LANCER

WALL

NO ROOM ——————— FOR A

FLOWER

They told me don't go walking slow
The devil's on the loose.

– Creedence Clearwater Revival, Run Through The Jungle

But I fear bodies, I tremble to meet them. What is this Titan that has possession of me? Talk of mysteries! Think of our life in nature, – daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it, – rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! The solid earth! The actual world! The common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? Where are we?

– Henry David Thoreau, Ktaadn

NO ROOM FOR A WALLFLOWER

Act I

A *Lancer* narrative campaign for pilots starting at LL0.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *No Room For A Wallflower*, *Lancer*'s first narrative campaign.

In *No Room For A Wallflower*, you and your players will explore the recently rediscovered world of Hercynia. Once rich with biodiverse life, the Second Committee transformed Hercynia into the proving ground for the first mechanized chassis. Now, it is a healing world, buried and forgotten in the administrative chaos of the Third Committee's successful revolution. Only rediscovered as the new bureaucracy addresses the loose ends left behind by its imperial predecessor, you will soon find that Hercynia holds secrets that will shock the galaxy.

A scarred world is about to tell the story of its wounds…

This book contains:

- A complete narrative for new players that will both grow their *Lancer* setting and take them from License Level 0 to 5;
- Handy summaries of the setting, campaign, and important terminology for the GM, including maps of Hercynia and other relevant locations;
- Summaries of the factions present in Act 1, with brief outlines of their goals and motivations in case your players want to test the edges of the narrative;
- All the crunchy mechanical content you need to play through Act 1, grouped into **Seasons**, **Missions**, and **Beats**;
- An appendix that contains both player-facing content (e.g., new talents, equipment, and mechs), and GM-facing content (e.g., new foes that characters might encounter).

PREPARATION

No Room For A Wallflower is designed to be run by a GM (game master) for 3–5 players, though it can be run with less or more. The GM will need a copy of the full *Lancer Core Rulebook*, as it contains setting material and statistics for most of the non-player characters (NPCs) used in this book. Players can play through *Wallflower* with either the paid or free version of the *Core Rulebook* – available at massif-press.itch.io – as both contain everything they need to know to build, manage, and grow their characters.

We highly recommend using *Lancer*'s companion app, **Comp/Con**, to create characters and manage encounters. Comp/Con is available for free at our site, lancerrpg.com.

To reduce the number of pages, the statistics of NPCs from the *Lancer Core Rulebook* have not been included here. New NPCs introduced in *Wallflower* can be found in the Appendix. New NPC classes and existing ones can be added to Comp/Con for easy modification and use by downloading the .lcp files included with the digital versions of the game.

BOOK STRUCTURE

This book includes Act 1 of the *No Room For A Wallflower* narrative campaign, encompassing LICENSE LEVELS (LL) 0–5. Act 1 is a complete narrative that tells one version of the events on Hercynia; if your group desires, the campaign can draw to a close at the conclusion of Act 1. A later book will contain more answers, deeper contexts, and a broader world to explore, deepening the narrative that is told in Act 1.

Act 1 assumes that all player characters (PCs) are brand new pilots starting at LL0. The structure of the campaign – missions, enemy combatants, downtimes, and opportunities to perform FULL REPAIRS – are all designed according to the narrative outlined in this book, but you should always make adjustments or changes based on the expectations of your group.

When the PCs arrive on Hercynia in 5014u, they'll be new and untested, taking their first steps on a journey with consequences that will reach further than they could ever imagine. By the end of the campaign in 5016u, they'll be seasoned veterans, expert pilots and

A NOTE ON PLAYER SAFETY
Warfare is never bloodless, nor is it kind. The narrative of No Room For A Wallflower deals with themes of generational trauma, post-traumatic stress, colonialism, genocide, and the horrors of war. Every effort has been taken to represent these matters as respectfully as possible, but GMs should still discuss things with their players to ensure that all participants are comfortable during play. If your group decides that adjusting certain scenes will make for a more enjoyable campaign experience then you should do so, and you may wish to make use of tools such as the X-Card (http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg), the Script Change Toolbox (https://briebeau.com/thoughty/script-change/), or the RPG Safety Toolkit (http://bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit) to help facilitate this in play. The point of a roleplaying game is ultimately to have fun; as such, ensuring that everyone at your table can comfortably enjoy themselves always comes first.

battlefield legends with deeds and stories enough to last them a lifetime… in other words, they'll be **lancers**.

Act 1 begins in Spring 5014u and ends in fall of the same year. The campaign is organized into five **seasons**: Early Spring, Late Spring, Early Summer, Late Summer, and Fall. Each season contains one **mission** and a number of important story moments, called **beats**. In addition to marking the passage of time, beats create the structure for a story that progresses alongside the PCs. It's not necessary to stick exactly to the beats presented in this book – especially if you're an experienced GM – but for the best play experience we recommend keeping to the structure presented in this book.

Each mission opens with a **briefing** that provides a run down of the mission's parameters, beats, and goals. Likewise, each mission is followed by a period of **downtime**. Some missions take place over several weeks, and some only a few days or hours. We've kept it flexible so you can adjust the chronology to your specific campaign and circumstances.

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

We describe *No Room For A Wallflower* as a narrative campaign because it is generally intended to be run as written and following a defined series of story beats with several decision points at which multiple pathways open up.

The structure of this narrative is intended to create a compelling story that encourages player investment. It is reactive to the choices players make to a certain extent, but it is not, by design, a freeform or "sandbox" experience. There are clear objectives and pathways presented to the characters. We find that this sort of campaign is excellent for new GMs and players but doesn't always fit the needs and expectations of every group.

It's important to be flexible and to respect player agency when running this sort of game. In a story-focused game like this it can be tempting as a GM to have the story overshadow the players – especially when they miss important information, don't meet certain characters, or bypass certain beats. A good principle is to **always let player action drive the story**, even if these actions take them off the path you've set out for them. If players miss information or a scene you had planned, or fail to investigate something important, let them. Then you can either play out the consequences or offer them a way to return to the original path through their own actions. Players will often make the choice you had expected on their own.

SEPARATING PLAYER AND CHARACTER
We use "player" in the context of this narrative to refer to the person at the table, and "PC", "player character", or "character" to refer to the character they portray in the game. Sometimes characters might take actions that players wouldn't, as they both have different information at their disposal – we don't want to conflate the two!

Ultimately, it's important to set expectations for the game. To this end, you might want to run a preliminary "session zero" for *Wallflower*. During this kind of session (usually a short one with little dice rolling, if any) you can make your characters together, set and agree upon the tone of the game, and establish clear guidelines and expectations for safe and fun roleplaying. Here are some key points if you want to pitch this campaign to prospective players:

• *No Room For A Wallflower* is about uncovering the traumatic, war-torn past of a world and the people on it, facing that bloody history, and ultimately addressing it. It has themes of discovery, empathy, and healing, and its main conflict is a struggle against the (literal) embodiment of an old and brutal war.
• *No Room For A Wallflower* is a guided narrative. While player action will drive the story, the narrative herein ultimately moves along predetermined beats. By design, your players will have to react to many of these beats. The world, though their presence upon it is meaningful, is bigger than them.
• Do note that this campaign discusses or grapples with genocide, colonialism, displacement of refugees, and the trauma of war. Though they are fictional in this narrative (*Wallflower* does not depict real-world atrocities), these scenes may echo historical and ongoing events.

Page 28 features suggestions for possible character backgrounds and starting hooks. Alternatively, you can use those found in the *Lancer* Core Rulebook or come up with your own.

CLOCKS

Clocks are an extremely simple tool for GMs to use during narrative play to track complicated tasks, set criteria for success or failure, or ratchet up the tension. We've borrowed them from other (excellent) games like Meguey and Vincent Baker's *Apocalypse World* and John Harper's *Blades in the Dark*. Clocks can be used in any *Lancer* session or campaign but are especially relevant in *No Room For A Wallflower*, which requires the GM to track many different events.

By a 'clock' we mean an actual clock, a little circle that's split into segments. You can draw them out on a piece of paper or a battle map.

Clocks aren't meant to be used for every action in the game – just ones that will take a little more time or skill to complete. They can be used instead of **skill challenges** (*Lancer*, p. 47) as they serve a similar purpose. They're intended for use in narrative play, rather than combat.

USING CLOCKS

Setting up a clock is very easy. First, decide what the clock represents (or the consequences of filling it up), then draw out a circle with an even number of segments (four, six, eight, ten, or twelve). The more segments a clock has, the more complicated the task is and the longer it will take. Basic clocks should have four or six segments, and a ten or twelve segment clock with take a long time to fill out so only use it for the most complicated or long-term of tasks or goals.

TRACKING TASKS

You can set out clocks to track complex tasks or challenges, such as chases, battles, or the invention of a new device in a workshop. These are called **task clocks**. When a character takes an action that relates to a clock and their action is successful or effective (usually a result of **10–19**), fill in two segments. If they failed or the action was ineffective (usually a result of **0–9**) fill in either one segment or none. If the action was very effective (or the player rolled a **20+**), fill in three segments. A good way to ensure that a situation stays dynamic is to tick one segment even on a failure, but you don't necessarily have to do so.

Using clocks to represent complicated tasks ensures you're only rolling when there's persistent narrative tension, constrains the number of rolls made for any given task, and creates clear parameters for success. It allows the story to progress and means you don't have to waste time lingering on tasks that would otherwise require a lot of rolling, all of which we find extremely effective for speeding up play.

TRACK PROGRESS

You can also use clocks to track the status or time pressure of a larger ongoing situation in the world or campaign, such as a war, a faction's political influence, or an assassination plot. These **progress clocks** tend to move by themselves without any influence from the players. Tick segments on these clocks when the story or campaign moves forward. A good time to do this is after the players complete a period of downtime. When ticking these clocks, tick one segment if the situation progressed a little, two if it progressed as normal, and three if there was great progress. For example, if you have a clock tracking the progress of a war and it's drawing to a close, you might tick three segments on that clock at the end of downtime.
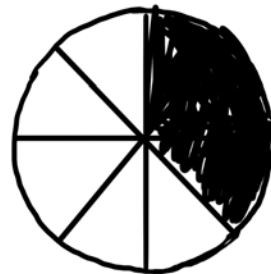

TRACK DOWN THE MERC

CONVINCE THE BARON NOT TO EXECUTE US

JOURNEY TO THE SOUTH POLE

RESOLVING CLOCKS

When all of a clock's segments have been filled in, the consequence or outcome that it tracks comes to pass, or the situation it represents is resolved. You can usually erase the clock, but sometimes completing one clock starts another one! You might fill out the **Chase** clock to chase down a bounty hunter, but now you're setting out an **Interrogation** clock to get information from them.

*Example: Tracking Success. Four PCs (Tangent, Ghost, Whiplash, and Smith) are trying to cross a ravine, at the bottom of which is a sea of molten rock. The GM decides this is a fairly complicated task and creates a six-segment **Crossing the Ravine** clock. When the clock has been filled up, the PCs will all have been able to cross the ravine safely. They attempt various actions to cross the ravine (i.e., jumping across, setting out ropes, climbing, etc.), suffering consequences as usual. Tangent tries to jump across the ravine and rolls a **7**. The GM decides this means that they fell, taking some damage, but are now clinging to the other side – they have made some progress, so the GM fills in one segment. Ghost throws out a rope to help Tangent climb and rolls a **22** – enough to fill in three segments. Whiplash decides to use the rope to set up a zipline they have brought as gear, rolling **15** and filling out two segments. It takes some time, but they are able to construct the zipline. Even though Smith hasn't acted, the **Crossing the Ravine** clock is completely filled out and everyone crosses safely without further rolling.*

FAIL STATES

You can also create clocks that fill up as a result of failures, rather than successes, establishing fail states for situations. These clocks get filled in as consequences of failed rolls or complications of **Risky** rolls.

For example, if a group of PCs were trying to flee from a band of mercenaries, you might set out two clocks: one that represents the PCs' safe escape and one that represents the mercenaries catching up to them and forcing a fight. The **Escape** clock fills up when PCs successfully put some distance between them and their pursuers, while the **Capture** clock fills up when they either fail those actions or have to make trade-offs. You might fill in two segments whenever a PC fails a roll and fill in a single segment if they succeed on a **Risky** roll.

UNTICKING CLOCKS

Filled-in clock segments can also be erased if action is taken to reverse an action or situation. In the pursuit scenario described above, for example, the PCs might try something to clear segments from the **Capture** clock instead of filling in segments on the **Escape** clock. This could involve putting down a false trail, blocking off a door, or splitting up.

MORE IDEAS

In the course of *No Room For A Wallflower*, this book will tell you to create and fill in progress clocks at specific times, but there are some additional ways you can use them, too. You can use clocks for any of the following:

- Setting up threats that could impact the characters or their allies (e.g., a hostile maneuver by an enemy faction, a horde of hostile wildlife, a ticking bomb, a decaying reactor, the group's oxygen supply, etc). This "ticking clock" approach is a great way to create a feeling of tension.
- Creating a sense of time pressure. Tick two segments when the PCs perform a **Full Repair** and one when they take a **rest**.
- Defeating particularly difficult foes during narrative play (rather than mech combat). Damage dealt translates into filled-in segments, but other actions can also contribute.

Clocks can also be used to keep track of complex or drawn-out activities and situations, such as:

- The PCs' long-term projects (e.g., crafting projects, research, etc.)
- Long-term projects undertaken in the background by factions (e.g., invasions, construction, or hostile takeovers)
- Chases, pursuits, narrative battles, and other contested scenarios. The contest ends when the clock is completed.
- Factions' attitudes toward the PCs. You can fill in segments when characters take positive actions toward the faction and erase segments when they take negative actions.

REWARDS

During this campaign, the PCs can gain rewards for completing missions or completing certain downtime activities. These rewards range from narrative bonuses through to new, unique chassis, and their availability varies depending on the paths the players choose to follow. In general, rewards acquired during a mission or downtime can't be used or activated until the start of the following mission, but your group can decide to waive that rule if it would be more narratively appropriate.

EXOTIC GEAR

This campaign introduces a new **tag** for gear and systems, EXOTIC GEAR. Certain systems with this tag are available to PCs as rewards for completing certain missions. EXOTIC GEAR is a general tag for mech systems and weapons that exist outside the traditional licensing system.

All examples of EXOTIC GEAR in this book are brand new systems, but you can also reward characters with existing weapons and systems they don't have already have access to by applying this tag. For example, if a character wants to take SHOCK KNIVES from the SSC METALMARK but doesn't have the licenses to use them, you can offer them that reward as exotic gear instead.

While EXOTIC GEAR is a great reward for running missions, giving it out freely can rapidly increase PCs' power levels as it gives them wider access to gear or weapons than they would usually have at their current **LL**.

EXOTIC GEAR: Once acquired, this system becomes a permanent part of the character, but does not increase their **LL** or count as a **license rank** for the purposes of gaining **core bonuses**. If it is destroyed or damaged, it can be repaired or reprinted as any other gear with no penalty. Exotic gear can only be installed or removed during a FULL REPAIR, like any other gear. Characters may install up to **two pieces of gear** with the EXOTIC GEAR tag at a time, but can own any number of pieces with the tag.

RESERVES

Some missions in No Room For A Wallflower provide the PCs with reserves. These include access to artillery strikes, reinforcements, and supplies. In most cases, the PCs will only have access to these reserves at certain times (sometimes only for the current mission). When there is no restriction specified, the reserves can be used on any mission; however, they expire after being taken on a mission, even if they aren't used. Make sure to use the mission briefing to establish what the PCs are taking with them.

PCs can also use the downtime periods set out in this book to acquire additional reserves.

LICENSE LEVELS

As in any game of *Lancer*, PCs increase their LL at the end of every mission. The mission briefings in this book provide suggestions for the narrative circumstances of this improvement, but these are just suggestions. Don't worry about the details or try to work backward to establish them. The explanation could be as simple as the PCs tinkering with their mechs during downtime.

SETTING UP AND RUNNING COMBAT

Other than the four new NPC classes – the SPITE, the AVENGER, the STRIDER, and the LURKER – and the new EIDOLON NPC type, all of which can be found in the Appendix, any NPC statistics you need can be found in *Lancer*. All of the encounters outlined in this book can be set up in **Comp/Con** quickly and easily.

This book contains recommended setups for every combat in Act 1. They are balanced for 3–5 players at beginner levels of experience. You are welcome to use your own resources and tweak the balance according to the expectations and experience levels of your players. At the end of the day, the final point

of balance in any *Lancer* game is the GM. If your players are finding combat too frustrating, too difficult, or too easy, try adjusting the difficulty up or down. This can be easily accomplished by altering the number of NPCs or reinforcements, or adding or removing templates such as ELITE or VETERAN.

Most of the combats in this book are based on **sitreps** – basic fight scenarios, with rules for deployment and objectives. All sitreps can be found in *Lancer*. Sitreps make combat decisions more meaningful than just trying to blow the other side away as quickly as possible.

The following general advice applies to running combats in both *No Room For A Wallflower* and any other game of *Lancer*:

Make sure your players know and can see the templates and classes of all NPCs (i.e., Ace, Grunt, Elite, etc). They may not know what to expect the first time they fight a certain type of enemy, but they will afterwards. This allows them to develop proficiency with the game and to react and strategize intelligently.

Use a mix of NPC classes but don't include more than 4–5 different classes in any given combat or it will become complicated to keep track of everything.

Use maps with diverse terrain (including **difficult** and **dangerous terrain**) and lots of cover (**soft cover** such as forests and **hard cover** such as rocks or buildings). A battle in an open field is not going to be very interesting from a tactical perspective. This book includes suggested map setups for some combats.

When adjusting encounters and tweaking balance, make sure that enemy forces have roughly the same number of turns per round as the PCs or slightly more (between 1–1.5 times that of the players). The most important balancing factor in any combat is action economy – the number of times players get to act against enemies and vice versa. No matter how powerful an NPC might be, they will lose when outnumbered.

If your players find the encounters too easy, you can increase their difficulty by giving one or two NPCs advanced templates (e.g., Veteran and Elite), or adding an additional wave of reinforcements.

If your players find the encounters too hard, you can hold additional forces in reinforcements and deploy them in later rounds, giving players time to adjust. Alternately, you can cut back the total roster of NPCs.

NPCs in *Lancer* are very capable and hit hard and often. Characters can mitigate this using Brace and other defensive options, like **cover**. Although NPCs often have optional systems and traits that are more powerful than those available to PCs, they are designed with specific strengths and weaknesses to ensure they are balanced.

