE

Ships use the same defensive language as characters, scaled up (Core Rules Chapter 17):

- The targeted arc.** Damage depletes the **Armor Slots of the arc the attack comes from** (Fore, Aft, Port, Starboard), point for point. Arc Slots regenerate 2 per arc at the end of each round.
- Into the Hull.** Damage left over reaches the **Hull** and converts by the ship severity table: 1 to 5 points = 1 Hull; 6 to 12 = 2; 13 to 20 = 3; 21 to 30 = 4; 31+ = 5, plus 1 per additional 10 (Overkill).
- At 0 Hull** the ship is **Dying**: the crew chooses to fight on, abandon ship, or hold her together, scarred.

Heat is the operating cost: weapons fire and hard maneuvers build it, and an idle round with no weapon fire dissipates 1. Reaching the **Heat Cap** has no penalty. Crossing above it triggers the Core overflow event once; the crew is never Overwhelmed merely by ship Heat.

Sensor Lock. Spend the Sensor station Spotlight and roll Knowledge: Adjacent DC 5, Engagement DC 10, Standard DC 15, Long DC 20, Extreme DC 25. **Only vehicle- or starship-scale targets are eligible. Personal-scale creatures and characters cannot carry a Sensor Lock.**

It costs no Stress or path resource and requires a working Sensor Array. Success places one pending Lock on the target; the next Gunner attack made from the locking ship has Advantage, then spends it. A target carries at most one Lock. Evasive movement breaks it automatically at Long/Extreme, requires Pilot Instinct Roll, DC 15 at Standard, and cannot break it at Engagement/Adjacent. It drops if the locking Sensor Array goes offline. At Extreme, only Guided or explicitly sensor-guided weapons can exploit it. Guided never creates a Lock.

CLASS PROFICIENCY PROGRESSION

CLASS	MILITARY (TIER 2) ACCESS	EXPERIMENTAL (TIER 3) ACCESS
Soldier	Level 2	Level 5
Pilot	Level 2	Level 5
Engineer	Level 2	Level 5
Explorer	Level 2	Level 5
Scholar	Level 2	Level 5
Mystic	Level 2	Level 5
Diplomat	Level 2	Level 5
Scoundrel	Level 2	Level 5
Vanguard	Level 2	Level 5

All classes follow the same proficiency progression. Class identity is expressed through Domain Powers and Subclass features, not through gating equipment access.

WEALTH TIERS AT A GLANCE

TIER	TITLE	MONTHLY ASSET ACQUISITION	CAN ATTEMPT WEALTH CHECK FOR
0	The Forgotten	None	None
1	The Established	One Tier 1 item	Tier 2-3 items
2	The Prosperous	One item up to Tier 2	Tier 3-4 items
3	The Affluent	One item up to Tier 3	Tier 4-5 items
4	The Powerful	One item up to Tier 4	Tier 5 items
5	The Transcendent	Any item up to Tier 4	Narrative acquisition

Wealth Tier 0-1 limitations are intentional design. Financial constraint carries narrative weight alongside power progression. A Tier 1 crew is meant to feel the cost

of every Tier 3 acquisition; that pressure is the engine of many side-arcs.

REPUTATION LADDER

LEVEL	TITLE	RP THRESHOLD	CORE FEELING
+6	Legendary	35+	You define the faction's future.
+5	Revered	25	Practically family; a leader.
+4	Honored	17	Your name has weight; you are valued.
+3	Trusted	10	A reliable ally; they invest in you.
+2	Respected	5	Competent; they see potential.
+1	Recognized	2	They have heard your name.
0	Unknown	0	A ghost in the crowd.
-1	Distrusted	-2	They are watching with suspicion.
-2	Scorned	-5	A known enemy; treated with contempt.
-3	Hated	-10	Kill-on-sight; they will hunt you.

Each faction tracks the crew's Reputation independently. Standing with House Volkov may be Revered (+5) while standing with House Joric is Distrusted (-1). The crew is a different person in every room they enter.

LOADOUT & VAULT SYSTEM

Domain Powers split between the **Loadout** (equipped and ready; 5 Powers at Tier 1, 6 at Tier 2, 7 at Tier 3) and the **Vault** (known but not prepared; no cap). This is an Awakened-only system: the Sleeping run on Effort Features and Resolve Moves instead.

- **Recall** (moving a Power from Vault to Loadout, displacing one): free reorganization at a Long Rest; pay the Power's printed Recall Cost in Stress at a Short Rest; in an active scene use an Action, pay the printed Recall Cost, and spend 1 Hope.
- **Acquisition**. Characters start with their Class's Starter Loadout (2 Level 1 Powers) and grow through Advancement (corebook Chapter 12, Option 8: New Power), story rewards, training, and rare Veil Echoes.

The Mystic carries no extra slots; their edge is the **Veil Alignment** (Lux or Void), switchable at Tier thresholds (corebook Chapter 18).

STRESS AND THE OVERWHELMED STATE

STRESS LEVEL	STATE	EFFECT
0	Composed	No effect.
Below Maximum	Strained	No mechanical effect, but the character is carrying weight.
At Maximum	Overwhelmed	Disadvantage on all rolls until at least one Stress slot is cleared.

During a Short Rest, choose **Clear Stress** as one of two different moves to clear **1d4 + Tier** Stress. During a Long Rest, choose **Decompress** as one of two different moves to clear all Stress. A Sleeping character needs their Recovery Anchor for those two moves. Rest never generates Effort.

NEURAL AND ARMOR-BYPASSING DAMAGE

Some Powers and adversary abilities deal damage that "bypasses armor." **Neural** damage is the canonical case: a subtype of **Void**, it strikes the mind and nervous system directly. When damage of this type lands:

1. Compare damage to the target's thresholds as normal (Major/Severe). 2. The target **may not mark an Armor Slot** to reduce the severity; they mark the full HP directly. A **Ward against Void** cancels the bypass.

Armor-bypassing damage represents attacks that strike at the mind, the nervous system, or the fundamental structure of reality. Ceramic plates do not help against a neural lance.

Note, Universal Life Force exception. Universal Life Force (Synthesis, Mythic) is an exception to all damage rules. Its damage bypasses all defenses, including Damage Thresholds. Each point of damage marks 1 HP directly. At Mythic level, you are channeling the fundamental force of life itself. Physics does not apply.

KEEPER QUICK-REFERENCE: FEAR SPEND COSTS

MOVE TYPE	COST	USE WHEN...
Soft Move (free)	0 Fear	Foreshadowing, telegraphing, scene-framing details.
Standard Complication	1 Fear	Introducing a wrinkle; minor obstacle; one-step escalation.
Antagonist Special Move	1 Fear	An enemy uses a special ability listed in its stat block.
Hard Move	2 Fear	Consequential change to the situation; clock advance; reveal.
Major Reveal	2-3 Fear	A campaign-defining piece of information lands.
Devastating Move	4+ Fear	The climactic moment of a multi-session arc.
Escalate a Failure (rare)	1 Fear	After Failure with Fear, introduce one additional visible environmental pressure that does not alter the dice, cancel a critical, dictate a PC Action, or negate the declared result. At most once per session.

Starting Fear. Each session begins with **1d4+2** Fear in the pool. Fear does not carry between sessions.

Phased Boss Desperation. When a phased boss enters its final phase, the Keeper gains **3** Fear instead of the standard 2, subject to the hard maximum of 12.

SPOTLIGHT & TURN FLOW

Veilfarers does not use rolled initiative. At the start of each round, list every eligible participant. Players choose which eligible PC takes the next Spotlight; between PC Spotlights the Keeper chooses an eligible NPC or Threat Group Spotlight. Every eligible participant receives exactly one Spotlight before the round ends. Spending 1 Fear may move one eligible NPC earlier, never grant a second Spotlight. Resolve ties in fictional timing by the directly affected player choosing among tied PCs and the Keeper choosing among tied NPCs:

- The Keeper opens the scene by framing it and identifying who the Spotlight is on first.
- After each action, the Keeper passes the Spotlight, either to another player whose action follows naturally, to an antagonist who is reacting, or to an environmental effect.
- A character may receive the Spotlight multiple times in a single combat round; another may receive it only once. The Spotlight follows the *story*, not the clock.

When uncertain, ask the table: "*Who is doing something right now?*" The answer is the next Spotlight.

A PLAYER'S GLOSSARY

Frequently-referenced terms, ordered for quick scanning.

- **Advantage.** Beneficial circumstance. Roll an extra d6 and add it to your total.
- **Disadvantage.** Detrimental circumstance. Roll an extra d6 and subtract it from your total.
- **Ancestry.** A character's species or biological heritage (e.g., Human, Kryllian, Celestari).

- **Heat.** A starship's operating cost. An idle round with no weapon fire dissipates 1. Reaching the Cap has no penalty; crossing above it triggers the Core overflow event once. Ship Heat never makes the crew Overwhelmed.
- **Armor Slots.** An expendable defensive pool. Mark 1 Slot to reduce a personal hit by one severity step; on ships, the shield array provides Slots per arc and absorbs naval damage point for point.
- **Roll (Core Trait Roll).** The core mechanic: roll the Hope d12 and Fear d12, add one Trait modifier, and compare the total with a Difficulty Class (DC).
- **Class.** A character's profession or archetype (Soldier, Pilot, Mystic, etc.).
- **Clock.** A Keeper tool tracking progress toward an impending event or consequence.
- **Core Worlds.** The pre-Silence centers of galactic power, politics, and population.
- **Critical Success.** Hope and Fear dice show the same number. Automatic success with extra benefits.
- **DC (Difficulty Class).** The target number fixed before the dice come to rest for a Core Trait Roll.
- **Death Move.** A final, dramatic action a player character can take when reduced to 0 HP and Dying.
- **Domain.** An area of specialized, often supernatural, ability. Characters gain Powers from their class's assigned Domains.
- **Duality Dice.** The core dice mechanic, one Hope die (d12) and one Fear die (d12) rolled together.
- **Evasion.** Passive defense score. An attack must meet or beat this number to land.
- **Experiences.** Short descriptive phrases representing a character's defining background moments. The Awakened spend 1 Hope to invoke one; the Sleeping invoke theirs for free.
- **Effort and the Effort Track.** The Sleeping path resource. Significant Hope-dominant rolls mark one of two track segments; both full convert to 1 Effort. Recovery never generates Effort.
- **Reaction Roll.** The defensive Trait roll a character makes against an effect (never called a save). The DC is fixed before the roll.
- **Faction.** A major political or social power in the galaxy (Great House, Guild, etc.).
- **Great Houses.** The six primary dynastic families holding the most political power in the post-Silence galaxy.
- **Great Silence.** The cataclysmic event a century ago where the Q-Net collapsed.
- **Keeper.** The term for the Game Master in *Veilfarers*.
- **Proficiency.** A character's level of training with technology Tiers (Common, Military, Experimental, Precursor).
- **Q-Net (Quantum Entanglement Network).** The pre-Silence instantaneous communication network. Its collapse was the Great Silence.
- **Subclass.** A character's specialization within their chosen Class.
- **Traits.** The six core statistics: Agility, Strength, Finesse, Knowledge, Instinct, and Presence.
- **Veil, The Stellar.** The dimensional medium that allows faster-than-light travel. Became unstable and dangerous after the Great Silence.
- **Wealth Tier.** An abstract measure of economic standing, from 0 (Forgotten) to 5 (Transcendent).