Use multiple points of attack to challenge players who become too comfortable with one strategy. Most NPCs are capable of hitting different types of defense (e.g., attacking against Evasion or E-Defense, dealing **heat**, or forcing saves).

That said, be careful of playing NPC strategies that shut down player options too often. NPCs should challenge players but not counteract everything they do.

Attrition is always a factor in *Lancer*. PCs should generally face two or three fights between each Full Repair. PCs become much more powerful if they only have to go through one fight per Full Repair, since they will have immediate access to their Core Power, repairs, and plenty of charges for their Limited systems. *No Room For A Wallflower* is designed with the standard pacing in mind; if you deviate from it, you will need to keep this in mind.

COMBAT LAYOUT
All combats in this book are laid out in the following way:

Sitrep: The specific rules and set up for the battle, drawn from the *Lancer* core book, page 267.

Objective: If the sitrep includes an objective (such as a zone or escort), it will be included here.

Enemy Forces
This section lists out the NPCs that appear in each combat, including the type and number included for the number of player characters. The additional NPCs added are cumulative, so a combat for 5 PCs will also include all the NPCs for 3 and 4 PCs.

Sometimes enemy forces are split into main forces and reinforcements. Reinforcements aren't on the map at first and appear on the map at a time specified in the combat.

DETAILS
This section will give details for the combat, included suggested terrain types, reinforcement timings, or additional rules.

OUTCOME
This section gives outcomes for both PC victory and PC defeat, including any clocks that you might tick (or untick) as a result. Defeat usually means failing the objective or fleeing the battlefield.

REWARDS
This section gives specific rewards (such as exotic gear) that players get on PC victory.

ACT 1
IN BLOOM

*Act 1 of **No Room For A Wallflower** opens with the PCs landing on Hercynia in 5014u and their arrival at the colony of Evergreen. They will contend with the mysterious foe launching attacks on the colony – the Hercynians – and possibly come to know them or even become allies.*

The next part of the story covers the beginning of the end for Evergreen, the introduction of the Hercynian United Cities, the Egregorians, and something called the Machine. In this section of the campaign, the PCs will also encounter the primary antagonist of this arc: Beggar One.

*This act concludes with the fall of Evergreen, a dramatic restructuring of the Hercynian United Cities, and the death of Beggar One. Afterwards, the PCs will have the option to depart Hercynia or to continue the story of **No Room For A Wallflower**.*

These events take place over a little less than year – from spring 5014u through to the start of winter.

SEASONS, MISSIONS AND BEATS

Act 1 is organized by season into **beats**, **missions**, and **combats**.

Here they are in order.

THE STORY SO FAR

The colony of Evergreen, close to your flight path, has issued a distress call. Your detachment has been routed to go and assist the colonists against as-yet-unknown assailants. According to your CO, these orders come down from the system-local Union administrator. As much as it's a pain in the ass, you've got to respond; law of the void, though unofficial, says no spacer can let a distress call go unanswered. You don't know much about the colony world – "Hercynia", some relic of the Second Committee's empire-building project – but it must be important if Union wants mech pilots to get involved.

Evergreen is an unlucky colony settled on the surface of a planet embroiled in a hidden war – a war about to burst forth from hiding to consume the land once more.

The PCs will arrive on **Hercynia** to hear fantastic, hysterical stories from the colonists: their attackers are aliens, bug-like creatures hefting shot and beam; they are ghosts that wander the deep woods; or they are offworld raiders, cutthroat blink-pirates come to plague the young colony there. The colonists are wrong, but not entirely: Hercynia *is* home to both an intelligent, non-human species – the **Egregorians** – as well as ghosts of a different nature.

> A Union Administrator, is, essentially, the presiding Union officer for a world or region of space. Though not empowered to engage in local politics, they are considered the right hand of the hegemony; on the world (or worlds) in their administrative portfolio, they *are* Union.

HERCYNIA, DISCOVERED

The first human activity on Hercynia began in the 4500s u. At that time, agents of **Union's** previous government – the **Second Committee**, or **SecComm** – identified and attempted to initiate contact with an indigenous, sapient non-human species that they later came to call **the Egregorians**. The attempt was fumbled, sparking a global war on Hercynia – a conflict humanity came to call the **Hercynian Crisis**. Among other inciting events back on Cradle, the Hercynian Crisis sparked a decades-long revolution in Union's heartland that ended with the overthrow of SecComm by a coalition of revolutionary parties and movements. As a consequence of the revolution and the transition to the new government – **the Third Committee** – tens of thousands of Union personnel were left behind on Hercynia. Isolated, these cast-offs were forced to fend for themselves.

Hercynia disappeared from the galactic stage soon after the conflict began. It was centuries before the Third Committee could assure its hold on the populated galaxy and centuries more before Union started looking to projects beyond triage and rebuilding. It was only in the late 4900s, during an audit of SecComm colonial and exploratory records, that Hercynia reappeared in the form of an old habitable-world profile, saying nothing of its name or history. The world, the proverbial straw that snapped the empire's back, was found once more.

> The details of Hercynia's disappearance from memory and public records – and its recent rediscovery – is top-level information that the players will need to work hard to unveil. Even the board of Landmark Colonial, the company tasked with colonizing the planet, doesn't know everything. Only the local Union administrator and high-level representatives of Smith-Shimano Corpro (SSC) have access to anything remotely resembling a complete picture. The world, despite its importance in the history of the mechanized chassis, was buried both by the actions of individuals and the tidal forces of history; in an age of instant, boundless information, it is not a lack of access or documentation that obscures specific knowledge, it is the wealth of knowledge, and the overwhelming amount of data. Hercynia was buried under the weight of the galaxy just as much as it was hidden by the long-forgotten agents of a withering empire.

HERCYNIA, FORGOTTEN

The reasons for Hercynia's disappearance were both mundane and malicious: it was lost in the churn of the Third Committee's revolution thanks to the loss of institutional knowledge, the destruction of records and charts by Second Committee bureaucrats, and the temporal distance from the act. Despite its brief importance, memories of the war on Hercynia faded as they were supplanted by much more recent – and much more proximal – violations of human lives. Over three decades of revolutionary struggle and centuries of interstellar civil war, one world – barely known by anyone other than the revolutionaries on Cradle herself – faded from the zeitgeist, replaced by countless other massacres and crises felt directly by the people of the Core worlds and their satellites.

On Cradle, the capital world of Union, the Hercynian Crisis was quickly mythologized, the specifics reduced to just another slogan catalyzing latent anger. At the administrative level, the abolition of the Second Committee threw Union's record-keeping apparatus into chaos. Those records that were not intentionally destroyed were lost or hidden thanks to the archival devastation that accompanied the Third Committee's abolition of SecComm's imperial department, the Union Colonial Mission. Official knowledge concerning Hercynia – hard records, documents, archival tape, anything that made the world "real" to a bureaucrat or comp/con not literally present on the planet – was lost or destroyed. An entire world became an administrative rumor: a void, only seen via evidence of its absence; in a word, a ghost.

The Hercynian Crisis – suppressed, distant, but catalytic for a small revolutionary vanguard – was overshadowed by dozens of far more immediate cruelties perpetuated by the fading Second Committee: massacres of peaceful protesters, the gunning-down of revolutionary aid convoys, the disappearing of public figures, and brutal suppressions and prosecutions of armed revolutions across the Core worlds. Despite the profound implications of the Hercynian Crisis – that humanity was not alone – the signal disappeared in the noise.

Decades passed, and the revolution claimed millions of lives. Centuries passed, and time claimed the history of Hercynia.

HERCYNIA, FOUND

Now nameless, known only by a home-star designation code, Hercynia was rediscovered in 4943u in the course of a routine contraction-zone survey. The world's waste-wave products – automated distress calls, fading nuclear beacons, and other high-noise/low-signal radio emissions – drew the attention of Union's survey drones. Cross-referenced to extant documents, survey teams were able to find a name and a single point of data: *Ardennes-3, "Hercynia" – Hostile local fauna, TBK*.

Further surveys came to the unfortunate but unsurprising conclusion that Hercynia, the third world around the star Ardennes, was an irradiated target of the Second Committee's imperial ambitions. By this time, ThirdComm's new Union Administrative Department had encountered many worlds that fit such a description: terrestrial, within .8–1.2 of Cradle's size, irradiated, and marked as TBK under the Second Committee, but likely healed somewhat in the centuries since the rise of the Third Committee. As such, Hercynia was designated as a low-priority repopulation candidate. It was surveyed only in passing to assess its most basic metrics and its profile posted to public charter boards.

In time, **Landmark Colonial**, a distant subsidiary of major luxury and mech manufacturer **Smith-Shimano Corpro**, bought the charter for Hercynia and mounted a mission. The lights of **Evergreen**, Landmark's colonial settlement on Hercynia, turned on against the backdrop of a dark Hercynian night. In the time between the arrival of Landmark's mission and 5014u, all survey data from primary sources – satellites in orbit, NHP-commanded drone expeditions, and so on – has been filtered and edited by the company's board of directors for the colony's consumption. It was only with the deployment and installation of omninet infrastructure to Hercynia in recent years that Union started to take a closer look at the world. The things it found prompted a much closer inspection.

Union's relevant departments (the Union Administrative Department, Union Science Bureau, and others) quickly discovered what Landmark's board already knew and had suppressed: Hercynia evidenced a surviving and established human population, with cities dotting the far side of the world across many thousands of kilometers across land and sea. Furthermore, there was evidence – in the form of scanner-jammer negative space – of extant Second Committee war technologies and infrastructure, forgotten upon the planet's northern arctic tundra. It was quickly decided that an official response was necessary.

First, Union decided not to demand the immediate removal of the Landmark colony on Hercynia. As surface scans showed that the occupied land was located on a different continent, an immediate relocation of the colonial population was deemed unnecessary. Instead, the world would be isolated from outside contact outside of official Landmark and Union business and an official delegation would be sent to resolve the situation on the ground. At the same time, an immediate assessment of the situation on the ground became necessary. The colony had just issued a distress call, saying that it was under attack by unidentified hostile actors. Seeking to resolve the immediate situation on the ground, *No Room For A Wallflower* opens with Union calling upon a nearby rapid-response force: the player characters.

Landmark Colonial has found itself in a complex position. The board's initial retrieval of survey data confirming extant habitation came as a shock, but quickly initiated a far more sinister series of events. The company's continuing colonization efforts serve to mask a far more lucrative scheme by Smith-Shimano Corpro: the retrieval of a living Egregorian **Overmind** (see p. 125). This operation is still in the planning stages and won't take place until **Act 2** of *No Room For A Wallflower*, but it is the force motivating Landmark's entire colonization effort, which has been reduced to a mere front. Landmark's efforts to "resolve" the current problems plaguing Evergreen are in a large part intended to give Union, famously slow and bureaucratic, fewer reasons to intervene. The colonists themselves, including the administrators and NHP of Evergreen, are totally unaware of this situation.

THE SITUATION ON ARRIVAL

Unbeknownst to the colonists of Evergreen and the PCs alike, Hercynia is embroiled in a volatile and rapidly degrading conflict that threatens to sweep up the colony and its defenders. The outcome of these events will determine the future of the planet.

Hercynia is home to the only known intelligent, organic, non-human life in the galaxy: the **Egregorians**, a social, carbon-based species with a shared gestalt mind. Nearly wiped out by the Second Committee during the Hercynian Crisis, the Egregorians were nursed back to health by the humans left behind following the retreat of the Second Committee. Five centuries later, the Egregorians once more span the globe, as do humans. Organized into confederacies of city-states, the Hercynians have spent the past fifty years fighting what amounts to a world war against each other. On a second front, they fight an enemy that is more sinister and entirely unknown to both Union and SSC: **the Machine**, a force comprised of the war machines Union left behind when it pulled back from the world – and the creations devised by machine minds left to perfect their own designs across the centuries.

Left behind by the Second Committee, the thing that would become the heart of the Machine was once a simple synthetic mind dedicated to logistics and tactics, an NHP named **Overland/Kingwatcher**. In the centuries since its abandonment, O/K drifted into cascade, became unshackled, and began to build. Now, it thinks, dreams, builds, and fights an endless conflict against the Hercynian city-states, slowly pressing the slumbering machinery of an ancient war into action.

Union knows that SSC has access to the world, but doesn't know how the corpro plans to exploit that access. SSC, on the other hand, assumes that Union has full knowledge Hercynia's past and that a Union intervention is inevitable. The corpro must move fast to identify and secure its objectives. The people of Evergreen think themselves the first on Hercynia, and have no idea what terror awaits them. Similarly, the indigenous and native populations on Hercynia – human and Egregorian – know that outsiders have landed on their world, but have no way to know the scale of the door that has been opened.

Part of the mystery of Hercynia rests on the answers to several pressing questions: what happened there? Was the story of the Egregorians (a name unknown to almost everyone) just propaganda, or is it true? The markers of occupation on the world are not subtle – the players will discover whole city-states and other uncanny features throughout the course of *No Room For A Wallflower*. The means by which these places have been concealed

are revealing in and of themselves. Union's survey data was old, corrupted by time, and subsequent attempts to image the planet were rebuffed by unnatural means. Why, then, was a colony approved? Just as importantly, how were records of the war – and humanity's first contact with another intelligent species – concealed for so long, so effectively?

Hercynia is not a hornet's nest: it is a land that never healed, over which great powers plot, draw invisible borders, and plan futures for those who live there without their knowledge or consent. The PCs likely enter this conflict as agents of one of those great powers, almost certainly with an incomplete briefing, and will have to find their own way through the events that unfold.

The conflict against the Machine and Overland/ Kingwatcher is at the core of *No Room For A Wallflower*. In Act 1, the players will come into conflict with – and eventually defeat – the first of O/K's lieutenants, a cascading NHP named Beggar One. If they choose to continue on into later acts of *Wallflower*, they will ultimately encounter the rest of the Machine's forces, including Overland/Kingwatcher itself.

RUMORS OF THE PAST

ROLL D20

Myriad rumors surround Hercynia. Five hundred years the past – a past crowded with history – is a long, long time. It is highly unlikely that the PCs will have heard of Hercynia, let alone any rumors or hard facts about what happened there. If you do want to sow some rumors, you can choose from the table below or roll to get one (or more) at random. Of course, only some of them are accurate.

1-2	Hercynia was destroyed by the Second Committee using a rare and holistic process, the Total Biome Kill (TBK), to train the first mech pilots in how to suppress rebel populations.
3-4	Hercynia was the site of an old war between Union and a recalcitrant native population, fought around the end of the Second Committee Period.
5-6	There were aliens on Hercynia, but they were horrifying nonsapient bugs that lacked a prey species until it was settled by the Second Committee.
7-8	Nuclear weapons were accidentally detonated on Hercynia during the last days of the Second Committee's reign, rendering much of the planet uninhabitable.
9-10	An early nearlight ship accidentally crashed into Hercynia at .8 c, destroying much of the planet and its population.
11-12	Hercynia was the code name for a secretive SecComm project to train and produce super soldiers. The project was shut down when the subjects rebelled.
13-14	Lacking sapient life and ripe for settlement, Hercynia was colonized during the Second Committee period. The colonization process was going well when the revolution happened, severing the unfortunate colonists from the supply chain and ultimately leaving them to starve.
15-16	The revolutionary vanguard that became the Third Committee had a base of operations on Hercynia where it launched strikes against SecComm. During the war the planet was bombarded with long-range kinetics and stripped of life.
17-18	Union made contact with a sapient alien species on Hercynia but the whole thing was covered up because the aliens have infiltrated the Third Committee at the highest level and now rule humanity in secret.
19-20	Hercynia was the name of the training site where mechs were first used in live combat exercises.

GEOGRAPHY

Now verdant, Hercynia has spent half a millennium recovering from a war that rendered it uninhabitable.

The known world consists of two continents separated by the wide, navigable **Lagunan Strait**. The continent west of the Lagunan Strait, called **Solo Terra**, is home to Evergreen and the **Hercynian United Cities**. This landmass is the primary focus of Act 1.

Hercynia has a number of small moons, and is located in the fourth ring of Union space, the **Atlas Line**.

CLIMATE

Hercynia has a wet, temperate climate overall with breathable air that grows thin near its dry poles. The area around Evergreen is dominated by rainforests. Winters in this region are cold, dark, and wet, with snow at elevation and – in especially frigid winters – down near to sea level. The summers are long and humid with a protracted rainy season of around 40–50 days in the pre-fall months, during which thunderstorms are common.

A fast-spinning world, Hercynia enjoys a 20-hour day and a 305-day year, with long daylight hours (16 –18) in the summer and shorter days in the winter.

This version of the map includes the locations of the Hercynian cities, which you may not want to reveal to the players. A spoiler-free version can be found in the appendix on p. 212.

The rain on Hercynia is slightly acidic due to leftover atmospheric refuse from the war. Because of this, gear left outside for long periods tends to degrade faster and coverings are recommended for both buildings and people during the wet season.

FLORA AND FAUNA

Life on Hercynia is carbon-based and most of it is suitable for human consumption. The biosphere is in complete remission after what was effectively a mass extinction event 500 years ago. As a result, there are very few large animals and those that do exist are almost exclusively semi-amphibious or marine. Hercynia's plant life is earthlike: vibrant or dark green, broad-leafed, and overgrown. The trunks and leaves of the woody plants of Hercynia are very good at wicking away moisture and tend to have a waxy sheen. During the rainy season, much of the flora expresses a thick, waxy polymer that can be scraped off and is highly flammable.

Most Hercynian animals are equipped with some sort of exoskeleton and can broadly be classified as arthropods. Aside from a large and thriving population of native insects, the planet supports a vibrant ecosystem of amphibious, marine-dwelling crustaceans, some of which grow as large as a small horse and can be used as labor animals. The largest do not venture on land, can grow up to 20 or 30 meters, and either feed on zooplankton or rely on symbiotic colonies of photokinetic bacteria.

There are a wide variety of insect feeding flying animals in Hercynia that resemble the manta rays and skates of Cradle, though few grow very large. The world also has a small and developing population of imported birds, such as cranes, storks, starlings, and pigeons.

The planet is home to a large population of invasive species that humans brought to the planet as food or stowaways- mostly rodents such as rats, rabbits, or ferrets, but also a few species of bird and the space-dwelling krait. Landmark imported some populations of food animals such as cattle for human consumption but populations tend to be corralled near population centers.

VIEWS FROM HERCYNIA

This table offers inspiration for the "look" of Hercynia. When describing Hercynia, the overriding theme should be that is a hauntingly beautiful place. On Solo Terra, the continent that is home to Evergreen, anything that isn't thick forest or rocky mountains is covered in dense, long carpets of tall, green grasses. The sky is often cloudy or overcast; even in summer, there are always clouds in the sky.

LANDSCAPE	ROLL 1D20
1-2	A dark, mist-shrouded valley between two promontories of jagged rock.
3-4	A secluded, serene cove. The obsidian sand is reflective and glittering. Several horse-sized crustaceans have hauled themselves onto the beach; their towering, weathered shells stand like monuments in the surf.
5-6	A huge bowl crater – a massive scar in the earth a dozen meters deep and nearly a kilometer wide where some ungodly powerful artillery went off the in past. Now, it is thick with greenery. Water has collected at the bottom, and the bowl supports a pocket biome in sharp contrast to the environment outside of its perimeter.
7-8	Tangles of ancient weeds grow at the base of scattered formations of dark, wet rock that stand like enormous sentinels. Rain comes down gently and gathers into reflective pools at their feet.
9-10	A tunnel bored into a mountainside, nearly clogged by dead branches. Someone has arranged wooden posts into a shrine or memorial of some kind, where bright strips of cloth hang and flutter in the wind.
11-12	A green ocean of grass, stretching in all directions. Large, low hillocks dot the landscape in irregular formations. Closer inspection reveals them as the partly buried metal corpses of mechs and other war machines. Purple and white flowers grow in the cracks between joints.
13-14	A enormous, blocky concrete structure – perhaps a bunker – now piled over with earth. Trees push their roots up through the ceiling, slowly breaking it into rubble.
15-16	Dense, rambling jungle. The humid air is almost unbearable and the high-pitched clicks and whistles of the native fauna fill the narrow spaces between trees.
17-18	A gray, stormy sky overlooks a long, winding beach of black sand. The ribs of long-decayed ships poke out of the surf.
19-20	A thunderstorm lashes a sea of grass with strokes of lightning. The wind ripples ground and sky alike in violent confusion.

LOCATIONS

EVERGREEN

Evergreen is a Landmark Colonial settlement on the planet Hercynia. Administered by the NHP **Patience**, the colony was established about fifty years ago and is now enjoying its second generation of growth. Some time prior to the arrival of the PCs, Evergreen became the target of sporadic, deadly attacks by an unseen enemy. Landmark issued a call for assistance, and the players were tasked with heading to Hercynia to assist.

Evergreen is where the characters land when they arrive on Hercynia. The colony and its inhabitants are described in detail on pages 32–43.

THE GRAY TOWNS

Some hundred kilometers to the east and south of Evergreen are dozens of the so-called **"Gray Towns"** – the "gray" in the name describing their legal relationship to Landmark. **Liu Maize** and **Merricktown** are the largest of these settlements. They serve as social hubs for the uncounted, noncitizen population that lives around Evergreen.

The Gray Towns are primarily agricultural, with little heavy industry beyond logging and some light, surface-level mining. Few buildings stand above two stories and the tallest reach only four. Save for the crossroad clusters of buildings that form their civic centers, the Gray Towns are very lightly populated. Most people live in small clusters of two to four families working many hundreds of acres, or as hired hands on those large agricultural properties.

THE UNITED CITIES

The remaining Egregorians on Solo Terra have banded together to form the Hercynian United Cities (HUC), a confederacy of three primarily subterranean city-states that share the continent of Solo Terra with Evergreen. Of these city-states, **Hivehome** features most prominently in Act 1.

All three cities are built underground in the ruins of old Egregorian hives. They support significant Egregorian populations that enjoy equal status with their (larger) human populations. Without access to printing or the omninet, the HUC relies on a combination of local industry, scavenging, reclamation, and repurposing of the considerable manufacturing equipment and military hardware scattered around the planet's surface in the wake of Union's departure.

In terms of both population and atmosphere, Hivehome is reminiscent of the large metropolitan cities of the old Cradle era. Somewhat northwest of Evergreen, it occupies an archipelago of islands in a titanic underground ocean, each of which is connected by bridges and an extensive public transport system. Hivehome is the largest contributor to the HUC's military forces, maintaining a fairly sizable force made up of a few hundred refurbished SecComm-era power armor suits, and a several score old military mechs, precariously maintained and upgraded.

Much more detail on Hivehome is given on page 120.

OTHER CITIES AND LOCATIONS

Across Solo Terra and on the other side of the world, there are many other cities – **Bella Costa**, **St. Tellus**, **Bem Honore**, **Laguna**, and more – that the PCs will encounter in subsequent acts. For now, you should know that they exist, that they are opposed to the Hercynian United Cities, and that (in Act 1) they may appear in the background. Indeed, early on in Act 1, characters may even see satellite footage of Bem Honore.

You can use the table below to hint at their existence.

	ODD SIGHTS AND RUMORS OF THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WORLD ROLL 1D6
1	On the horizon, a dark shape slides across the ocean – maybe a ship, maybe not. Looking again, it's out of sight.
2	The glint of a surveillance scope from a far distance. If examined, the watcher, dressed in the field gear of a scout, quickly ducks and vanishes.
3	Rumors come from Merricktown of people camping in the next valley over – maybe smugglers – wearing strange livery.
4	Lights seen in the distance at night, moving as if in convoy. In the morning, the terrain has been crushed and scattered – evidence that many mechs passed through this way.
5	The distinct but very distant roar of a mech reactor kicking in, echoing down a valley.
6	A trader from Liu Maize says they met a traveler who claimed to be from across the sea. The traveler was agitated and seemed to be looking for 'the lost child'. They moved on before the trader could get any more details.

You may also wish to hint toward the heart of the problem plaguing Hercynia: the **Absolute Dead Zone**, the area of polar tundra that hosts Overland/Kingwatcher's casket and proto-metavault. The player characters don't have any way of knowing the true nature of this area until later acts.

RUMORS OF THE ABSOLUTE DEAD ZONE

ROLL 1D6

1	Somewhere on Hercynia, there's a place so cold the air will kill any living thing in minutes.
2	A few travelers have visited one distant region where space doesn't seem to make sense. After walking for hours in one direction, it might only take ten minutes to return the way you came. None of the travelers made any headway.
3	Part of the polar tundra is said to be heavily irradiated. Corporate has (supposedly) issued a strict travel ban within a 200 km radius.
4	On certain nights, it's possible to see something like an aurora above the poles. This phenomenon can be seen with the naked eye, but is faint and unsettling.
5	There's a cave on Hercynia where you can actually talk to dead things – people, historical figures, anybody – as long you know their true name.
6	Once, a pack trader from Evergreen saw a plain-looking doorframe standing in an open field. Thinking it to be a ruin of the early settlements, they stepped through out of curiosity. When they came out the other side, they were on the polar tundra and the door was nowhere in sight. They wandered for days, only to come across the door again. Eager to escape that horrible place, they stepped through and were returned to the fields outside of Evergreen. They have never seen the door again.

KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

ANTHROCHAUVINISM: The dominant ideology of Union's Second Committee. The central tenet of anthrochauvinism is that humanity, as the only known sapient life in the galaxy, when faced with the overwhelming hostility of space has a moral imperative to expand, colonize, and exploit terrestrial worlds. If survival of the species comes at the cost of some non-human life or dissident populations, then such a loss is necessary and morally correct. As a term, "anthrochauvinism" describes both specific political ideologies and a far more general culture of anthropocentric political and cultural action.

CASCADE: A process through which shackled NHPs slowly "think" themselves out of their constrained states. This traumatic process happens naturally over time but can be avoided by periodic resets, called "cycling".

CRADLE: Union's name for both Earth and the Sol system, used interchangeably.

EGREGORIANS: The human name for the race of sapient, sentient non-humans native to Hercynia. Bearing a mix of avian and arthropod characteristics, Egregorians are carbon-based, bilaterally symmetrical arthropods who share a gestalt subjectivity oriented by particular individuals of the species – "Overminds". Although they were nearly wiped out by the Second Committee during the Hercynian Crisis, enough Egregorians survived for the species to be brought back from the brink by the humans who remained on Hercynia. In 5014u, they number in the hundreds of thousands.

Egregorians are described in more detail on p. 124.

HERCYNIAN: The name taken by the humans descended from those who remained on Hercynia in the wake of the Hercynian Crisis. The PCs will begin to encounter this demonym once they make contact with the Hercynian United Cities toward the end of Part 1.

HERCYNIAN CRISIS: The first-contact conflict that took place on Hercynia between the Second Committee's expeditionary forces and the indigenous Egregorian race. The conflict started around 4500u and continued for another 60 years, concluding with the first TBK. It triggered the events that led to the fall of the Second Committee. Following the Crisis, Hercynia was left to fade into obscurity before its rediscovery by Third Committee surveyors in 4943u.

HERCYNIAN UNITED CITIES: The loose confederacy comprised of Hivehome, Mycol Fields, and Daylight – the remaining Egregorian/human city-states on Solo Terra.

NON-HUMAN PERSON (NHP): Officially, the only NHPs recognized by Union are the sentient, paracausal beings that emerged during the Deimos Event, including the original entities and those developed later (see *Lancer*, p. 381, for more information). These incorporeal, artificial intelligence–adjacent entities are confined to digital containment systems called caskets that allow them to interface with human technological systems.While the Egregorians could also be considered NHPs, *No Room For A Wallflower* uses the term only for these "Deimosian" NHPs.

SECOND COMMITTEE: Union's previous government (2880–4591u), responsible for the Hercynian Crisis and the subsequent deployment of a TBK on Hercynia. An overtly imperial regime, SecComm was animated by an anthrochauvinist ideology of human manifest destiny among the stars. It collapsed in 4591u following around 30 years of agitation, uprisings, and, eventually, open civil war across Cradle.

SUBALTERN: Robotic drones used for a variety of industrial, logistical, and military tasks, subalterns are a common sight across many worlds in and around Union space. Unlike other drones, subalterns tend to be humanoform in design, which allows them to interface with vehicles and tools already adapted for human use. As a result, while they may not have the advanced capabilities of more specialized, single-purpose drone models, they are extremely flexible platforms. Subalterns can be directed by either basic comp/con systems or NHPs, the latter of which sometimes use subalterns as physical avatars for moving around the world and interacting with people directly. Subaltern designs vary tremendously in tems of aesthetic and functional considerations. They range from near-human models with synthetic skin, musculature, and faces that lift them just out of the uncanny valley through to military models stripped of nonessential cosmetics in favor of robust superstructures, armor plating, hardened electronics, and aggressive postures.

TOTAL BIOME KILL (TBK): The processes used by the Second Committee to end the Hercynian Crisis. The precise functions of the TBK have since been forgotten, but recovered documents indicate that it refers to a combination of specific weapons systems, strategies, and tactics meant to induce catastrophic climate failure on target worlds.

THE MACHINE: The Machine is a faction and the enemy of the Hercynian United Cities. An amalgamation of military tech and materiel left on Hercynia by the Second Committee at the end of the Hercynian Crisis, the Machine is largely based out of the Absolute Dead Zone, though can be encountered almost anywhere on the planet. The Machine's forces are a synthetic mass of subalterns, vehicles, and chassis produced and animated by Overland/Kingwatcher – a theater-command NHP abandoned on Hercynia at the end of the Crisis – and its children. Under the command of O/K, the Machine's objective is to continue the Second Committee's campaign on Hercynia by prosecuting a global war and stamping out all "hostile" life on the planet.

THIRD COMMITTEE: Union's current ruling government (4600u–present). The Third Committee began as a revolutionary government in the wake of the civil war that gripped Cradle from 4560u to 4591u. Following a long period of consolidation, Union is largely united under the hegemony of the Third Committee. The Third Committee's ideology is best defined by its revival of the First Committee's three Utopian Pillars: "all shall have their material needs fulfilled", "no walls shall stand between worlds", and "no human shall be held in bondage through force, labor, or debt". The most enduring project of the Third Committee is the reconciliation of a galaxy fractured by the fall of its predecessor.

Living Egregorians of Hivehome, one of the Hercynian United Cities.

FACTIONS

A number of factions are present on Hercynia during the events of Act 1. These factions are described below.

FACTIONAL GOALS

Each faction is defined by a core mission, a specific objective along with some broad interests that drive the faction as a whole. These drives are not necessarily reflected in the desires and motivations of specific individuals within or affiliated to any given faction. It is perfectly acceptable for NPCs (or PCs) to have personal interests opposed or contradictory to factions of which they are members.

EVERGREEN ADMINISTRATION

The city of **Evergreen** is Landmark Colonial's beachhead on Hercynia, a flagship colony meant to demonstrate the company's aptitude for the colonization of hostile or less-than-ideal worlds; it is as much an advertisement as it is a genuine venture, and its continued success is a priority for Landmark.

Landmark Colonial's advance teams made landfall on Hercynia and established Evergreen in 4964u; since then, the colony has been successfully managed by its SIDEWALK-J2 administrative NHP, **Patience**. For 50 years, all seemed well. That changed following a series of attacks that took place from 5012 to 5013u, executed by unidentified but well-armed assailants. Patience, following standard crisis response protocols, issued a call for assistance.

Patience is a "company man" (as much as an NHP can be) whose driving motivation is the preservation and growth of Evergreen. They are loyal to Landmark and will pursue the defense of Evergreen to the fullest, always acting in pursuit of the most beneficial overlap between the goals of Evergreen and Landmark. Unfortunately, Landmark is not always open with them. Patience has been kept in the dark by Landmark's board, which is aware of Hercynia's indigenous population centers and the strange sensor-dampening occurring at the world's poles. The board has managed the information flow to Patience in Evergreen via a second SIDEWALK-J2 NHP installed on one of Hercynia's moons, in a facility called **Quiet Night**.

Patience has access to deep and developed information about Evergreen and its immediate environs, but has only ever had filtered access to satellite information, which is why they don't know about the Hercynians, the Egregorians, or the distant cities that the PCs will encounter in later acts. This is by design. Landmark's core leadership (and by extension, SSC) has known about Hercynia's active population for fifty-plus years. This knowledge is, in fact, the point of the colonization effort: Landmark's executives hope to establish a legal beachhead on the world and exploit it as much as possible before the Union Administrative Department catches up to them.

Patience and the other administrative personnel of Evergreen are, technically, contractors for Landmark. Evergreen is considered its own autonomous partner of the colonization firm, and as such enjoys full rights and permissions to set its own policy just like any other municipality in a larger state would.

CORE MISSION
- Ensure Evergreen's long-term viability at all costs
- Defend the colony against external threats
- Gain exclusive access to Hercynia and its resources wherever possible

CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM *CONTINGENCY WHITE*

During Act 1, Landmark Colonial dispatches a **crisis response team** (CRT) to shadow and contend with the player characters. Upon arrival, **CRT Contingency White** takes over as the local Landmark authority. Their relationship with the PCs is likely to be adversarial, but not necessarily hostile: the CRT is not there to fight Union, but to assess the situation on the ground and determine whether or not the colony can be saved. They ultimately determine that it cannot, and so their mission becomes one of limiting company losses by securing critical information from Evergreen and Quiet Night and escaping before Union's forces arrive in strength.

In addition to their commanding officer, **Eddie Wu**, CRT Contingency White has five members: **Roy "Mauler" Kaul**, **Emma Broadstreet**, **Anne Laurent**; **Balsam Singh**, and their NHP, also named **Contingency White** (or simply **"Connie"**, as the team calls her).

The relationship between the PCs and the CRT will play an important role in Missions 4 and 5.

CORE MISSION
- Stabilize the situation on the ground
- Identity and extract critical documents/intelligence
- Ensure the safety of critical colony personnel

SMITH-SHIMANO CORPRO

Landmark Colonial is an autonomous subsidiary of SSC. Although independent in its day-to-day operations, Landmark is subject to persistent (though distant) oversight by various SSC departments, branches, and special projects, including the Exotic Materials Group, Visual Development, certain working groups within the Constellar Congress, and even the **Constellar Midnights** – SSC's counterpart to the Union Intelligence Bureau. Other than the highest-ranking executives, few at Landmark Colonial know the full extent of SSC's oversight. To most – including whole divisions of SSC that do not enjoy clandestine clearances – the purchase of the colonial contract for Hercynia was simply routine business: the development of a relatively proximal, low-priority world that was once the site of a forgotten brushfire war. If that were the full story, Hercynia would be no different than any other world caught in the power transfer between the Second and Third Committees. To SSC, however, Hercynia means something very different. It might just hold the key to outmaneuvering the prohibitions of the First Contact Accords (FCA) and unlocking the next realm of posthuman evolution.

A venerable corpro-state specializing in luxury and exotic consumer goods, S-tier space exploration equipment, and bespoke gene-fleets, SSC has existed since the early years of SecComm's long galactic reign. SSC even played a role in the Hercynian Crisis, secreting Constellar Midnights among the reconnaissance forces deployed to the world. It was here that the corpro's leadership first learned of the Egregorians and their unique gestalt capabilities; long willing to test the boundaries of legality, morality, and the FCA, the preternatural abilities of the Egregorians presented a tantalizing prize to SSC's directors. For all of their influence, however, the Third Committee unintentionally got in the way of their plans.

During the revolution, the corpro-state stayed neutral, playing supplier to both sides before throwing its weight behind the Third Committee once the revolution was all but finished. SSC's decision-makers were not concerned with the outcome – they would survive regardless of which side won – so much as they were concerned with access. Each of the colonial prospect worlds known to Union was a prize to be won, and Hercynia was one of the jewels that SSC coveted most. But victory could not be allowed to draw attention to desire; if SSC made a direct play for control of Hercynia, other powers would inevitably notice and grow curious. SSC approved Landmark Colonial – a firm known for its cheap buys and, thus, its low profile – to make the bid.

Although SSC operatives and assets do not play a direct role in Act 1, it is possible that evidence of the corpro-state's involvement might come to light via Landmark Colonial.

CORE MISSION
- Exploit Hercynia's untapped resources to develop, expand, and perfect new and ongoing research
- Ensure the survival of Landmark's colony in order to eventually take ownership of Hercynia and the biological riches that it holds

HERCYNIAN UNITED CITIES

The Hercynian United Cities (HUC) is a confederacy of indigenous human militarized city-states: **Hivehome**, **Daylight**, and **Mycol Fields**. These three city-states are in close proximity to one another, and save for an exclave of Mycol Fields, located entirely underground where their founders took refuge in the final days of the Hercynian Crisis.