FINAL NOTE

Print this appendix. Keep it at the table. Mark it up. Add your own house rules in the margins. A Keeper who can answer a rules question in two seconds is a Keeper who keeps the table's attention; a Keeper who must page through three chapters is a Keeper who loses the moment.

The rules are scaffolding. The story is the building. **Run well.**

APPENDIX C

RUNNING REPUTATION, A KEEPER'S GUIDE BY FACTION

"They will ask you, after the job, whether it counted. The honest answer is: it counted to someone. Your task is to know to whom."

Maya Santos, House Amaranth field agent

The Reputation system in the corebook (Chapter 16) gives you the ladder and the math. This appendix gives you the judgment: for each major power, *which deeds actually move the needle, and in which direction*. The same act earns a salute from one faction, a shrug from another, and a bounty from a third. Knowing who cares about what is most of running Reputation well.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Keep the corebook scale in front of you. Gains: a **Minor Success** is +1 RP, a **Major Success** is +2 to +3, a **Legendary Deed** is +4 to +5. Losses run faster: a **Minor Transgression** is -1, a **Major Betrayal** is -3 to -4, an **Act of War** is -5 to -6. Award at the end of a session or arc, not mid-scene, and narrate the shift so the table feels it.

Four habits make this guide work at the table:

- **Award for deeds the faction would actually hear about and care about**, not for intent and not for effort. A heroic stand in deep space that no one survives to report earns nothing until the story reaches the right ears.
- **Match the deed to the faction's values**. Each entry below opens with *what moves them*. A pile of dead pirates thrills House Volkov, leaves House Amaranth cold, and worries the Stellar Commerce Guild if it happened on a trade lane.
- **Remember the rivalry web (corebook Chapter 15)**. A gain with one power is often a loss with its rival. Name the trade before the players commit, then honor both halves.
- **Tell them the price of a perk**. Calling in a faction's help is itself a deed in that faction's ledger, usually a small obligation, occasionally a debt. Cashing a favor rarely moves RP, but failing the obligation that came with it does.

The values below are starting points. Scale them to how public the deed was, how much it cost the faction's rivals, and how much the faction needed it at that moment.

HOUSE AMARANTH (KEEPERS OF WISDOM)

What moves them: knowledge recovered, preserved, and shared with the House; dangerous knowledge kept from the wrong hands. They measure worth in what you bring back and what you keep quiet.

Award RP when the crew:

- **+1**: recovers a minor pre-Silence record, answers a scholarly request, protects an archive or a researcher from harm.
- **+2 to +3**: decodes a Vault cache and shares the findings, recovers a lost work the House has sought, denies a significant piece of knowledge to a rival House.
- **+4 to +5**: brings the House a power-shifting secret, saves a great archive from destruction, solves a mystery Amaranth has chased for a generation.

Remove RP when the crew:

- **-1**: withholds a genuine discovery, is seen selling data to a rival, damages records through carelessness.
- **-3 to -4**: sells House knowledge to a rival power, destroys irreplaceable records, exposes a secret the House was keeping.
- **-5 to -6**: burns an archive, hands the House's deepest secret to an enemy.

Largely indifferent to: raw combat victories, wealth, and territory, unless knowledge was won, lost, or threatened in the doing.

HOUSE JORIC (THE SENTINELS)

What moves them: lines held, the defenseless protected, aggression refused. Joric rewards the shield, never the sword.

Award RP when the crew:

- **+1**: reports a raider sighting, lends a hand at a shorthanded post, escorts civilians to safety.
- **+2 to +3**: holds a position against a real assault, recovers a captured Sentinel or asset, stabilizes a threatened border world.
- **+4 to +5**: turns back an invasion, saves a populated world, breaks a siege the House could not.

Remove RP when the crew:

- **-1**: starts a fight in Joric space, abandons a post or a charge under pressure, is seen profiting from a conflict.
- **-3 to -4**: sells out a defensive position, leaves civilians to die for gain, aids an aggressor at scale.
- **-5 to -6**: turns Joric arms or intelligence against the people they protect; kills a Sentinel commander.

Largely indifferent to: profit and prestige; a Joric officer respects a quiet competent defender over a loud rich one.

HOUSE KUROGANE (THE GOD-MAKERS)

What moves them: progress proven in data, boundaries pushed, the human form advanced. They reward results and the willingness to be the test.