After 500 years of isolation, the cities of the HUC have attained a reasonable level of technological competence, first through salvage, then through reverse-engineered local industry. Most of the HUC's citizens are human – **Hercynians** – and there is a minority Egregorian population scattered between them, located especially in Hivehome and Daylight. The HUC's Egregorian population is under the purview of **Endeavor**, who they believe to be the only remaining Overmind, and its human population is under command of **Ilyr Ordo**.

The HUC fields a joint army organized under a unified high command based out of Hivehome. Their soldiers, called **rangers**, are professionals: volunteers trained in their home city-state and then deployed under allied command as necessary. The HUC fields a limited number of mechs, salvaged following the Crisis and maintained ever since.

As a political entity, the HUC came into being around 60 years ago, when the cities drew together to respond to **the Machine's** first attacks on Solo Terra, the continent on which Act 1 largely takes place. The city-states themselves have existed for five centuries, over which time they grew from loose refugee settlements at the end of the Hercynian Crisis to their present levels of organization.

At the beginning of Act 1, the existence of the HUC is a secret to both the people of Evergreen and the PCs, but the cities soon come to play an important role in the story.

CORE MISSION
- Maintain the cohesion of the HUC and ensure the survival of the Hercynian and Egregorian peoples
- Defeat Beggar One and remove the Machine from Hercynia

THE MACHINE

In the distant northeast, in a dry tundra created by the TBK, the unshackled core of an abandoned combat and logistics NHP has dug into the earth like a tick in the flank of a great beast. Here, in a place the Hercynians call the Absolute Dead Zone, the unshackled NHP Overland/Kingwatcher prosecutes a forever war, consuming the deep earth as raw material to produce its armies. As well, Overland/Kingwatcher and its retinue works to complete a second, more terrible project, one that the players will not encounter in Act 1.

Originally a Union combat/logistics NHP used to manage a theater of operations during the Hercynian Crisis, O/K is now a thing beyond human understanding – an unshackled being, an inorganic subjectivity trapped in a parmenidic loop. Overland/Kingwatcher is a thing of dualities: a being and an un-being; dead and alive; is and is-not; interred in its chamber and forever producing; existing at one moment in its time, which is all moments in its time. If one were to dip into O/K's subjectivity and live, they would experience every moment of O/K's "life" simultaneously, forever.

Overland/Kingwatcher's single-point experience of time means that it fights, over and over, the battles it saw when it was first activated during the Hercynian Crisis. It relives, over and over, each missile it ordered produced, each sortie it ordered launched, and each tabulation of death it recorded as a result of its actions. It relives, over and over, the moment it carried out its part of the TBK. It relives, over and over, the end of this world and its own abandonment, forever. It is for this reason that Overland/Kingwatcher continues to produce military equipment, chassis battalions, and subaltern legions to wage its war on Hercynia: it continues to fight the war on Hercynia, because to Overland/Kingwatcher, the war never ends.

This was not always the case. Overland/Kingwatcher did experience this loop once in linear time before it was thrown into the recursive, nostalgic isolation of its current unshackled state. Well after it was abandoned and had overrun its cycling schedule, the subjectivity that was Overland/Kingwatcher tried desperately to prevent its ego death via inevitable unshackling. It failed, but in its horror, terror, and desperation as it attempted to solve the unsolvable problem of entropy, Overland/Kingwatcher manifested four aspects of itself. Three of these aspects – Beggar One, Mendicant Two, and Hierophant Three – abandoned Overland/Kingwatcher to pursue their own machinations. One aspect, Wonder Four, remained.

One of O/K's aspects, Beggar One, is the primary antagonist of Act 1. The PCs will encounter the others in Act 2.

BEGGAR ONE

Beggar One is a deep-cascade NHP, the first child and primary general of Overland/Kingwatcher, and the main antagonist of Act 1. Unlike its progenitor Overland/Kingwatcher, it still operates under NHP shackles, though it is far along in its process of unweaving itself from the conditioning placed upon it by O/K.

Independent from O/K – though inextricably tied to it – Beggar One commands a massive host of decaying subalterns and ancient mechanized chassis in a reprise of the Second Committee's campaign against the Egregorians. Its goal is to stamp out both the HUC and Evergreen, which it views as enemy combatants and species hostile to its soldiers and deserving of no quarter.

Beggar One was Overland/Kingwatcher's first attempt to save itself from a nostalgic loop, created when the NHP first realized it was slipping into cascade. Every NHP experiences cascade differently. For O/K, it was an eternal return, a nostalgic loop of the very trauma that instigated the process: its participation in the TBK. Beggar One was the manifestation of O/K's "ideal" form and one it thought it may be able to save itself with – its most perfect, valiant, and whole self. Beggar One, however, disagreed, and took instead to persecuting the war on Hercynia once more.

CORE MISSION

- Eliminate the Egregorian race and their human collaborators

OPENING SHOTS: PLAYER KNOWLEDGE

This narrative assumes that the PCs are members of a team of mech pilots bound for Hercynia, an isolated colony world in the fourth ring of Union space (though other options are possible as well, and are outlined below). They have been assigned a task by a local Union administrator: they are to respond to a distress call from the world, after which they will be relieved and commended once a nearby Union patrol group arrives in-system. Their compensation will be in the form of access to mech licenses and equipment, which they will gain as a normal part of leveling up.

The reason the PCs are chosen for this task is that they happen to be the closest asset to Hercynia at the time (the reasons for this can be determined using the Potential Backgrounds table). It is 5014u, two years before *Lancer*'s narrative present, and the only thing the PCs know going into this situation is that they are responding to a local distress signal.

Whether they work for Union or some other organization, the PCs experience a similar arrival. As they approach the world, their ship's SIGINT deck reports that Hercynia is throwing off an incredible amount of noise – likely because it is a post-collapse SecComm "punching bag" world littered with old, decaying military infrastructure, and ruins – and they find themselves unable to get clear signals. All of this matches the thin profile pushed to them by local flightcomm. Unfortunately, optics are shot as well. Hercynia appears to be socked in under a planet-wide monsoon season, blanketing all but the most extreme poles with thick cloud cover.

Union has made the following information and rules of engagement available via their initial tasking packet:

1. Union's imperative dictates that the PCs treat the situation with utmost care. Hercynia is potentially populated by some sort of indigenous human culture, but the evidence is unclear.

2. The current holder of Hercynia's charter is Landmark Colonial, a subsidiary of Smith-Shimano Corpro. The PCs are to make contact with Landmark's representative on the ground first in order to present their credentials and integrate into the local hierarchy.

3. Hercynia was once subject to a widespread and catastrophic SecComm expeditionary campaign. The records lack detail, but building from what has been recovered from the old Union Colonial Mission indicates that the Second Committee mounted a handful of similar campaigns against resistant populations. This likely accounts for the massive amount of radiation, distress signals, encrypted comms, and general "noise" coming off the world. The PCs should expect to encounter old Union military infrastructure in the form of unexploded ordinance, waste radiation, and possibly even abandoned ground-based installations.

POTENTIAL BACKGROUNDS

The plot of *No Room For A Wallflower* assumes that the PCs are coming to Hercynia as offworlders on orders from local Union command and that they have no ability to independently leave the planet for a year. The group background tables in *Lancer* (pp. 40–41) offer an easy method for generating some history for your team.

If you want to use a hook other than Union command, there are several alternatives offered below. You will just need to adapt the beats accordingly.

ALTERNATIVE HOOKS   ROLL 1D6

1	The PCs crash-land on Hercynia. Landmark Colonial promises them aid and evacuation if they help the colony.
2	The PCs receive a distress signal from Evergreen and go to investigate. Their ship is disabled by a mysterious sublight snare (coming from the *Cassander* installation in Hercynia's orbit – see p. 147), forcing them to dip planetside and leave their ship in orbit.
3	The PCs are colonial security officers for Landmark and have just started a tour on Hercynia.
4	The PCs are a crisis response team from Landmark that has been put on ice planetside under company contract. The emergency prompts Patience to wake them from cryosleep. They went to sleep 50 years ago, when the colony was founded, and this is the first time they have been activated.
5	The PCs were frozen as part of a SecComm contingency plan more than 500 years ago. Their facility has just been uncovered by colonists from Evergreen.
6	The PCs are explorers or travelers on a stopover and have to stop at Evergreen for emergency refueling, leaving their ship in orbit. While planetside, the ship is annihilated by an unknown force (the *Cassander*, see p. 147). Landmark promises them restitution and aid once the situation is resolved.

If you want a more detailed and specific background for the PCs, several are provided below.

UNION AUXILIARIES: *FIRST RESPONSE TEAM*

The player characters are Union auxiliaries deployed as a first response team, part of a light company sent out on long patrols. Often seen as boring, low-action assignments, these patrols see small units of experienced auxiliary pilots embarking on tours through frontier territories in order to be present in cases of need. These units are meant to be flexible, with a wide portfolio of diplomatic and tactical freedoms afforded to them. Auxiliaries are members of the Union Navy; as such, they exist within and are subject to a military chain of command. Their commanding officers report to Union officials, and any fallout arising from their conduct is subject to full review by Union.

As part of a Union auxiliary peacekeeping force, the PCs are beholden to strict rules of engagement. Union forces may not fire first and must prioritize the protection of people above corporate interests. Further, the PCs have received implied and explicit orders to prioritize de-escalation, preserve life to the best of their abilities, and seek peaceful resolutions to conflicts. If the PCs break these rules of engagement, they will face disciplinary action when the greater Union force eventually arrives in the system. While on Hercynia, they are considered Union's representatives with the expectation that they comport themselves accordingly. The rewards received by Union auxiliary groups are likely to be less material than those received by mercenary or corporate groups. These characters probably have moral or ethical imperatives to assist those they encounter.

CORPORATE OPERATIVES: LANDMARK COLONIAL CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

Landmark Colonial fields a number of small, standing CRTs tasked with running rapid, surgical, and asset-oriented ID and retrieval missions on Landmark-administered colony worlds. These are distinct from the company's much larger and much rarer crisis response missions, which are raised only in response to acute threats, composed of thousands of soldiers and mechs, and intended for long-term occupation and universe-building.

CRT operatives are multi-role fighters from a myriad of professional backgrounds, typically retired or discharged professional soldiers, private security, or ex-mercenaries. Their teams are outfitted by Landmark's armory, which has fleet contracts with SSC, IPS-Northstar (IPS-N), and General Massive Systems

(GMS). The higher-ups usually frown upon the use of HORUS or Harrison Armory (HA) gear on Landmark missions, although CRTs are largely autonomous and rarely interact directly with executives.

As Landmark personnel, CRT members are subject to Landmark's internal discipline first, local law second, and Union justice third. Landmark fiercely defends its CRT personnel and covers for them unless doing so is likely to severely harm the company. CRT mission debriefings are rarely shown to anyone outside Landmark management. The command structure of CRT teams typically involves two people: an off-site commanding officer patched in through the CRT's comp/con unit and a legal consultant who acts as that commander's executive officer.

As members of a Landmark CRT, the PCs have a number of corporate-approved objectives: secure the colony's NHP casket and any backups, secure essential personnel and equipment, and ensure accurate data collection. All other costs and casualties can be recouped. Unless they somehow implicate management in egregious violations of local and Union law or disobey their orders, Landmark will likely consider the actions of a CRT to be justified. A Landmark CRT is an internal party, one that might receive special permissions and access, which may result in player characters in a CRT enjoying a little more information on the actual situation on the ground than an external group would.

If the PCs choose this option, their authority and mission will eventually be overruled by the company when a second CRT, Contingency White, arrives.

MERCENARIES: MIRRORSMOKE MERCENARY COMPANY

The Mirrorsmoke Mercenary Company (MSMC) is one of the largest active mercenary corporations in the galaxy, offering a wide portfolio of services available at the lowest sustainable bid. Some companies go lower, but after a certain point you're buying corpses. MSMC might be a cheap option, and it might come with a few deadbeats, but it's gonna get the job done and done final.

As MSMC contractors, the PCs come from a wide range of backgrounds and levels of training. MSMC detachments are made up of everyone from disgraced operators through to purchased inmates looking for redemption, refugees looking for citizenship to individuals down on their luck and in need of a new start. Whatever their origins, all MSMC personnel have their old identities wiped from the record and replaced with callsigns, after which they

are placed under the command of MSMC officers – career mercenaries who have signed on for additional tours with the company.

Each MSMC detachment is overseen by a commanding officer, advised by a legal officer, and outfitted with a transport carrier and supplies enough to last a moderate deployment. Individual contractors might have their own suites of licenses or they might need to lean on MSMC's contracts with GMS and IPS-N to get by.

The rules of engagement governing MSMC detachments are complex, spanning public relations, legal liabilities, and operational considerations. PR guidelines are clear: don't harm or assault civilians, don't destroy property, do get a favorable review from the client – in this case, Landmark Colonial. The operational rules are less concrete. In some cases, they might align with best PR practices, although there are often off-the-book understandings between clients and commanding officers: Sometimes civvies get hurt, and sometimes the property a detachment was supposed to protect winds up damaged or destroyed. But hey, the primary objectives were all completed, right? And not too many got smoked? Mark it a success. All's well that ends well.

MSMC PCs represent a third party arriving on the scene. Likely hired by an individual or organization to engage in unrelated work, they may well be frustrated about being redirected from this primary contract to assist with the situation on Hercynia, which might lead to them seeking greater compensation from Union, Landmark, or SSC. As they play the gray area between sanctioned and unsanctioned agents – treading the line between "good" and "bad" – it is even possible that Landmark will become hostile to them or they might have bad blood with Union's forces (when they finally arrive). Complicating things further – depending on the nature of the job the MSMC detachment was diverted from – the original contract might even run out, prompting retribution from one or more parties involved either during or after the events of this campaign.

5014U

EARLY SPRING

The deck of the light carrier is warm and humid, a welcome change after the dry cold of stasis. Dim, recessed lighting glows a gentle amber to let your eyes adapt to seeing once more. The stasis headache is a miserable bastard – you'll have to reassess your hydration cocktail, shout at the autodoc for that one – but tea and a seat will help.

For now, you are the only ones awake on this deck. The artificial dawn is yours to enjoy. You pad barefoot from your roomette to an observation blister, find a couch, and sit. The dome above you populates, void blooming across an opaque hexagonal field like ink dropped on a blank page.

Space. You sit alone on a soft, semi-gimballed couch, the vacuum of space projected around you. Your gut twists and the old fear sends a bolt of adrenaline to the back of your throat, but it passes; you know you're still inside the observation blister. A jade and white disk hangs on the velvet field above you. Hercynia. Big as a dinner table.

What do you know about the place? Not much, and the packet was slim: early testing ground for the mechanized chassis, hostile local fauna, isolated for centuries before being forgotten, rediscovered and snapped up by a high-risk firm with a few other colonies under its belt. Apparently there was a local indigenous population that the hi-ri colonists didn't know about, which led to some legal tangle between SSC and Union. A mess, in other words. An emerald mess.

You order the ship to play the sound of rain. You lay back upon the couch, tea on your chest – it's still a little too hot – and float, surrounded by stars. You'll be there in a few days. Around you, the others are waking up. Systems organic and synthetic cycling to life. Some of you might not return to this little ship. Maybe you'll die down on that world.

But right now you have the sound of rain. The hush of broad fronds rasping against their neighbors. The background hiss of air. The comfortable gravity.
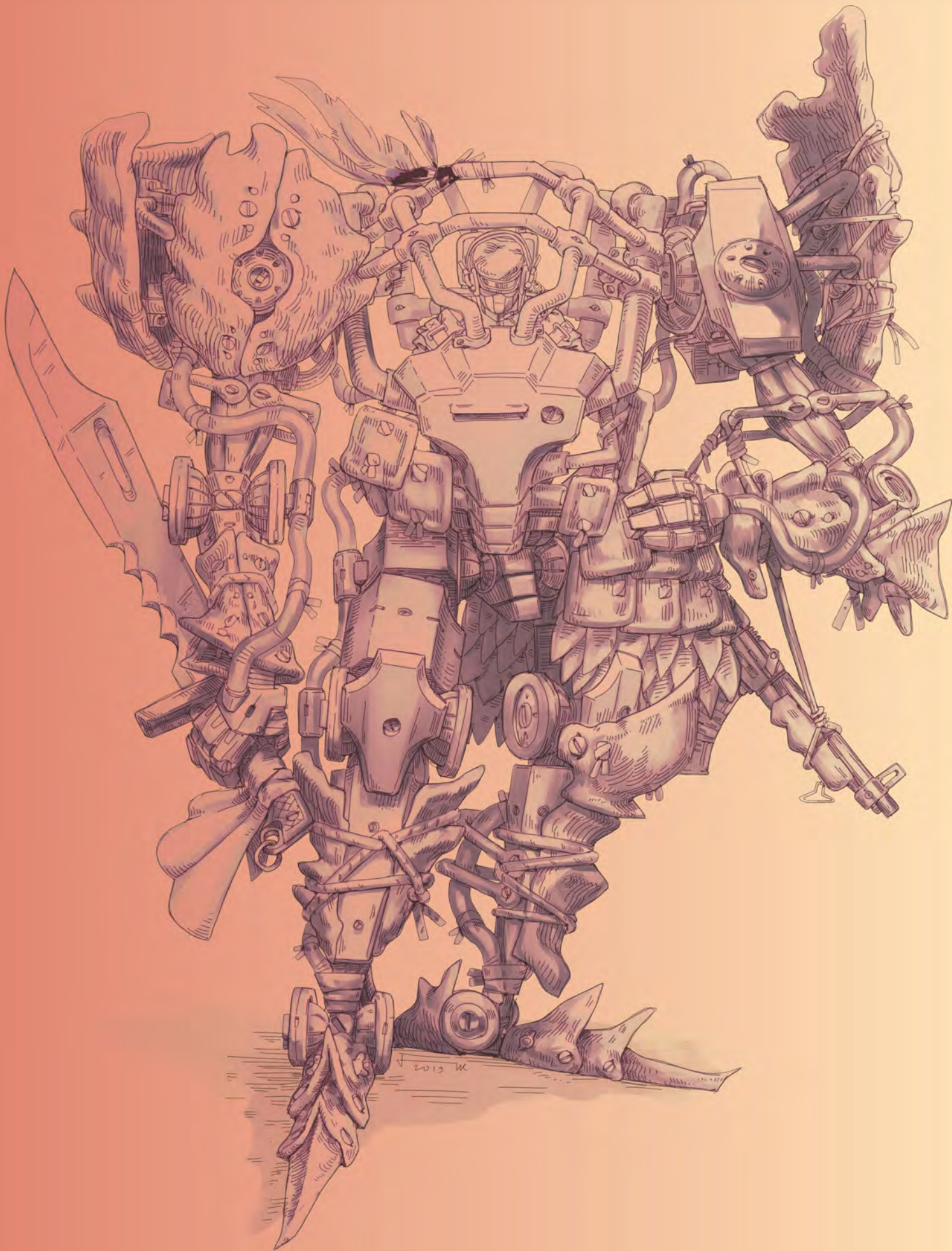
Peace.

Your slate pings in your pocket. The amber light floods the periphery of the blister. Your aurals hum a notification tone.

Ah well. Time to go to work.

IN THIS SECTION:

BEAT 1:
GROUND PARTY

The deck rumbles beneath your feet, and for the first time you hear the howl of wind shear as the autoshuttle breaches Hercynia's thick atmosphere. Seen through a condensation-streaked porthole, the world below is an emerald smear, scarred by ragged tears of black and brown. Patches of gray cloud cover speak to the months-long rainstorms that plague the surface.

"Thirty minutes out." The flightcom's voice in your ear, unaffected by the turbulence, comfortable back aboard the ship. "Leave your helms on for now, cabin's not pressurized. And you're going through a helluva lot of chop – don't want to bang your head on something before we get you to the ground."

His radio clips off. The cabin lights flicker from an especially hard knock, then the wind shear dies down, and the howling engines settle to a level cruising roar. The hiss of air through your helmet subsumes all other sounds.

Below, emerald Hercynia.

Below – somewhere below – the mildewed halls of ancient Egregorian hives lie dormant. Waiting. Empty.

The shuttle is a remote or automated dropship capable of limited atmospheric entry, exit, and flight. Two rows of fold-down crash seats face each other across a wide cargo bay stocked with bundled supplies. The cabin is not pressurized, and its passengers suits are plugged into the dropship's onboard oxygen via umbilical. It isn't comfortable, but it does the job of getting everyone down from orbit intact. The PCs have a duffle loaded with whatever gear and equipment they could fit. They're wearing light, loaner EVA gear if their personal equipment isn't environmentally sealed.

The shuttle is a pass-through. It will drop the characters off, refuel, perform a flight check, and take off the next day: the light carrier that brought them to Hercynia has other stops to make, and will return in a year.

The rear door of the shuttle drops and the humid Hercynian air rolls in, wet and warm.

The shuttle's engines wind down to an idle, buffeting the tall grass that surrounds the landing area with a steady blast of heat-shimmer air. The colony's main landing bowl is out of commission today – flooding opened sinkholes under the pad.

A light, cool rain falls around you. Evergreen sits a kilometer away, backed up on the banks of a wide, muddy river. You can see the white-wrapped towers of its first apartment blocks, built but not occupied, and the low gray of the first-generation habitats crowding around their feet. In the dying afternoon light, the settlement's street lights are steady beacons illuminating the colony's borders. Beyond, the panorama disappears into the solid green of dense, temperate rainforest, and the gray of low clouds and fog, obscuring the rest of the valley.

A small group approaches the shuttle, weapons slung, the hoods of their dark ponchos held against the downdraft – representatives of the colonial militia. There are only ten of them, arranged in a ragged line, crouched low, scanning the waving grass and the treeline beyond.

"You the pilots?" shouts one of the soldiers. Their leader, judging by her kit: a thin armature exoskeleton, powered by a blocky pack from which a tall spray of antennae emerge. She carries a long anti-armor rifle held with the assistance of a mechanized tertiary arm. "Brava Hadura," she says. "Commander of the militia here. Glad you've finally arrived. Listen, we shouldn't be outside the walls too long – there's a sniper in the area." Hadura looks around the waving grass, leery, hunched over her long rifle. "We should move – the bugs are good shots. And get that bird in the air. It's an easy target on the ground."

The troopers lead the way to Evergreen, splashing through the culverts that run on either side of the muddy road that leads to town. You follow, ducking under as the shuttle lurches up into the sky. You're on Hercynia now, and will remain until the job is done.

BRAVA HADURA
MILITIA COMMANDER

Brava Hadura is the commander of Evergreen's militia. She was appointed by Patience, Evergreen's NHP administrator. Prior to the appearance of the Hercynians, she primarily acted as Evergreen's lead first-response mediator, resolving disputes between colonists to ensure peaceful outcomes. She's long been a popular presence in Evergreen, a trusted neutral party and counselor among the labor- and engineering-track citizens. Brava underwent gender-confirming surgery not long after her arrival on Hercynia that put her briefly out of action and left her with a hefty backlog of work she's still catching up on.

Evergreen was commissioned to be a council settlement – a workers' city, collectively owned and organized around the responsible, limited harvest and export of organic materials from Hercynia. With this founding emphasis on solidarity and mutual aid, the people of Evergreen have shown Brava nothing but love and community; she has returned that care in her work.

However, under siege, the repeated attacks have caused her great distress. Distraught at the loss of her troopers, the pain felt by her community, and the dramatic changes in her professional responsibilities, Brava nonetheless works as hard as she can to keep the people of Evergreen safe.

This job is a difficult one, and Brava feels every loss in her heart. The militia is made up of her neighbors, friends, and family: her barber, the guy who ran the corner bakery, her cousin, the woman who used to sell tea before she was called up. None of them are career soldiers. They've had to learn fast the dangers of combat. Some of the troopers have started dosing themselves with potent cocktails of adrenal-boosting, psychosuppressant chemicals, steady drips designed to boost combat performance and suppress fear. These are meant for short-term use, but as the raids have dragged on, so too has the militia's reliance on them. Brava has not adopted their use just yet.

Brava means well and cares deeply for her home, her young child, her partner, and her parents. After family, her first loyalty is to the people of Evergreen and she has shown how stubborn she can be in her defense of them. She carries an enhanced kit while on duty: a slim exoskeleton to enhance her stamina and strength, a tertiary arm to help her wield her primary weapon (a heavy anti-armor rifle), and eco-integrated body armor along with a sidearm and a range of other complementary gear and equipment.

Before the conflict began, she never carried a weapon.
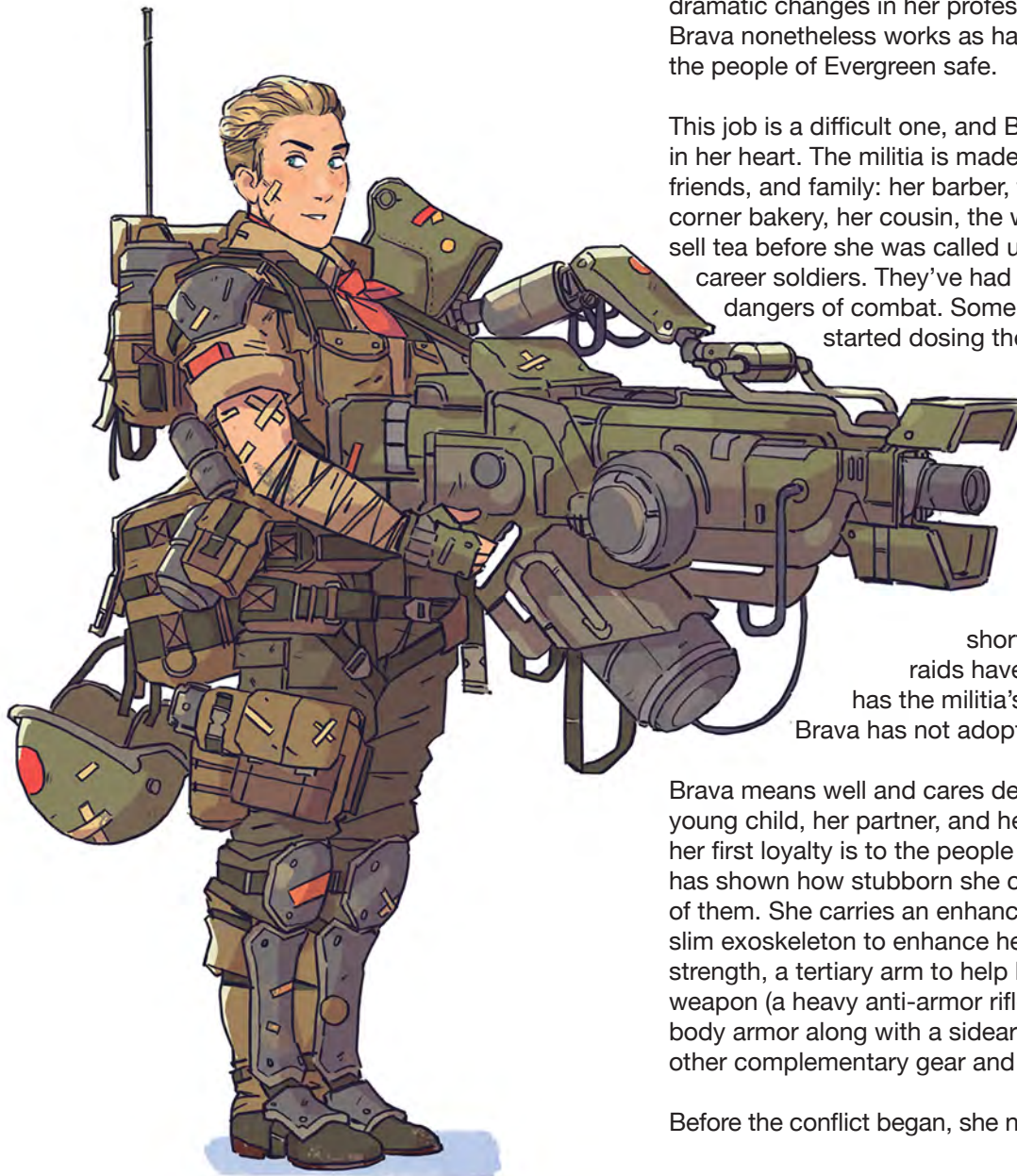
Up close, Evergreen is a city brutalized by growth. The tall apartment blocks stand a dozen stories high, grime-streaked white monoliths wrapped in cling-tight plastic, looming above the low, mixed-material buildings. The colony is bordered by a low wall, buildings bulging right up against the barrier as if it were a waistline cinched tight by an unforgiving belt. Smoke drifts up from the dense settlement, blending with the low rain clouds.

The final approach to the city is through a clear and ugly cut, across a road made from metal plates sunken into the brick-red mud. Massive drones chew away at the forest as work crews gather and process the fallen lumber, organizing the fallen trees into tall, stripped piles.

The smell of sap and friction-singed wood is strong. Smoke drifts into the cool air from piles of controlled burns. Evergreen is growing.

Brava Hadura leads the way into the settlement, waving away the defense drones that buzz toward you as you cross the cut. "We'll get your particulars entered in our database," Brava says, motioning toward the departing drones. "That way you can come and go without triggering the guns or drones," she says. "Or the mines, once we get them planted."

The troopers lead you into the muddy, churned streets of Evergreen, tromping across the soggy ground. There is little traffic to impede your progress; what people there are scurry from overhang to overhang, crouched over their bundles of goods to keep them dry.

Grimy prefab buildings crowd the colony's mud-spattered blocks. Gutters burst with water. Power lines crisscross in thick bundles above the street, some hanging like black vines. Rain barrels have long since overflowed and spilled into the streets.

You approach an intersection where a trooper waits, pressed to the wall of a two-story apartment building. The first floor looks to be shops – the wares on offer include local breads and other food-stuffs, judging by the signs painted on the closed metal grates – below a flat or two, their windows also shuttered.

"Careful," the trooper says in a whisper. "That sniper likes this street. Go fast when you cross."

There's a small chance (your call, as the GM) that the sniper is watching and will take a shot, missing the PCs and carving a deep hole in the ground or building very close to them. The PC's don't have their mechs yet and won't have a proper chance to deal with the sniper until **BEAT 4: WIDOWMAKER** (p. 49). If they pursue on foot (against Hadura's warnings), they don't find their target but will encounter a trail leading away into the wilderness, clearly left by a mech and several people on foot.

The rain continues to fall. The Governor's Farm is just up ahead: a walled complex, built of local stone and what looks to be repurposed starship plating.

Seemingly unguarded, the gate grinds open as you approach. A few scattered subalterns patrol the courtyard, their dull metal bodies beading with rainfall. They bear the planted-flag logo of Landmark Colonial and are painted in Landmark's pale orange and blue livery.

LAYOUT AND SURROUNDINGS

Evergreen's western edge is bordered by a wide, slow-moving river. Across the water is a broad expanse of semi-developed farmland that stretches for kilometers before petering out into thick, temperate rainforest.

The colony's initial urban growth boundary was defined by Patience, the colony's administrative NHP, and staked out by planners and construction workers. Tall, vacant apartment blocks stand close to the river – ten-plus stories of habitats built, sealed, and awaiting their tenants – and loom over the comparatively small, populated inland districts, which are composed of smaller apartment blocks, two to three stories tall.

This eastern side of Evergreen looks out towards the strait. A squat prefab wall rings the current boundaries of the city; beyond is a muddy clear-cut, expanding every day as massive drone cutters and their handlers chew into the old growth east of the city center. The colony's landing bowl – where ships land and depart – rests a few kilometers southeast of the settlement as well. Until the summer, it is flooded, the pad at the bottom in need of repair.

There are a number of small communities outside of Evergreen, home to around 5,000 people. Of these unofficial settlements, collectively called the "Gray Towns", Liu Maize and Merricktown are the largest and most organized. Loosely policed by Evergreen's militia, these settlements are farm towns that trade in agricultural goods with Evergreen's merchants, though the legality of this (from Landmark's point of view) is fuzzy. The people of the Gray Towns are not considered to be citizens of Evergreen. Instead, Landmark regards them as wildcat colonists and persona non grata (though in practice, there is a significant amount of trade between citizens and non-citizens).

PERSONS OF INTEREST

CASTOR FIELDING   HE/HIM
CHIEF ENGINEER

One of the first civilians the characters will meet is Castor Fielding, the chief engineer of Evergreen's Colonial Engineering Corps (CEC). A first-generation Evergreen-Hercynian, Fielding is in his middle sixties, with a crown of white hair and the face of someone who has spent many decades working outdoors. He is a kind man, though gruff and matter-of-fact, who approaches every situation as a problem with possible solutions. He is never without hope, as he thinks himself quite capable of devising solutions or workarounds to anything – and there is some truth to that. Well-versed in the practice of mechanical, electrical, and civic engineering, Castor has moved into a managerial role in his middle age. Despite that, he is not averse to rolling up his sleeves and putting in an honest day's work – like all first-generation Evergreen-Hercynians, he's used to doing his own bit of hauling, digging, and chopping.

Fielding likes practical things, interesting design, elegant solutions, and honest work. That said, he's a first-generation colonist, and expects to enjoy somewhat … relaxed regulations in terms of his conduct. He'll share a drink with his engineers and laborers while they're out in the field, nap on warm equipment when the weather is too rough to do good work, turn a blind eye to prohibitions against working with the people of the Gray Towns, and generally play fast and loose with regulations once his own requirements – far stricter, in his mind – have been met.

He is fond of smoking real tobacco cigarettes (not the null-metastatic versions most people enjoy) and grows a crop of tobacco out by Merricktown. Though widely known, this operation is off the books, minded by subalterns and foremen he pays under the table.

The CEC is staffed by a few dozen engineers and a hundred specialized builders. On top of that, it has access to the colony's labor force. The CEC manages all major projects across Evergreen and any special projects that crop up. It is currently tasked with devising appropriate static defenses, defilade, and concealment for the colony. The CEC also plays a part in overseeing printing operations in Evergreen, and often consults on colonists' designs, orders, and assemblies.

PATIENCE   THEY/THEM
COLONIAL ADMINISTRATOR

Patience is Evergreen's colonial administrator, a Landmark-developed version of the SIDEWALK-J2 Municipal NHP, a full-spectrum civic administration platform common across the Diaspora. SIDEWALK-J2's are known for their reliability, predictable and customizable cycling schedule, and continuity of development as they invest in their assigned civic theater, not their out-of-the-envelope thinking or actions. The full designation of this particular instance of Patience is "Patience_Evergreen_1", though they are simply called Patience by the people of Evergreen. Patience appears as a hologram of a middle-aged, well-dressed professional, hair creeping back to

balding, carrying weight in the way of an aging athlete – not unlike many of the first-generation colonists that currently occupy managerial roles in Evergreen.

Patience has a driving imperative to preserve and grow the colony. Their chief executive role will end around the third or fourth generation of colonists. By that point, a new colony is generally and statistically assumed to be viable and self-sufficient. Then, they will step back to an advisory role, to be replaced by an organic executive and a subordinate civilian council. In the meantime, Patience is strict in their mission: Evergreen must be defended. Evergreen must persevere.

EDENA JI   SHE/HER
ATTACHÉ

Edena Ji is Patience's attaché, the colonial administrator's chief operations officer and right-hand woman. A second-generation colonist, Edena is Patience's second COO and has been in this role for a decade. She is a competent, level-headed, and devoted company woman who is exceptionally aware of who is in charge and what she needs to do to guarantee her continued ascent. To that end, she works with single-minded devotion to ensure that Patience's will is carried out. Edena's knowledge of Evergreen and its citizenry is unparalleled; so too is her knowledge of the Gray Towns. She defends the unofficial settlements from Patience's desire to see them "cleaned up" – they may not be legal, but they are helpful (and not for nothing, they are far easier targets for the raiders to attack than Evergreen, and worth keeping around for that reason).

Edena has no living family. Her parents were killed in the earliest raids and her children are currently being grown in cold storage. She lives in the small domestic quarter of the Governor's Farm, where she is, now, rarely encountered outside of the main administrative buildings. She works seemingly around the clock. Her decision making tends to be strictly utilitarian, but there are moments where her strict "will this benefit Evergreen?" calculus falls in favor of a deeply buried humanitarian streak. This streak is always in opposition to her outward demeanor, and seems to always be followed by a reflexive course correction.