Award RP when the crew:

- **+1**: returns honest performance data on House tech, field-tests a prototype and reports the failure as fully as the success.
- **+2 to +3**: recovers salvageable Precursor or experimental tech for study, completes a dangerous research retrieval, proves a new technique works.
- **+4 to +5**: delivers a breakthrough, a working Precursor system, a viable augmentation line, a result that moves the Forbidden Fire forward.

Remove RP when the crew:

- **-1**: falsifies test data, hides a result, refuses a reasonable round of monitoring after taking House tech.
- **-3 to -4**: sabotages an experiment, sells a prototype to a rival, destroys research the House cannot replace.

- **-5 to -6:** exposes or burns a flagship project; turns Kurogane's own creations against the House.

Careful: Kurogane and the Church of the Eternal Veil are doctrinal enemies. Service to the Church's reverence often reads as obstruction here, and the reverse.

HOUSE SOLARI (THE FADING CROWN)

What moves them: the forms upheld, the Crown's legitimacy defended, dignity preserved. They reward those who let the old order keep its face.

Award RP when the crew:

- **+1:** observes protocol at court, lends presence to a ceremony, delivers a discreet courtesy that lets a noble save face.
- **+2 to +3:** recovers an imperial relic or document, settles a succession or honor dispute quietly, defends the Crown's legitimacy when it is publicly challenged.
- **+4 to +5:** props up the dynasty in a true crisis, restores a lost symbol of imperial continuity, becomes a pillar the Crown leans on.

Remove RP when the crew:

- **-1:** breaches protocol, humiliates a noble in public, treats the Crown's claims as the fiction everyone privately knows them to be.
- **-3 to -4:** sides openly with reformers or the Compact against a Solari interest, exposes a scandal that wounds the dynasty.
- **-5 to -6:** strikes at the bloodline or the throne itself; proves the Crown has no clothes before the wrong audience.

Careful: Solari and Valerius are rivals (imperial tradition versus naked commerce). Earning one's favor through trade-first solutions tends to cost the other.

HOUSE VALERIUS (THE PEARL MERCHANTS)

What moves them: profit, settled debts, contracts honored to the letter, markets kept orderly. They reward reliability over heroics.

Award RP when the crew:

- **+1:** settles accounts on time, completes a clean trade run, routes good business through House channels.
- **+2 to +3:** delivers a sensitive cargo no questions asked, secures Chrono-Pearl and gives the House first refusal, breaks a smuggling ring undercutting the market.
- **+4 to +5:** opens a lucrative route or market for the House, defends the Pearl trade in a crisis, lands a deal that moves prices across systems.

Remove RP when the crew:

- **-1:** pays late, undercuts a House market, is caught carrying a rival's cargo.
- **-3 to -4:** breaks a signed contract, defaults on a real debt, runs goods that crash a House market.
- **-5 to -6:** ruins a Factor, exposes the House to catastrophic loss, turns a Pearl shipment over to a rival.

Careful: with Valerius, a broken deal costs more RP than a lost battle. Honesty about money buys more standing here than any act of courage.

HOUSE VOLKOV (THE WAR- MAKERS)

What moves them: strength proven, challenges met, weakness despised. They reward the sword, the open fight, and the kept word.

Award RP when the crew:

- **+1:** wins a fair fight in front of witnesses, answers a challenge instead of dodging it, holds the line in a brawl the warband shares.
- **+2 to +3:** finishes a dangerous mission the House respects, defeats a feared enemy, leads a successful raid from the front.
- **+4 to +5:** wins a war or a legendary duel, breaks a rival warlord, performs a feat of strength the warbands will sing about.

Remove RP when the crew:

- **-1:** refuses an honest challenge, flees a fight they could have held, shows the weakness of a broken word.
- **-3 to -4:** wins by treachery the House finds dishonorable, abandons a shared fight, breaks an oath sworn to a Volkov.
- **-5 to -6:** strikes a warlord in the back; betrays the warband on the field.

Careful: Volkov respects an honest enemy more than a slippery ally. Winning through cowardice or trickery can lose RP even when you win the fight.

STELLAR COMMERCE GUILD

What moves them: goods and contracts kept moving, neutrality preserved, arbitration respected, dues paid. They reward the dependable and distrust the partisan.

Award RP when the crew:

- **+1:** completes a clean contract under Guild colors, pays dues without fuss, reports a hazard on a trade lane.
- **+2 to +3:** carries a Guild cargo or message through dangerous space, breaks a piracy ring on a key route, accepts Guild arbitration over a private feud.
- **+4 to +5:** reopens a strangled trade corridor, defends Guild neutrality in a House conflict at real cost, brokers a peace that keeps the lanes open.

Remove RP when the crew:

- **-1:** runs contraband under the Guild flag, dodges dues, picks a fight on a Guild berth.
- **-3 to -4:** breaks a Guild contract, takes a clear side in a conflict the Guild is brokering, robs a Guild caravan.
- **-5 to -6:** destroys a Guild market hub, assassinates an arbiter, makes a major lane impassable.

Careful: the Guild's whole value is neutrality. Doing a House a dramatic favor often costs Guild RP precisely because it was partisan.

THE FREE FLEET

What moves them: mutual aid among the free, independence defended, no captain sold to a throne. They reward those who answer the call and never bend the knee.