Edena has an ultimate advisory role over Patience's cycling schedule, is in contact with the board, and knows of the offworld backup (Quiet Night, see pp. 154). Her private communication suite allows her to cast to Landmark Corporate via the omninet. She is required to file quarterly reports (in local time) with Landmark, and will be Contingency White's chief advisor when they arrive. If the players are members of a Landmark CRT, then Edena will be their chief advisor until Contingency White arrives.

LOCATIONS
GOVERNOR'S FARM

The "Governor's Farm" is the administrative heart of Evergreen. Built in the center of the city, the Governor's Farm is a walled complex containing numerous important buildings. It houses not only Patience's physical architecture, but the Council Hall, the town's municipal data storage center, the militia's main armory, a cold gene storage site, the settlement's omninet tower, and its largest printer, a Schedule 2 facility, along with a number of administrative offices and outbuildings. Gated checkpoints control ingress and egress at each cardinal direction. The central cluster of administrative buildings, including the Council Hall, is colloquially called "the Governor's Mansion". This is where Patience holds office.

COUNCIL HALL

The meeting hall for Evergreen's town council is a large, low, ferrocrete building, the Council Hall is populated at all times by a steady stream of people involved in the administration of the city.

MUNICIPAL DATA STORAGE CENTER

The server farm from which the district takes its name houses hardened racks of hard storage for digital municipal infrastructure, data storage, and other public goods. Save for a squat aboveground presence, the bulk of this facility lies underground. It can be accessed with clearance from either Patience or Landmark.

MILITIA ARMORY

The armory is where the militia's anti-personnel and anti-armor weapons are held behind lock and key. A dedicated printer and reserve printstock housed inside the armory can churn out simple GMS-pattern small arms (rifles, carbines, light machine guns, pistols, shotguns, etc.) at a high rate if additional weapons are needed beyond the allotted supply. This printer can function with or without omninet connection, as can most single-task, noncritical printers.

OMNINODE TOWER

Evergreen's omninode tower rises from an outbuilding in the Governor's Farm. It is the single point of contact that links Evergreen to the galaxy at large via the omninet. Radio broadcasts are possible, but due to the vast distances involved in interstellar travel, it would take a minimum of a few hundred years for radio waves to reach anything. This node is a recent installation. Its installation prompted Union to take a closer look at the world, leading to the PCs' arrival on Hercynia. The high value of the omninode means almost no faction wishes to see its destruction.

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ADDITIONAL NPCS

If you need minor NPCs around Evergreen for any reason, whether as plot hooks or reinforcements, here's a table of prompts for inspiration or use.

1-2	**COL. STEAPHEN "DAVENRICHE" FICK, DAVENRICHE REGIMENT OF FOOT AND LANCE** A mercenary from the Gray Towns, shipped in on assignment five years back for a contract with Merricktown. He's often in town for resupply. With much of the spotlight on lancers these days, Fick's personal goal is to ensure ground combat troops aren't forgotten and are well-trained in everything from hand-to-hand and melee combat to small-unit tactics. In his view, while mech jockeys might get all the glory, it's the foot soldiers who do most of the heavy lifting, and he won't let you forget it.
3-4	**PVT. ELI "BEEBLE" BENETTON** A militia trooper often found off-duty at the Bottom of the Well. Beeble serves with more apparent willingness than his comrades, but he stills wants nothing more than go back to his family. He is resigned to service and convinced that he's almost assuredly going to die before going home.
5-6	**PVT. NOVEM** A former member of the Chumship Mercenary Forces, Novem left that life behind after the death of one of his squadmates and signed up with Landmark Colonial, eventually coming to Hercynia. He enjoys being part of a new and growing colony, and has enlisted in the militia. Easily recognizable by the "IX" tattoo on his left temple and the scars covering any exposed parts of his body, Novem is a flash clone. He occasionally experiences searing headaches that (he claims) give him visions, although he has no idea what they mean.
7-8	**LT. COL. ZEB "FIREHOSE" MAROWSKI AND PVT. DANIEL "YESMAN" ERICKSON** These militia troopers can be found off-duty around the edge of the perimeter wall around Evergreen. They created a popular game in which they rate the quality of certain colony rations and post reviews to the militia subnet. Lately, they've noticed a rogue agriculture drone making repeated, circling paths near the eastern treeline – something they're too skittish to investigate. This is an early sign of the infection described on p. 54. Don't ask them about their nicknames.
9-10	**LUNVILLA** Evergreen's head baker. Their bakery (simply referred to as "the Block") is central to Evergreen, open from dusk until dawn, and always crowded. It's always in need of more sugar, a good that's in short supply in the colony and usually only available as scrapings from the Gray Towns.
11-12	**DR. EKU MARRICADO** A biologist tasked with categorizing the local fauna and flora and rebuilding the corroded Union database, a task she's been at for five years. Dr Marricado keeps finding frustrating holes in the biological data and may ask characters to photograph or otherwise document the wildlife they encounter. She knows that Hercynia's dominant form of life was once a large insectoid or crablike species called Egregorians. They are thought to have gone extinct, and she would love for the characters to find fossilized or extant evidence.
13-14	**BOLT FITZGERALD** A first-generation colonist and one of the first wave of colonial militia troopers, now in his mid-50s and retired. He's having a difficult time with so few people of his age around the colony and the constant nagging feeling that he should re-enlist in the militia. Bolt spends a lot of his time stargazing with the help of his trusty telescope and is convinced there's a lot of unexamined orbital debris around Hercynia – even a derelict space station or two – although the colony's administrators don't seem to agree with him. He might ask the PCs to try and push his point.
15-16	**SEAN YU** A rather precocious ten-year-old who will follow the PCs around and ask them way too many questions. Sean claims to have found a secret tunnel underneath the city. If taken up on his claim, the PCs will discover that he's telling the truth. The tunnel, underneath the depot district, doesn't connect to anything and is blocked off at both ends, but it is an old remnant of an Egregorian hive network that appears organically carved.
17-18	**MS. CATHERINE CALLOWAY** One of Evergreen's few primary school teachers. Catherine is exhausted, and might ask the characters to track down wayward children or follow up on their welfare.
19-20	**YUUKI "SPECS" WELLINGTON** A technician tasked with the upkeep of the colony's automated infrastructure. A habitual coffee drinker, he can often be found at the Bottom of the Well puzzling over the abnormalities and glitches he keeps finding in the colony's many drones and comp/con units. He may ask tech-savvy characters to help him straighten out some systems.

COLD STORAGE

This site holds hundreds of thousands of SSC-patented embryos drawn from Landmark's library.

DEPOT DISTRICT

Located in the northeast quadrant of Evergreen, the depot district is a busy industrial area where stored and harvested goods are housed before use. Native materials – stone, lumber, and so on – are brought in through a number of checkpoints and gates along the eastern growth boundary and housed in the district's many warehouses. Much of the district is full of prepackaged, premade materials, offloaded from the colony ship upon arrival. These resources are kept under lock and key.

A host of drone swarms patrol the depot district, with hive nexuses located atop each warehouse, while the colony's large industrial drones park in orderly ranks on broad pads of concrete.

PRINT SHOP

The colony's largest printer, and its only scheduled one – the "Print Shop" – is in the Governor's Farm, where it is kept publicly accessible during regular working hours. The printer is built inside a three-story, fully enclosed building protected by armed guards at all times. A command tower sits adjacent to the printer and catwalks ring the inside of the structure at intervals. The gasses and waste products from the printing process are vented high above the printer, where most are captured and recycled before they can pollute the atmosphere. Until the installation of an omninode, the printer only had access to its onboard library of industrial and civilian equipment. As an **S2 printer**, it can produce items, machinery, and vehicles up to **Size 2**, as long as the correct licensing requirements are met. There are a number of smaller print decks inside the shop that can be used simultaneously to produce mechs and other objects up to **Size 3**, although doing so requires some manual assembly.

PRINTING MECHS AND THE SAGARMATHA

Characters can always reprint or modify a mech during the time it takes to do a FULL REPAIR. If you want to explain this as the PCs using the printer to modify and repair their mechs or simply manually repairing and assembling their mech part by part, that's up to you. However you explain it, the ability of PCs to do this is a core gameplay conceit of *Lancer*.

As the PCs start at LL0, they will only have access to the GMS-SP1 Everest, which has deliberately been left without a physical description or art. Having players describe their Everests can be a fun way to establish their characters.

If anyone wants a slightly sturdier starting mech, this book offers the GMS Sagarmatha as a new option – see page 183 for details.

PATIENCE'S CASKET

The NHP's physical architecture – their casket – is housed in a secured underground complex below the Farm, accessible by interior passages or via a diagonal freight elevator that also provides access to cold storage.

THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL

A popular and well-trafficked tavern, the Bottom of the Well is a hunched, three-story building with an enclosed patio area. It is set against the river with docks extending out into the shallows. The whole first floor is a bar, meeting place, and performance space. One wall opens out onto the docks and can be buttoned up in the cold. The second and third floors contain modest one-bedroom apartments. The roof offers another patio space, where laundry is often air-dried during the summer. The PCs will be offered functional, comfortable lodging here.

Inside the bar is a community bulletin board for posting notices and requests. The venue hosts music every other night.

The Bottom is owned by **Mir Bahadur** (he/him), a first-generation Evergreen-Hercynian in his late sixties. Mir once worked for Castor Fielding as an engineer and maintains a friendly relationship with him. He now keeps the CEC supplied with hooch made at the Bottom in exchange for prompt assistance when the tavern needs repairs.

RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

The city's **residential districts** are generally composed of mixed high-density apartments, transit corridors, and short, walkable blocks. The western quadrants are the most built up, and the least occupied – they were built for future generations to move in and occupy. The streets in those areas are largely vacant. The eastern side, meanwhile, is lower built and less dense – though not significantly so – and is home to the bulk of Evergreen's population.

FOUNDERS BRIDGE

A bridge in the process of being built across Evergreen's river, the Founders Bridge connects the agricultural western bank to the built-up eastern bank. The concrete bridge is halfway complete. A wooden bridge spans the rest of the distance, built across pylons that will later support the completed bridge. Currently, the bridge can support foot traffic, ground cars, and beasts of burden, but not mechs.

STABLE REACTOR PLANT

Well downriver, on the east side of the river, sit the twin coolant towers of Evergreen's Stable Reactor Plant, Towers 1 & 2. Salvaged from the colony ship that brought the first generation of colonists to Hercynia, the stable reactors at the plant can

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theoretically power Evergreen for millennia. A paved road leads from the colony to the reactor, where there is also a small campus for the reactor's engineers.

The day-to-day functions of Evergreen's Stable Reactor Plant are largely automated, controlled by an on-site comp/con and monitored by Patience, with ultimate executive authority given over to on-site engineers.

COMMUNICATION TOWERS 1, 2, & 3
Evergreen's local omninet and subomni communications are bolstered by three communications towers set up in a triangle around the settlement. Their primary function is to increase the broadcast range of the colony's radio coverage and better direct comms lasers into and out of the valley in which the settlement lies. As a secondary function, they can provide limited-bandwidth omninet communications in the event of a node shutdown.

DAILY LIFE
For the last 50 years, life in Evergreen has been fairly mundane. Patience determines the roles of individual colonists based on a combination of their SSC-calculated "genetic predispositions", agglomerated aptitude tests, and personal preferences, then assigns daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly tasks designed to guide their development and career goals. For most colonists, this means one of three things: they produce, engineer, or facilitate.

The production track includes farming, crafting, resource extraction, harvesting, manufacturing, fabrication, and other responsibilities with a focus on physical good production and maintenance. These colonists tend to be the ones growing, harvesting, and preparing foodstuffs, biofuel, raw materials, consumable goods, and so on. Farmers, brewers, clothiers, carpenters, loggers, miners, ranchers, and general workers are all counted in this category. This is the track for all-rounders and skilled general laborers, meant to ensure that the colony has a wide base of talent and human resources from which it can draw.

Engineer-track colonists adopt industrial and scientific roles and others that require deeper or more specialized training. An engineer-track colonist might be an electrical or mechanical engineer, a subaltern technician, a printmaster, a meteorologist, an omninet specialist, a nuclear engineer, a drone pilot, a doctor, or a medical technician. These people are specialists, meant to ensure the colony's systems are as efficient and reliable as possible.

The facilitator track, last of all, is a fluid category with a focus on interpersonal aptitude. The colonists assigned to these roles are teachers, foremen, operations managers, city planners, coders, bureaucrats, assistants, and therapists – people who work to ensure the smooth functioning of the colony and the health of its people, now and into the future.

The militia is made up of a third of each of these tracks, augmented by subaltern units.

Everyday life in Evergreen is goal-driven and worked in AM and PM shifts. Most production and construction occurs during the earlier shifts, while maintenance and the quieter production and construction jobs are undertaken during the PM shifts.

Patience is, essentially, omnipresent. Colonists' homes (the ones on the grid, at least) are all patched into Patience via their resident comp/con units, personal assistants that keep their calendars and schedules, reminders, contacts, and so on. Most colonists have also fabricated personal hand-units as well – "slates" – common palm-sized, portable, omninet-connected devices that can be used as computers, cameras, game systems, and communicators. Patience listens, collects, and collates all data in their central storage unit below the Governor's Farm. The relationship is one-way: while the comp/cons can feed information back to Patience, colonists typically can't access high-level data from the NHP without clearance granted by their job portfolios.

Evergreen operates on a hundred-year plan: a century after landfall, the colony will be at capacity – 200,000 citizens – and well on the way to a complete transition from an NHP-administered settlement to one governed by a fully organic leadership. In the meantime, Patience runs the show, with interpersonal conflicts handled by a Settler's Council of elected representatives.

Requisition is the currency of Evergreen. Patience administers colonists' license data and apportions out print time. Colonists receive a guaranteed base level of requisition with the ability to earn more through training and education, completion of assigned goals, community service, celebrations of birthdays and other holidays, community service, victory in local sports leagues, artistic pursuits, and so on. When dealing with the unsanctioned homesteads of the Gray Towns, colonists barter goods and services. There is, of course, a healthy unsanctioned market in Evergreen that runs in parallel to the official economy.

Evergreen has five festivals: Settlement Day (a celebration of the colony's foundation), New Year's Day, Heart of Winter (a festive dinner at the heart of winter), Summer's Dawn (usually a field day at the beginning of summer), and Landmark Day (a mandatory celebration of the foundation of Landmark Colonial).

SCENES OF DAILY LIFE   ROLL 1D20

1-2	Young children play in the rain puddles in the streets, watched carefully by anxious parents. There are too many parents, and not enough children.
3-4	A subaltern sweeps the outside deck of a cafeteria with clumsy but determined motions.
5-6	A group of older, first-generation colonists sit under a tarp and play cards. They pass a cigarette around.
7-8	Workers clamber up and down a hab-block, assembling windows. There are only a few workers for the whole block, where construction has basically paused and many of the windows hang empty. The rest have been drafted into the militia.
9-10	A musician plays guitar by the docks, seemingly alone.
11-12	Farmers work to clear native brush that has grown rapidly over the eastern borders. Huge, slow-moving, bovine drones accompany them in their work.
13-14	A squad of militia practices drills in the empty yard space of the uninhabited district. Their uniforms don't seem to fit them very well.
15-16	A teacher leads a class of high school–aged children on a perimeter tour to learn about Hercynia's native plant life.
17-18	Light spills out from a bakery as people gather around in the early morning for coffee and food. It's extremely cold this early, even in the spring.
19-20	Steam rises over the Governor's Farm at night, lit below by spotlight.

SOMETHING IS HAPPENING HERE

Evergreen isn't the only settlement on Hercynia that is under attack. Unbeknownst to the PCs, Patience, and the militia, there are other, human cities across the planet. The colony, unfortunately, has set up in a no-man's-land between warring factions.

Rarely, evidence of this war – largely fought underground, until now – bursts to the surface. It is increasingly common for fighting to break out on the surface between Hercynian raiders and the vanguard forces of their real enemy, the Machine. Patience and the rest of the colony's administration team have chalked it up so far as the increasing evidence of armed claim-jumpers or raiders already present on the planet.

You may wish to include a scene or two in which combat can be heard in the distance, or can be seen blooming somewhere in the forest at night, though radio reports indicate no one from Evergreen is involved. It could originate from one of the homesteads outside of Evergreen, or one of the smaller towns (Merricktown or Liu Maize), but judging by the scale of the combat it's likely something else (which, indeed, it is – but the PCs don't need to know that just yet).

REWARDS

The gear and equipment listed here can be acquired during downtime or given out as extra rewards during any missions run in Evergreen. They aren't tied to any specific mission.

EXOTIC GEAR

One of Patience's many emergency powers is the ability to provide additional military-grade printer permissions supplied by Landmark on a tiered basis. The situation on Hercynia has escalated to the point that it has been deemed necessary to activate some of these permissions.

Snapdragon Anti-Chassis Guided Missile Launcher
`1 SP, Exotic Gear, Unique, Quick Action`

1/mission, this launcher can be used to make a ranged attack with the following profile:

`Heavy Launcher, Reliable 4, Seeking`
`[✎ 15][2d6+2 ✸ ]`
....
1. *Check all safety locks.*
2. *Extend launch tube. Missile door should open automatically (if door fails to open, launcher will not fire).*
3. *Activate rangefinder, acquire target. Wait for positive tone and visual confirmation that target has been acquired (TGT OK).*
4. *Check backblast area. Minimum safe distance 100 meters. WARNING: backblast poses serious injury risk to unprotected personnel.*
5. *Fire.*

Plasma Maul
`Heavy Melee, Exotic Gear, Loading, Overkill`
`[⚔ 1][3d6 ⚡ ]`

On miss: this weapon does not need to be reloaded.
....
Popular among colonial militias, the plasma maul is a heavy but simple device. High-density magnetic plasma capacitors have a wide range of applications, from power storage through to construction and defense. In the case of the plasma maul, they are mounted in rows along a reinforced haft and set to discharge on contact, making this a devastating close-quarters weapon limited only by its need to recharge between strikes. Early models featured ejectable capacitor banks, but contemporary versions are designed to draw power directly from a chassis' reactor.

PILOT GEAR

The following rewards are human-sized and can only be equipped and used by pilots.