Award RP when the crew:

- **+1:** answers a Fleet distress call, shares charts and hazard warnings, repairs a stranded Fleet ship.
- **+2 to +3:** shelters a hunted Fleet crew, drives off a House press-gang or slaver, recovers a captured Fleet vessel.
- **+4 to +5:** breaks a blockade on a Fleet anchorage, wins a stand that preserves the Fleet's freedom, turns a House campaign away from independent systems.

Remove RP when the crew:

- **-1:** ignores a distress call they could answer, hoards information the Fleet shares freely, takes obvious House errand-work in Fleet waters.
- **-3 to -4:** sells a fellow captain's position to a House, leads a House patrol to an anchorage, profits from another Fleet crew's ruin.
- **-5 to -6:** delivers the Fleet's freedom into a crown's hands; the word *oathbreaker* attaches, and there is no harder word out here.

Careful: the Free Fleet and House Joric are natural opposites (independence versus imperial order). Earning Joric's gratitude through obedience often costs Fleet standing.

SMALLER POWERS

The same logic covers the rest; keep the entries short and let each faction's single obsession guide you.

- **The Explorers' Guild.** *Reward* the charting of new space, recovered Vault data shared with the Guild, and rescued explorers (+1 to +3), or a newly opened, world-changing frontier (+4 to +5). *Dock* hoarded maps, falsified surveys, and abandoned colleagues (-1 to -4). They do not care who you fought, only what you found and whether you shared it.
- **The Solara Compact.** *Reward* colonists protected, fringe worlds defended from exploitation, and disasters averted (+1 to +3), or a colony saved from destruction (+4 to +5). *Dock* aiding strip-miners and predatory Houses, or leaving a settlement to burn for gain (-1 to -5). They remember exactly who showed up when a colony was dying.
- **The Church of the Eternal Veil.** *Reward* reverence shown at sacred sites, Veil-relics recovered and returned, and the devout protected (+1 to +3), or a profanation of the Veil prevented (+4 to +5). *Dock* desecration, trafficking in what they deem profane, and open service to Kurogane's transhumanism (-1 to -5). Their favor binds you to their doctrine, and that is a cost as much as the perks are a gift.

For any regional power the players make matter, name its single obsession, then award for serving it and dock for crossing it, scaling by how public the deed was and how much it cost the faction's rivals. The math is the corebook's; the judgment is yours.

APPENDIX D

GLOSSARY AND INDEX: A KEEPER'S REFERENCE

This appendix indexes the Keeper's principal tools and setting structures. Final page references are generated after PDF candidate pagination is locked.

A

Adventure Framework (*Keeper tool*). A reusable structure of hooks, pressures, clocks, and unanswered questions for building scenarios. **Find it in:** Chapter 16.

Adversary (*bestiary*). A statted opposition figure or force. **Find it in:** Chapters 5 and 12.

Apex Threat (*campaign threat*). A phenomenon whose rules and consequences are larger than one encounter block. **Find it in:** Chapters 12 and 14.

C

Clock (*Keeper tool*). A segmented track representing progress, danger, discovery, or irreversible change. **Find it in:** Chapter 4.

Contradiction Rule (*mystery tool*). The practice of giving every major hidden theory at least one credible contradiction. **Find it in:** Chapter 14.

D

Devourer Pattern (*restricted mystery*). The observed tendency of Devourer manifestations to prioritize communications, Veil systems, and concentrated cognitive activity. Its origin and purpose remain unresolved. **Find it in:** Chapters 12 and 14.

Drone (*mechanic*). An autonomous or remotely operated machine with defined control, range, memory, and will rules. **Find it in:** Chapter 13.

E

Encounter Design (*Keeper tool*). The construction of combat, social, and exploration challenges around stakes, opposition, and changing conditions. **Find it in:** Chapter 5.

Environment (*setting tool*). A large-scale stage of play with its own pressures, resources, and history. **Find it in:** Chapter 9.

F

Faction Politics (*setting tool*). The interacting goals, resources, dependencies, and conflicts of major institutions. **Find it in:** Chapter 8.

Front (*Keeper tool*). An off-screen threat with an agenda and clocks that advances without waiting for the crew. **Find it in:** Chapters 4 and 5.

G

Glitch (*drone and identity tool*). An emergent inconsistency in machine behavior, memory, or self-direction. **Find it in:** Chapter 13.

Great Silence Evidence Cluster (*restricted mystery*). The simultaneity problem, energy imbalance, missing interval, and orderly ruins that complicate the official Q-Net failure account. **Find it in:** Chapter 14.

H

Hearts in the Void (*adventure*). The flagship teaching adventure, published as its own volume. **Find it in:** the *Hearts in the Void* book.

Hope/Fear Engine (*Keeper tool*). The interpretation, banking, and expenditure of Fear alongside player-facing Duality outcomes. **Find it in:** Chapter 2.

House Amaranth (*Great House*). Preserves knowledge, history, and institutional memory. **Find it in:** Chapter 7.

House Joric (*Great House*). The Sentinel House, associated with protection, military enforcement, and Imperial security. **Find it in:** Chapter 7.

House Kaelen (*minor Imperial House*). The Border Arbiters, responsible for interspecies mediation, treaty oversight, frontier arbitration, and protection of vulnerable populations. It relies on other institutions for enforcement and major resources. **Find it in:** Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

House Kurogane (*Great House*). Transhumanist makers and engineers who push the boundary between flesh and machine. **Find it in:** Chapter 7.