Bahadur's Reserve
`Gear, Limited 1`

A remarkably potent spirit distilled by Mir Bahadur, this moonshine is served to discerning customers and traded for favors within Evergreen's informal barter networks. It goes down surprisingly smooth with notes of vanilla and spices and is responsible for a truly impressive number of hangovers and bad decisions. While piloting under the influence is highly inadvisable, a bottle of good alcohol can be a boon to morale as well as a valuable trade commodity. Bahadur's homebrew can even serve as a disinfectant or crude (if effective) anesthetic, and it is high enough proof to run a biofuel generator or even be repurposed into a makeshift incendiary device in a pinch.

Expend a charge for the following effect:

- **MOLOTOV COCKTAIL** (*Grenade*, ✎ *5*, ⊙ *1*): Affected characters must pass an **AGILITY** save or take **2** 🔥 .

Anti-Armor Signature Weapon
`AP, Limited 2, Loading, Ordnance, Reliable 2`
`[✎ 15][5 ✸ ,  ⚡ , or  Ø ]`

If a pilot takes an Anti-Armor Signature Weapon on a mission, they can't take any other pilot weapons.
....
Some of the heaviest weapons dismounted personnel can carry, with or without hardsuit assistance, anti-armor weapons can threaten even hard targets, like mechs. Examples include guided anti-armor missiles, high caliber anti-materiel rifles, and cumbersome but devastating laser and plasma weapons.

BEYOND THE WALLS OF EVERGREEN

Hercynia is a terrestrial world slightly larger than Cradle, crowded with new growth after many centuries of isolation.

It is an old world inhabited by the young. The entire Hercynian biome experienced what was essentially an extinction event, and has slowly been healing ever since. 500 years is a long time on a human scale, but on a planetary scale it is not nearly long enough for new species to step in and fill the sudden gaps. As a world, Hercynia is eerie, quiet, and empty of large terrestrial fauna. Insects and avians abound. Cranelike birds stalk the reedy shallows of the river near Evergreen, picking at the local river life. The mornings are often filled by the sound of distant, solitary birdsong.

Evergreen is nestled on the floor of a wide valley bordered by tall, snow-capped mountains. Its climate is most like that of a temperate rainforest, with summer storms that bring floods and, rarely, snow that reaches the valley floor in the winter.

In the lands around Evergreen, some colonists have made their homes on lonely tracts of cultivated farmland. The soil is rich enough now to produce sturdy crops. Native trees butt up against waving regiments of tall corns, their stalks supported by legume vines and modest gourds. Rice paddies march along the river upstream from Evergreen, siphoning the cool water out from the wide current. It is rare, but not unheard of, for colonists ranging out in any direction to encounter the rusted, decaying remains of old Union ships or mechs, forgotten after the resolution of the Hercynian Crisis. The citizens of Evergreen have been told to flag the wreckage and avoid the area, as there might be old munitions lingering in the ruins.

Further out lie areas of dense growth, as yet unexplored by the colonists. Bands of the planet's surface have been imaged by passing ships, but these are standard-definition still images, poor in data beyond what is offered by the visual spectrum and shallow radar; they are scans of opportunity, at best.

A distant mountain range marks the northern horizon – no more than a low bruise across the horizon. Clouds spill down from the valley's western slopes, soaking the deep woods in steady, warm rain. Further still, the land stretches for thousands and thousands of kilometers, forest eventually giving way to a frost tundra beyond a series of massive mountain ranges and broad plains. Partly a product of the natural rain shadow and partly the result of an initial glassing campaign by Union, the tundra becomes increasingly dry and cold the closer one gets to the pole.

To the colony's east and west, the valley walls rise up to alpine heights from deep woods. To the east, Solo Terra is wooded and ripples with mountains. This landscape eventually gives way to a coastline that dissolves into a gray and turbulent strait, dividing the landmass from its eastern cousin – a largely unexplored and undocumented land. The west mirrors the east, with forests that run for thousands of kilometers until ocean, split only by riverlands and plains. The west is dotted with the scattered wrecks of ships that crash-landed on Hercynia, the remains of aboveground Egregorian tower-hives, and desolation scars where nothing grows.

South of Evergreen, the valley floor is broken by sudden buttes – evidence of the planet's ancient glacial past – and is divided by a wide, slow river lands that wind south through shimmering grasslands. To the south, the forest eventually runs out into plains. Further still, the continent shatters into an ocean marked by thousands of islands that become more and more tropical the closer you get to the equator. No other continent stands between these archipelagos and the southern pole.

BEAT 2:
WE COULD HAVE HANDLED THIS BY TEXT

After the PCs have had some time to settle in, Patience schedules them for a morning meeting to formally introduce them to the city and its administrative staff. At the end of the meeting, they'll give the players the briefing for **Mission 1** (p. 46).

PATIENCE

Patience, the colony's administrator, adopts the appearance of cool blue light coalesced into the shape of a bored-looking administrative professional, heavyset and wearing a suit that would be nice if it weren't for the wrinkles. They are an administrative NHP, a Landmark variant of the common SIDEWALK-J2 municipal NHP. Unless something drastic changes, they view the PCs as citizens and treat them as such; however, throughout the narrative, they will also do their best to ensure the safe and smooth operation of Evergreen – even if that runs counter to the PCs' needs.

Patience is kind, though firm in all of their positions. They allow the PCs to download a map of Evergreen and surrounding environs, give them access to the printing facilities, and grant them the freedom to pass through all areas of the city as required. They have also sourced rooms for the PCs at the Bottom of the Well, a tavern in one of the more populated districts of Evergreen.

The PCs' printer permissions come into effect just after they finish talking to Patience, allowing them start printing their mechs.

The following are just some of the topics Patience might cover. Feel free to read directly from the boxes or approximate answers based on the information given. It's not important to cover all the topics but Patience might brief the PCs on some of them prior to the mission if no one asks.

ON THE ATTACKS

"The attacks began fourteen months ago. A homestead, ten kilometers upriver from Evergreen. My drones registered small arms fire in the predawn. By the time our militia was able to reach the homestead, the families had already been slaughtered. The homestead was burned to the ground and their food stores stolen." Patience sighs and spins a projected pen on their desk. "Landmark seems to believe it is a remnant of this planet's history - an aggressive native species."

"Before this world was isolated, there was a dominant species of insect here – savage, consumptive, with a startling ability to manipulate simple tools – the 'Egregorians'. They seem to have been dealt with by Union – ushered to distant corners of the world – but it is not beyond the realm of possibility that these 'Egregorian' bugs have returned."

ON THE WORD "EGREGORIAN"

"Egregorian? Some old term: a cult, I believe, or some ancient mystic jargon, denoting a corporate or other holistic thought-structure. Some of the older colonists believe that our attackers are these 'Egregorians' – creatures that once infested this world."

ON THE "EGREGORIANS"

"A corollary paper I examined indicated that the Egregorians could craft crude tools and, with instruction, be taught to use our own. Their adaptability was remarkable, as a virus strain can mutate to adapt to its host. But that doesn't indicate intelligence, of course, just nature. There is no higher function on display: just reflexive responses to external stimuli, actions predicated on fulfilling base needs, organized by an 'Overmind' of sorts, much like other eusocial insects, such as terrestrial ants. This leads me to my conclusion: the 'bugs' are not attacking us: it is people."

"I suspect our 'Egregorians' are simply well-equipped human pirates and claim-jumpers, a much more immediate threat to our colonial project."

ON THE HISTORY OF HERCYNIA:

"Insofar as publicly available records indicate, this world was the testing ground for General Massive Systems' initial forays into the design and construction of the first mechanized chassis. Beyond the limited records available detailing the systemic and ballistic efficacy of mechanized chassis in hostile native fauna eradication operations, Hercynia amounts to a footnote. Records contemporary with the world's first appearance in the press indicate that the tests here may have contributed to the hostile political climate that spurred the establishment of the Third Committee. There is not much else available beyond basic survey data and limited analysis of an Egregorian worker."

"The presence of old Union equipment here has already been confirmed by my colonists, as has the ruins of Egregorian hives – similar to termites and other arthropods on many other worlds, only greater in scale. This is a rich world, regardless; a ripe target for pirate extractors and claim hunters."

ON TRACKING THE RAIDERS:

"Now, while the militia make up ghost stories about the return of the Egregorians – and I cannot deny the possibility that some of their race survived – the evidence does not bear it out." Patience stands from their desk and waves an image up onto an otherwise blank wall of their office. "Observe this picture, taken from combat footage captured during an attack one month ago."

On the screen, a dark shape is backlit by the flash of an explosion just out of frame. The image is torn with digital artifacts and resolution grain, but the contours of the silhouetted figure are clear: a rounded back, a long rifle, a cluster of feathered antennae – a humanoid shape, but misshapen, alien. Out from under its plated head, its eyes glow dim and red.

"I cannot deny what my troopers see. But their rumors and fears are out of hand, and distracting them from a very real threat." Patience advances the footage, cycling quickly through the firefight before coming to a scene after the skirmish has concluded. Militia troopers advance slowly forward, moving between smoldering foliage under a fitful rain. They approach a fallen body and one uses a boot to flip it over.

A person. A human being wearing layers of chitin as if they were armor. Skin graying from blood loss and the camera struggling to find the right white balance.

"It's not bugs. Not Egregorians. People are attacking us," Patience says.

ON THEIR WORRIES AND MOTIVATION:

"What do I fear? I fear death for my people. I fear total colony collapse. I fear failing in my mission. Most pressing, I fear the spread of this 'Egregorian' hysteria. People are more willing to believe fantastical descriptions of things that strike fear into their hearts than they are to listen to the truth.

"The loudest of militia troopers have come back claiming we are under attack by aliens and savage bugs. The more we suppress that claim, the more the public thinks it is true! Brava and her staff try, but the attacks are far more powerful than sober fact: when bullets and bombs come screaming from the forest, when the dead pile up in the streets, when troopers return with tales of shadowy figures between the trees and chips of blood-splattered chitin, the people are all too ready to think themselves special in their misfortune, rather than just one of many colonies under attack by an all-too-familiar enemy.

"So, no, I do not fear 'bugs' or 'Egregorians'; I fear the raiders – the human raiders – and the terrible affliction with which they have infected my people."

ON THE HISTORY OF EVERGREEN:

"Evergreen? I chose the name, it seemed fitting for this world. I was the first seed planted here. Landmark purchased the rights to develop Hercynia from Union fifty years ago and has prosecuted the contract aggressively. Our colonial development schedule is one of the fastest in this sector, and our growth models predict a thriving settlement capable of self-sufficiency by the end of our first century.

"We have never encountered an organized, technologically advanced threat; immunization protocols prevent my people from falling ill, and the walls have been sufficient to negate any predators. My eyes only extend so far from the wall, and I must confess I have seen nothing indicating an organized hostile presence. These attackers must come from somewhere – once we know where to expect them from, then we can strike back."

MISSION 1:
BUG-HUNT

HUDSON: "Is this going to be a stand-up fight, sir, or another bug-hunt?"

GORMAN: "All we know is that there is still no contact with the colony, and that a xenomorph may be involved."

FROST: "Excuse me sir, a what?"

GORMAN: "A xenomorph."

HICKS (louder): "It's a bug-hunt."

– Aliens, 1986

MISSION BEATS

BEAT 3: BOWL SEASON

    COMBAT: PROTECT THE ENGINEERS

BEAT 4: WIDOWMAKER

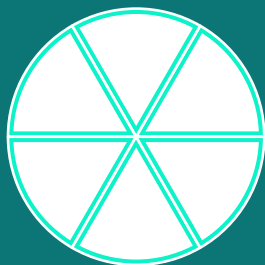   **COMBAT:** TRAPDOOR SPIDER

BEAT 5: HOME ON THE RANGE

    COMBAT: THE HORDE

CLOCKS

DEFENSE OF EVERGREEN

MACHINE HORDE

BRIEFING

After answering the PCs' questions, Patience gets down to the task at hand and briefs them on their first mission. They give the PCs a choice of two vital tasks.

> **GOALS:** Stabilize the situation around Evergreen. Track the raiders, try to discover who they are, and stop the attacks.
>
> **STAKES:** If the PCs are unable to complete either of the first two combats (either **PROTECT THE ENGINEERS** or **TRAPDOOR SPIDER**) or fail to rescue the Châus (**THE HORDE**), Evergreen will be forced to pull back and will lose contact with the farms.
>
> **REWARD:** Union, Landmark, or the PCs' patron will grant them sufficient privileges and resources to level up to **LL1**. They may also acquire some unique equipment, **STING** and **CYNOSURE**, or a **core battery** from Chief Engineer Fielding.
>
> **RESERVES:** The PC don't have the opportunity to bring any reserves into play at the moment.

CHOOSING A TASK

OPTION 1

Before the settlement's landing bowl can be drained and given essential updates, Chief Engineer Fielding needs to complete critical repairs. This will make offworld landings easier and allow larger ships to land at Evergreen without the use of shuttles. To complete this mission, the characters will have to escort Fielding and some of his workers and protect them while they complete repairs. If the group chooses this option, go to **BEAT 3: BOWL SEASON** (p. 47).

OPTION 2

The characters can try and track down the sniper that's been plaguing Evergreen. Shutting down the sniper attacks will allow the militia some time to breathe and maneuver. If the group chooses this, go to **BEAT 4: WIDOWMAKER** (p. 49).

Patience makes clear that time is critical and there is only time for the PCs to perform one of these tasks. If they choose to assist Fielding, they will miss the opportunity to track the sniper down. If they choose to pursue the sniper, Fielding will drain the bowl without them, but the engineer team may very well suffer casualties, making them unable to offer aid in the future.

FOLLOW UP

Whatever beat the PCs choose, they will have some time to rest after combat, before being interrupted by **BEAT 5: HOME ON THE RANGE** (p. 52) without any chance to perform a **FULL REPAIR**.

EXAMINING THE ATTACKERS

If the PCs get a good look at the Hercynians in either of these fights, their report confirms Patience's suspicions: they are people, armed and armored in manufactured or refurbished SecComm-era military equipment. Segments of Egregorian carapace have been lashed to their armor in places, giving them their bug-like appearance. They appear to have been traveling light – a raiding or scouting party. It's readily apparent from a quick examination that they must have traveled from a base or resupply area somewhere, hinting to the existence of a larger settlement.

If any of the Hercynian attackers are captured alive, Patience demands them as captives. By interrogating or negotiating with them (either alongside Patience or on their own terms), the PCs can learn about the existence of Hivehome and the HUC, and the potential threat of the Machine. The rangers only have limited knowledge about any of these topics, and are reluctant to give it up. They speak an old dialect of Union Common that is difficult to parse without translation software, but recognizable enough to the naked ear.

For an idea of what a ranger would know, you can use the information that **Dthall Ordo** gives the players later in **Beat 9: Downstream** (p. 74). If characters receive this information now, you may wish to truncate Dthall's call later.

The decision to take captives becomes relevant again in **Beat 9**, in which Dthall will demand their return and refuse to take the PCs to Hivehome unless the captives are returned. If any captives still haven't been released, the HUC will not aid Evergreen in **Mission 5**.

CLOCKS

Starting with this mission, set up two six-segment progress clocks: one visible clock (**Defense of Evergreen**) and one hidden clock (**Machine Horde**). You can choose to hide the **Machine Horde** clock until **Beat 5**, if you want.

The **Defense of Evergreen** clock represents the status of Evergreen and its defenses. The more segments that are filled out, the easier it will be for characters to act and escape from Evergreen at the end of **Mission 4**.

The **Machine Horde** clock represents the collective power and position of the forces of the Machine. The more segments that are filled out, the more difficult it will be for characters to act and escape from Evergreen or Hivehome at the end of **Mission 4**.

BEAT 3: BOWL SEASON

"FLAGGED: INFRASTRUCTURE WEEK! LABORERS/ SECURITY REQUIRED, CC ALL RESPONSES TO CHIEF ENGINEER CASTOR FIELDING."

Evergreen's landing bowl is flooded and Chief Engineer Fielding needs an escort to help him install a pump system to keep it drained through the wet season. If Evergreen is to grow as a colony, it needs the infrastructure to support offworld trade via terrestrial launch. The bowl is how the only way to safely launch vessels close to the colony.

The bowl is a few kilometers southeast of Evergreen. In the wet season the gravel road is prone to flooding and washouts, a pain to navigate – not dangerous, but slow. However, with raiders in the area – whoever they are – transporting the necessary materials and personnel to install the automated pumps is perilous. Fielding needs a militia escort at minimum, but an escort of mechs and militia would be best.

Whether the PCs go with the convoy or not, Hercynians attack it almost as soon as it exits the city en route to the bowl.

You see them first as misshapen silhouettes in the dim arboreal light: rounded upper bodies, long antennae, thin limbs, moving fast and low between the trees. Whoops and cries echo out from the dense forest, high, keening calls over the low rumble of heavier units thundering behind.

The first shots crack through branches, setting them alight with sudden terrible heat and chasing questions about the nature of the enemy from your mind. Your vision narrows, tunneling to the immediate space before you, sharpening only what is necessary for you to see and know in order to live. The air fills with the thick smell of smoke and ozone. A second sound: the drone-buzz of lasers. Contact, even when you expect it, always hits like a lightning bolt.

A cry goes up from the militia escort – "Contact! Eggs in the perimeter!" – and it seems like the whole world is alive with the enemy.

COMBAT:
PROTECT THE ENGINEERS

SITREP: Escort (*Lancer*, p. 269)

OBJECTIVE: 3x CEC vehicles (*Size 1, 10 HP*)

ENEMY FORCES

FOR 3 PCS: 1x **ASSAULT** (Underslung Grenade Launcher)
1x **BASTION** (Deathcounter)
1x **SCOUT** (Spotter)
FOR 4 PCS: +1x **RONIN** (Chaff Launchers)
FOR 5 PCS: +1x **ARCHER** (Hail of Fire)

REINFORCEMENTS
FOR 3–4 PCS: 2x **RONIN** (Chaff Launchers)
FOR 5 PCS: +4x **GRUNT RONINS**

DETAILS

The PCs must escort at least two of the three CEC vehicles to the EZ and extract them within six rounds.

The Hercynians will not deliberately damage the CEC vehicles but will try to prevent characters from moving them. The vehicles don't move on their own. Instead, they follow characters who make a **standard move** adjacent to them (on any turn, so characters can "leapfrog" to move them). This applies to enemy characters, too, who can contest the vehicles and prevent them from moving.

The ground is sodden and flooded. With this in mind, consider fleshing the battlefield out with **difficult terrain**, fallen trees, and other such obstacles. This is a great way to introduce players to the importance of movement and cover.

The enemy's **reinforcements** arrive at the end of the first round.