House Solari (*Great House*). Core-World traditionalists and custodians of formal Mystic schools. **Find it in:** Chapter 7.

House Valerius (*Great House*). Merchant princes controlling major trade, credit, shipping, and much of the Pearl economy. **Find it in:** Chapter 7.

House Volkov (*Great House*). War-makers who treat strength and readiness as the foundation of security. **Find it in:** Chapter 7.

I

Imperial Paradox (*setting theme*). The Empire can provide real protection and welfare while denying meaningful consent, lawful replacement of the ruler, and a legitimate mechanism to refuse central authority. **Find it in:** Chapters 6 and 14.

M

Micro-Environment (*setting tool*). A focused location designed for one tense scene or sequence. **Find it in:** Chapter 10.

Missing Interval (*restricted mystery*). Damaged records suggesting Aurelius was aware of an abnormal event before the Great Silence without establishing what he understood or could safely change. **Find it in:** Chapter 14.

N

NPC (*Keeper tool*). A non-player character built around a memorable surface, motivation, hidden wound, and actionable pressure. **Find it in:** Chapter 11.

P

Phased Boss (*bestiary*). A major adversary whose behavior, objectives, or statistics change across distinct phases. **Find it in:** Chapter 12.

R

Reputation (*mechanic*). Faction-specific standing changed by the crew's visible actions and obligations. **Find it in:** Chapter 8 and Appendix C.

Revelation Discipline (*mystery tool*). The practice of presenting evidence in layers, preserving contradiction, and ensuring discoveries create decisions rather than exposition. **Find it in:** Chapter 14.

S

Scene Framing (*Keeper tool*). Opening a scene at the point where choice, pressure, and consequence become active. **Find it in:** Chapter 1.

Severance Event (*exceptional path transition*). A campaign event that explicitly triggers the Keeper-only Awakened-to-Sleeping conversion procedure. It is never an ordinary advancement choice or an implied consequence. **Find it in:** Chapter 14.

Spotlight (*Keeper tool*). The procedure for passing narrative focus without rolled initiative. **Find it in:** Chapters 1 and 5.

Starter Adventure (*adventure*). A ready-to-run scenario designed for first sessions. **Find it in:** Chapter 17.

T

The Imperial System (*setting*). The institutions, dependencies, authority, and succession problems of the Pearl Era Empire. **Find it in:** Chapter 6.

The Six Great Houses (*setting*). Amaranth, Joric, Kurogane, Solari, Valerius, and Volkov. House Kaelen is a minor Imperial House and is not a seventh Great House. **Find it in:** Chapter 7.

The Veil (*restricted setting mystery*). The unstable substrate used for FTL travel and associated with Domain Powers, memory effects, and unresolved patterns of cognition. **Find it in:** Chapter 14.

Three-Clue Rule (*mystery tool*). Support every major inference with at least three clues from different source types. **Find it in:** Chapter 14.

V

Vault Network (*setting mystery*). The distributed pattern of Precursor sites, activations, and possible connections. Its full structure is unknown. **Find it in:** Chapter 15.

APPENDIX E

VERSION CONTROL

12.06 (editorial corrections pass) - The Ethereal ability is named by its canonical name, Phase Shift, in Keeper prose (formerly Liminal Presence).

12.04 - Sensor Lock scale clarification. Sensor Lock now explicitly targets only vehicle- or starship-scale stat blocks; personal-scale tracking remains governed by personal weapon and targeting rules.

12.01 - DC-ladder normalization pass. The general Difficulty table was off the standard ladder (Demanding 14, Hard 18, Daunting 22, Heroic 26); corrected to 15 / 20 / 25 / 30 to match the ladder and the Scholar's Reference difficulty table. Adversary defense normalized from the legacy "Difficulty" label to "Evasion" to match the Corebook rules root (27 stat blocks); the retired condition "Charmed" (Dominate Will, Psychic Song) updated to "Confused". The flat-modifier normalization is tracked separately.

11.4-Editorial Release - Added the Keeper-only Severance Event procedure: Awakened-to-Sleeping conversion is available only through an explicit campaign-event trigger, uses a no-profit advancement ledger, and cannot be inferred from ordinary Fear, damage, conditions, or rest.

11.0.1 - Two-column readability pass. Compact page-spanning tables now sit at explicit flow breaks, extensive catalogs move to dedicated full-width pages, and text after every wide table restarts unambiguously in the left column. Short H3 modules are kept intact within a single column when they fit, and table type was enlarged for print legibility. No rules or setting content changed.

11.0 - Release and pagination pass. The B1-B2 Keeper corrections were retained; playtest writing fields now render as ruled lines, Contents page references were regenerated from the final PDF, and the compiled edition passed full visual inspection.

11.0-B2 - Terminology verification pass. The active Keeper rules contain no residual saving throws or rolled-initiative mechanics; Reaction Roll and Spotlight remain canonical. Version-history and ordinary-language uses of the word initiative are retained where they do not describe a game procedure.

11.0-B1 - Canon correction pass. Product-name residues, path resources, armor terminology, and Four Hungers references were standardized.

VERSION CONTROL

12.06 - Release consistency and source-cleanup pass. Corrected the bestiary total to 47 throughout, replaced five retired NPC Hunger labels with the Four Hungers, normalized Keeper terminology, advanced the Core authority markers to 12.06, and removed internal review scaffolding. Adversary statistics and encounter procedures are otherwise unchanged.

12.03 - Canonical Heat and Spotlight synchronization pass. Criminal Heat now follows the Corebook 12.03 and Rust & Steel Chapter 2.3: the default is one crew-wide score, while Factional Heat is only the explicitly adopted Rust module. This Companion now expands presentation, pacing, Intel, and Favors without creating its own track, trigger table, consequence bands, or reduction amounts. Silent Alarm now establishes a Hidden, covered ambush and uses the ordinary Fear procedure to Spotlight one eligible guard; no Spotlight contest remains. No PDF was regenerated in this source pass.

12.02 - Canon synchronization pass. Fear is capped at 12 at every gain and matching dice, including 1+1, always use the Core Critical Success and Path payouts. Retired negative-critical, low-face malfunction, save, skill, off-ladder DC, and arbitrary-control procedures were removed. Fear clocks use declared triggers; the environmental tag registry and class interactions are complete; Experimental Subject, War-Titan, Mirror-Self, and Precursor Warden phased encounters were reconstructed with exact phase transitions and outcomes. Face Hug, Ferro-Beast growth, Erasure Beam, Gravity Shear, Sensor Lock, and direct-PC-death protections now reproduce Core 12.02. Duplicate references, meta clock triggers, and development-only notes were retired.

12.00 - Unified editorial release. Retained the complete Keeper's Companion source and integrated the Keeper-only Severance Event in Chapter 14, with its Appendix D index entry and version record. Awakened-to-Sleeping conversion is available only when a campaign event explicitly triggers it, requires player consent, and uses a no-profit ledger that cannot create Slots, Powers, or repeat multiclass benefits. Navigation, final PDF pagination, and the complete editorial package were rebuilt.

11.4 - Chapter 18 extracted. *Hearts in the Void* has been removed from this volume and published as its own book. The adventure had grown past the point where it could serve as a chapter: it carries its own maps, its own pregenerated crew, and its own cadence, and a Keeper reaching for the Companion's reference material should not have to page through a full campaign opener to find it. Cross-references now point to the standalone volume. Contents regenerated. No rules changed.

11.33 - Process transparency pass. The legal page now states how the line is made: AI-assisted throughout production, with all game design, worldbuilding, and editorial judgment the author's. A closing colophon, *How This Book Was Made*, pairs that statement with an open invitation to artists, proofreaders, and playtesters through the VeilFarers portal. No rules changed.

11.32 - Artwork note. The legal page now carries the generative-art disclosure, framed as an open invitation: the generated interior artwork stands as a placeholder for real art and is in no way meant to replace human artists, and artists who wish to collaborate are invited to reach out through the feedback section of the VeilFarers portal. Cover version line corrected. No rules changed.

11.31 - Front matter pass. Added product front matter: a typographic cover and a legal and credits page carrying the copyright notice, the Darrington Press Community Gaming License attribution for the Daggerheart System Reference Document 1.0, the trademark and non-affiliation statement, and typeface and accessibility credits. Front matter pages are unnumbered; Contents repaginated. No rules changed.

11.3 - Accessible re-layout pass. Rebuilt paragraph by paragraph on the Corebook accessible layout system introduced in 11.2: tagged PDF (ISO 14289-1 PDF/UA-1, ISO 32000, WCAG 2.2 1.3.2 and 2.4.3) with true heading, list and table structure, logical reading order, and page backgrounds as artifacts; embedded Aller typography with the Display/Light title system and the body reduced from 9 pt to 8 pt to match the line standard; full-width catalog boxes for wide-table groups; editorial purity ("→" arrows, no decorative emoji) and

unbalanced-emphasis normalization. Contents regenerated against final pagination. No rules changed.

11.1-RC2-draft6 - Keeper mystery-boundary and synchronization pass. Chapter 14 now presents evidence clusters, competing models, and revelation procedures without publishing the setting's final production secrets. The glossary was corrected and expanded for House Kaalen, the Imperial paradox, and the Great Silence evidence. Contents and source metadata were rebuilt for the PDF candidate pipeline.

Project rules in force across all versions: no em dashes; single-Trait Rolls; matching Duality Dice always resolve as Critical Success; the worst nonmatching result is Failure with Fear; the present day is about 103 years after the Great Silence.

This copy: VeilFarers Keeper's Companion 12.06 canonical editorial release. Rules canon: 12.06.

Versioning note: the whole line shares a unified decimal version. Increments of 0.01 mark minor revisions; increments of 0.1 mark major ones (rule changes, edits affecting more than 1,000 characters, or changes to chapter structure).

10.31 - Added the formal Attribution section required by the project license. No other changes.

10.3 - Navigational pass, matching the Corebook's 10.8. A **Contents** page was added at the front, listing every chapter and appendix with the page it begins on. And a new **Appendix E: Glossary and Index** was created from scratch (the Companion had no glossary before): a selective, curated index of the Keeper's working vocabulary, the tools (Clocks, Fronts, the Hope/Fear engine, Spotlight), the setting anchors (the Six Houses, the Imperial System, factions, environments), the bestiary terms, and the veiled-lore concepts, each with its category, a short definition, the chapter where it lives, and the page where it is explained. Page references were generated against the final paginated PDF in a two-pass build.

10.21 - Cleanup: removed one stray page number left embedded at the end of a paragraph in the bestiary's threshold note, the same copy-paste artifact cleaned from the Corebook in 10.71 and Rust and Steel in 10.22.

10.2 - Three passes in one revision.

Lore alignment with the Alien Species 10.2 reframing, and a new veiled secret. The Keeper's-Eyes chapter (Secrets of the Veil) is the one place the setting's restricted lore is meant to be told plainly, so it keeps its revelations, but it was brought into line with the standing premises. The Emperor's origin was moved from asserted explanation to unresolved evidence, since the published setting does not provide a final identity claim. A new section, "The Thing About Humans," was added: it tells the Keeper, and the Keeper alone, that the human knack for getting along across species runs deeper than a young and fragile people should reach, and leans toward the reading that the disposition was set running in them and is not entirely their own, a faint lean toward contact over slaughter that a careful gardener might have worked into everything they planted. It is deliberately not stated as certain, the humans do not know they carry it, it feels to them like simply being human, it is not magic, and fear can splinter it (the Kryx wars are the example). The door is left shut; the players are never to be told outright, and the Keeper is advised to hold it loosely too.

Rules cleanup pass. Residual obsolete damage types, ranges, saves, and Initiative procedures were converted to canonical VeilFarers terminology.

Rebrand cleanup. Residual former-product-name references were normalized to VeilFarers while preserving in-world Void terminology.

10.1 - Final product-name normalization to **VeilFarers**, the line's final published name. Every in-text reference to the game as a product (200 instances) was renamed; the world and system vocabulary built on the word "void" (void damage, the Void, Voidwalker, void powers) is unchanged, as it is fiction and mechanics, not the title. Running headers and the cover tagline updated to "Veilfarers: A Game of Distant Stars Across a Broken Universe". The development back-pages playtest log, previously an empty two-column table with no room to write, was replaced with ruled writing lines. No mechanical content changed in this pass.

10.01 - Source regenerated from the V7 render with the calibrated extractor (round-trip fidelity 99.88% of significant tokens); 184 stray page-number artifacts removed; the broken Class Proficiency table rebuilt, restoring the missing Explorer row. - **New Chapter 13: Drones, Glitches, Memory, and Will** integrated from its approved source (PART I, Keeper Drones; PART II, Glitches, Emergent Personality, and Self-Willed Gear); Chapters 13 to 17 renumbered to 14 to 18 with cross-references cascaded; the Bestiary's phased-boss addendum retitled to its own chapter number (a stale "Chapter 17" self-reference from an earlier structure). - **Bestiary deduplication:** the phased-boss roster, workshop, and quick reference shipped twice in V7 (Section B repeated the Addendum); the richer classified copy is kept, the duplicate removed, and the unique closing section salvaged (about 5,000 words of verbatim duplication eliminated). - Full canon alignment with Corebook V9: the Hope engine restated in path-resource terms (the Sleeping mark the two-segment Effort Track; Experiences are spent by the Awakened and free for the Sleeping, never a Hope reward; criticals mark both segments and clear 1 Stress); Overkill restated to the canon formula in Chapter 0; every save and reactive DC-Trait construction converted to Reaction Rolls (about 35 instances); Initiative converted to Spotlight terms; "magic" damage retired in mechanics (Void, with Neural as its subtype); Medium-range leftovers mapped to the canon personal bands; Mind-affecting and armor-bypassing damage restated as Neural with the Ward-against-Void cancel; Armor Shields renamed Armor Slots throughout; Hearts in the Void adversaries, the spotlight walkthrough, and the Rust Bucket starship converted to the canon engine (the ship to Hull, Armor Slots per arc, and Heat Cap); the Leviathan's ship-scale effects restated in Hull terms; external-IP and casing normalization (130 legacy product-name casing fixes completed before final normalization). - **Appendix B rewritten where it contradicted the engine:** the Duality outcomes table in path-resource terms; the personal damage sequence restored to the canon severity ladder with the Armor Slot step-down; the starship sequence replaced with the unified arc-Slots-then-Hull procedure; the Loadout and Vault summary corrected to the Core values (5/6/7 by Tier, uncapped Vault, situational Recall costs, no Mystic slot bonus, Starter Loadout of 2 Powers, acquisition through Advancement Option 8); the Overwhelmed state trimmed to its canon effect; the glossary corrected (Armor Score, Armor Slots, Death Move, Heat replacing Action Points) and extended with Effort, the Effort Track, and Reaction Roll.

V7 - Added a Synthetic-healing note (repair not medicine, Reconstructive Nanites) to Chapter 0: Running Veilfarers.

V6 - Earlier Emperor-origin assertions were revised in later editions; explicit identity claims are superseded and removed from active published lore. - Appendices relabeled A, B, C, and all chapter running headers realigned (had been one off since Chapter 0 was added). - Added Appendix C: Running Reputation, a Keeper's Guide by Faction. - Added Chapter 17: Hearts in the Void, after Chapter 16 (Starter Adventures). - Added Chapter 0: Running Veilfarers (intro, how to use, galaxy overview, engine walkthrough, three technology dials). - Single-Trait check fixes. 0 em dashes.