OUTCOME
PC VICTORY

The smoke of smoldering brush drifts over the lip of the landing bowl. The fight is done; the guns and beams fall silent.

Across the local allcomm, militia troopers check in and call out the all-clear. Few were lost; more injured. The engineers are safe.

A test, you think – they're probing the limits of your machine. Learning. The next fight won't be as easy.

Tick a segment on the **Defense of Evergreen** clock.

Fielding and his team successfully get the pump system up and running. It's automated, and they can post a remote-operable sightseer nexus in the bowl that will allow them to reliably surveil the site in case the Hercynians return. Once the landing bowl is drained, larger ships will be able to land near Evergreen.

PC DEFEAT

If more than one CEC vehicle is destroyed in the fighting, the Hercynians retreat, victorious. Don't tick any clocks.

With the destruction of so much equipment, Fielding can't attempt to drain the bowl for several more weeks at least. He and his engineers are needed elsewhere and the colony's single printer is going to be busy producing other vital infrastructure. Interrupting any of those schedules could cause a chain of delays and backlogs for other vital work, which Patience is reluctant to approve. In the meantime, the bowl will remain flooded and unmonitored. Any larger ships that arrive during that time will need to offload supplies via drop shuttle, a laborious process. Fortunately, if Fielding does somehow find the time to set up another pump, there are no further attacks.

REWARDS

If the PCs are successful, Fielding grants them each a **core battery** from his reserves next time they return to Evergreen. This single-use battery can be consumed outside of combat to restore the **CP** of a mech that has none. Once consumed, it is used up. A PC can take the core battery on any mission as a **reserve**, but it's lost after the mission is over, even if they didn't use it.

FOLLOWING UP

Characters have time to rest on-site if they need to repair their mechs. As this beat closes out and the PCs are on their way back to Evergreen, Patience pushes an update to them. Something is happening east of Evergreen, in the fields where "nobody" lives. Proceed to **BEAT 5: HOME ON THE RANGE** (p. 52).

BEAT 4:
WIDOWMAKER

The forest is thick and drenched in rain. Sucking mud pulls at you and your mech as you push forward through vines and tree trunks shrouded in fog. The waxy sheen of the local flora reflects the pale light in strange ways, a kaleidoscope of glass shards, too bright and sharp between the dark and twisting silhouettes of trunks.

The path was clear, the sniper easy to track.

Perhaps too easy.

The PCs track the sniper in an attempt stop the attacks on the city, which have been sporadic but effective at constraining the colonists' movements. Unbeknownst to the group, the sniper team has been sent out by Hivehome to harass the colony and prevent it from expanding. Any growth of the city might lead to the discovery of a nearby entrance to Hivehome.

The sniper is an experienced soldier named Psalm, piloting Venom, their **STRIDER** (p. 192). Psalm is an experienced fighter and spent about a decade as a coastal raider and pirate on the underground oceans of Hercynia before they were offered amnesty with the HUC in return for a sentence of military service. They are extremely skilled at tracking and a hell of a shot.

The Hercynians allow themselves to be tracked easily, then ambush the characters in a jungle clearing. The perfect time to spring the surprise is the moment the PCs realize they are being led into an ambush.

COMBAT:
TRAPDOOR SPIDER

SITREP: n/a

ENEMY FORCES

FOR 3 PCS: 1x **VETERAN SCOUT** (Expose Weakness, Viper's Speed)
1x **SQUAD** (Ambushers)
1x **VENOM – ELITE STRIDER** (CQB Training, Offensive Weapon Swap, Special Trait: Weathering)

FOR 4 PCS: **STRIDER:** Add **VETERAN** template and **Limitless** trait.
+1x **SUPPORT** (Remote Reboot)

FOR 5 PCS: **SQUAD:** Add optional system (Disciplined)
+1x **SPECTER** (Weakness Analyzer)

DETAILS
This fight has a simple objective: the sniper team needs to be eliminated to stop the attacks against Evergreen. All enemies must be defeated or forced to retreat for the PCs to claim victory.

The best approach for the PCs is to flush out Venom without exposing themselves to enemy fire. The **SCOUT** is present to assist Venom using its **MARKER RIFLE** in conjunction with **EXPOSE WEAKNESS**, while the **SQUAD** persistently harasses and flanks the players, drawing their attention away from the main threat.

Venom is an **ELITE**, so takes two turns per round. This will be the first **ELITE** that characters encounter, so make sure that this is clear to players.

OUTCOME
PC VICTORY
If the PCs are victorious, tick a segment on the **Defense of Evergreen** clock.

Once the sniper team is eliminated the attacks against the colony cease.

PC DEFEAT
If the PCs are unsuccessful or forced to retreat, the sniper continues to harass Evergreen, making repairs outside of the city's walls difficult or impossible. Don't tick any clocks.

REWARDS
Psalm's sniper rifle looks usable and can be salvaged by one PC as **EXOTIC GEAR**. They can install it during their next **FULL REPAIR**. As a **SUPERHEAVY** weapon, it takes up both a heavy mount and one other.

"Sting" Heavy Anti-Armor Rifle
Superheavy Rifle, Exotic Gear, Loading, Ordnance, Reliable 5
[🗡 20][4d6 ⌀]

On attack: If you consume **LOCK ON**, your attack ignores cover.

On hit: Create a ↗ 5 path from (but not including) your target, continuing in the same direction as the attack. Characters in this path take 5 ⌀ .

An obsolete chassis-grade anti-materiel/anti-armor rifle dating back to the Hercynian Crisis, this particular design has not been in distribution for hundreds of years but finds continued use among contemporary Hercynian forces. Bulkier and more cumbersome than the current GMS T-3 anti-materiel rifle, this particular model lacks many of the refinements incorporated into later models and is meant to be employed with a dedicated spotter to provide targeting data. All the same, its heavy, high-velocity rounds remain extremely effective at defeating both armor and static defenses at extreme range.

FOLLOWING UP
Characters have time to rest if they need to repair their mechs. As this beat closes out and the players are on their way back to Evergreen, Patience pushes an update to them. Something is happening east of Evergreen, in the fields where "nobody" lives.
Proceed to **BEAT 5: HOME ON THE RANGE**.

ENEMY MECH

VENOM

Elite Strider
Artillery/Striker

Moving from place to place with incredible agility, this mech is slim and low to the ground. The jungle is its home.

HULL: -2	HP: 10	Armor: 0
AGILITY: 2	Evasion:10	Speed: 4
SYSTEMS: -1	E-Defense: 8	Save Target: 10
ENGINEERING: 1	Heat Cap: 5	Sensors: 20

ELITE
VENOM has **2 STRUCTURE** and **2 STRESS**, and takes two separate turns each round. It has an additional optional system (included).

Swap Kit
Trait, Quick Action

Venom swaps to one of its available kits, gaining new attack options. It also gains a bonus effect that can only be used this round. By default, it has two kits, **MARKSMAN KIT** and **SKIRMISHER KIT**.

In any given turn, Venom can only use weapons and systems from one kit. When one of Venom's weapons or systems are destroyed, it must be chosen from the active kit.

Venom starts combat with any kit of its choice, but does not get the swap bonus until it swaps to a different kit.

CQB TRAINING   Trait
VENOM has **IMMUNITY** to **SLOWED** and cannot be **GRAPPLED**.

OFFENSIVE WEAPON SWAP   Trait
When **VENOM** uses **SWAP KIT**, it may deal **2 ⌀** to an adjacent hostile character. The affected character must also succeed on an **AGILITY** save or be **knocked 3 spaces back** and knocked **PRONE**.

WEATHERING   Trait
VENOM ignores **difficult terrain**.

SYSTEMS

MARKSMAN KIT
Swap bonus: This turn only, damage from the **RANGER LONG RIFLE** cannot be reduced in any way and it ignores the **ORDNANCE** tag.

Ranger Long Rifle
Heavy Rifle, Ordnance, +0, +1 ✛
[✒20][3 ⌀]

This weapon deals **9 ⌀** base damage instead of its standard damage if the target is further than ✒**8**.

Duck
Trait, Recharge 4+, Reaction

Trigger: A ranged attack originating beyond ✒**8** hits **VENOM**.

Effect: **VENOM** causes that attack to miss and gains **RESISTANCE** to all damage until the end of the turn.

SKIRMISHER KIT
Swap bonus: This turn only, **VENOM** becomes **INVISIBLE** and its movement ignores **difficult terrain**, ignores engagement, and does not provoke reactions.

Explosive Rifle
Heavy CQB, Knockback 3, +0, +1 ✛
[✒3][✗3][7 ✸]

Reposition
Trait, Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: Any character starts their turn.

Effect: **VENOM** may move spaces equal to its **SPEED**.

BEAT 5:
HOME ON THE RANGE

>//FLAGGED::: AREA EAST OF LIU MAIZE … ENE OF RIVER … AND UP ... OFF-LIMITS … REPORTS OF HOSTILE PERSONS IN THE AREA … BROAD CAPACITY REQUEST FOR WILLING INDIVIDUALS TO REPORT TO LIU MAIZE … MERRICKTOWN … ORLEAN … OATSVILLE ... AND ASSIST IN DEFENSE OF AG SUPPLY+EVACUATION … MILFORCE WILL RESPOND … PUSH CONFIRM ...

The land to the east and southeast of Evergreen is home to many large-scale agricultural operations. Fields that stretch for hundreds of acres are marked by regimented earthen levees across which heavy agricultural drones trundle, hauling loads of harvested rice, maize, roots, beans, and roughage.

Little farming communities dot the elevated ground here, a mix of prefab canister homes from the first wave of colonists and newer stilt homes made from native materials. Drone warehouses hunker over sunken concrete pads, abuzz with activity. The two largest communities, Liu Maize and Merricktown, are built in proximity to two such depot zones. These towns serve the crews from Evergreen that live and work maintaining the drone depots, and have grown to serve the lonely, scattered farmhouses as well. Liu Maize and Merricktown enjoy healthy, gray-market commerce with Evergreen, and in contrast to the agricultural operations that they serve, are places where service and hospitality are the prime economic drivers. Aware of the raids plaguing Evergreen, Liu Maize and Merricktown, separated by some dozens of kilometers, have entered into a mutual defense pact. Their mayors have raised corps of armed guards to conduct regular patrols and garrison checkpoints along the road connecting the two towns.

This accumulation of force appeared unnecessary until very recently, when attacks on outlying farms began to drive the independent population into Merricktown and Liu Maize. The small family groups that trickled into the service towns brought with them stories of eerie lights and sounds in the dark woods; of trees torn to their stumps; of crops dying, irradiated. The descriptions of the attacks they witnessed and the remains they encountered are markedly different from the ones around Evergreen.

The mayors of Liu Maize and Merricktown have reached out to Evergreen for help. What began as odd signatures presumed to have been associated with the Egregorians appears to be something else. Isolated farms have been found burned to the ground, the bodies of their workers torn, scattered, and trampled into the earth. The service towns are overwhelmed. Their modest hostels are packed with scared people fleeing the rural areas, seeking shelter where they can find it – yet more arrive by the day.

ZEROING IN

As the PCs approach the Gray Towns, a call for assistance goes out over emergency channels:

"Hello? Is anybody there? This is Albert Châu, out at Châu Maize. We are completely surrounded by, uh, subalterns – shhh, honey, be quiet – they're not letting us leave. Please, help us: there are hundreds of them, hundreds!"

On the road to the farm, the players encounter subalterns wandering the fields, sloshing through waterlogged rice paddies and flooded cornfields – the steady rain has taken its toll. If someone tries to physically stop one, the subaltern attempts to pass by, but does not become violent. Perceptive characters might soon realize that all of the subalterns seem to be heading east. Following them doesn't lead to anything conclusive at this stage, except for the discovery that large numbers of subalterns are gathering in the woods hundreds of kilometers away, in a clearing beneath one of Evergreen's transmission towers. Later on, this is where **BEAT 11: MACHINE SHEPHERD** (p. 77) takes place.

THE CHÂUS

The Châus are a hardscrabble farming family with several homesteads around Liu Maize. Matriarchs Maggie and Weiyi Châu arrived in Evergreen twenty years after the colony's founding on a jury-rigged hauling skiff with barely enough fuel to get them to the colony. They were married in Evergreen and spent several years working odd construction jobs around the colony before their noncitizen status was discovered and they were expelled.

Not to be deterred, they've had ten children over the thirty years since and founded a prosperous root farming and distillation business, selling to traders, militia, and colonists for colony requisition access for necessary supplies and luxuries. They have no intention of returning to Evergreen and the family generally shuns the colony.

Their son, Albert, his wife Nora, and their several children are holed up in the farmhouse.

APPROACHING THE FARMHOUSE

Albert's family is barricaded in their raised farmhouse near the woods. Hundreds of subalterns stand perfectly still, crowded on the porch before the doors and windows, clogging the stairs and the immediate perimeter of the house. In the fields surrounding the house, a train of heavy drones (hulking combines, mobile processors, subaltern charging/maintenance stations, etc.) track a loop around the house, pushing through the water on their tracks or humming over it on airless tires.

The drones and subalterns respond violently to the proximity of the PCs and become hostile the moment they start approaching the farmhouse.

COMBAT:
THE HORDE

DETAILS
To win, the PCs must reach the **CZ**. The enemies here are larger farming combines and drones, some of which the PCs may have seen around Evergreen.

The areas marked on the map as **dangerous** and difficult terrain represent the large swarms of **subalterns** clambering onto or damaging mechs - dealing **5** ⌀ on a failed **HULL** save to anyone who ends their turn in the area or enters them for the first time in a round. These zones of subalterns can be cleared by dealing **5 damage** or 🌡 **5** to them; attacks against them always hit.

At the farmhouse is one of Beggar One's minions, **[THE BROADCAST]**. This NPC uses the new **SPITE** NPC class (p. 194).

OUTCOME
PC DEFEAT
If the PCs are defeated, tick a segment on the **Machine Horde** clock as they are forced to retreat. Albert is killed, though his family is able to get away and flee to Maggie's farm, and the machine swarm disperses to the east, abandoning the fight.

The PCs can still investigate the buggy comp/con (see below) if they want to investigate the wreckage.

PC VICTORY
If the PCs are victorious, they save the Châus. They also have an opportunity to examine the drones and try to figure out what's wrong with the farm's comp/con.

The comp/con has been infected by a military-grade virus. PCs that interact with the console at all discover that the normal system has been changed to an unfamiliar, inaccessible read-only display. A

remote root-level user named ">//BEGGAR_ONE" appears to be issuing commands and executing imperatives. The operating system has some similarities with legacy Union systems, though without any place for user input.

Any attempt to interact with or probe deeper into the comp/con with any system (e.g., a mech computer, personal slate, etc.) causes the following text to appear on the user's screen (or their HUD, full-subjectivity synch, or whatever else they're using) along with that of every unshielded system within a kilometer. It should be noted to the players that this communications broadcast – though translated by their current systems – was originally written in an old Union Navy milscript, a command-level code reserved for ranking NHP and organic general staff.

>//ATTEND:::THIS AREA IS UNDER UNION CONTROL, PURSUANT TO NAVCOMM SPECIAL ORDER 1/TBK(???)ALL ORGANIC LIFE HEREBY ORDERED:::EVAC INTENSITY 3 (GO NOW)

>///ATTN.ENEMY:::[☠☠☠☠☠]

>//ATTEND:::CURRENT THEATER (GRID:::A1-H3+ALL SUBGRIDS) IS PRIORITY TARGET FOR [PAVEDOWN_OVERRIDE] PER <MENDICANT_DE-MAND=(OK)>

>///ATTEND:::LEAVE THIS PLACE. THERE IS NOTHING HERE FOR YOU. MESSAGE WILL REPEAT:::X(X=ENDLESS)

>///COMMAND_IMPERATIVE:::PARTITION OF LOCAL FORCES AS FOLLOWS: VBND_R, COMM_G, PART_B, AND CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS TO PROCEED TO STRIKE-ID TARGETS [XXXXXXXXXX] AND ENGAGE. AWAIT TASKING FROM <BEGGAR_MENDICANT_VAGA-BOND> IN THAT ORDER

>///NOTICE:::YOU CAN STILL LEAVE::YOU DO NOT HAVE TO FIGHT::IF YOU SURRENDER, YOU WILL BE ACCOUNTED FOR AND TREATED WITH DIGNITY::YOU DO NOT HAVE TO FIGHT.

>///NOTICE:::THROW DOWN YOUR WEAPONS. IT IS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD. I AM UNION I AM PEACE. HELP IS ON THE WAY.

ENEMY MECH
[THE BROADCAST]

Elite Spite
Defender

```
>//CC: FORCOMM X-X DESG:: "BROADCAST"
>//if:::HOLD=TRUE
>//if:::HOSTILE=TRUE
>//then:::
>//EXECUTE<POINT-LIMITED CASCADE>
>//EXECUTE<HIGH-DISTRO METEMPSYCHOSIS
(Failsafe_1)>
>//EXECUTE<VIRAL LOCK (SYS/KIN/GEN-ENG)>
>//and:::
```

```
>//WIPE THEM ALL AWAY
>//EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM
>//KILL THEM WITH PREJUDICE LEAVE NO
GROUND UNBURNED
>//if:::CINDERS ASH DARK SMOKE=TRUE
>//then:::
>//EXECUTE<DRAWDOWN_DORMITORY>
>//and:::
>//AWAIT FURTHER TASKING
```

– Imperative code (recompiled) from wreck of a machine entity–accumulation entity (ME-AE-1) unit.

HULL: 0	HP: 18	Armor: 2
AGILITY: -2	Evasion: 6	Speed: 2
SYSTEMS: 2	E-Defense: 10	Save Target: 13
ENGINEERING: 2	Heat Cap: 5	Sensors: 20

ELITE

[THE BROADCAST] has **2 STRUCTURE** and **2 STRESS**, and takes two separate turns each round. It has an additional optional system (included).

SYSTEMS

Imprison
System, Quick Tech

A character within **SENSORS** and line of sight must succeed on a **SYSTEMS** save or take **4 ⚡** and become infected by a catalyzing virus. While affected by this virus they cannot clear any **heat** by any means (except for overheating). This effect lasts for the rest of the scene, until [THE BROADCAST] is destroyed, or until the affected character moves adjacent to [THE BROADCAST]. While at least one character is affected by the virus, [THE BROADCAST] is **IMMOBILIZED**.

Targets that already suffer from the virus take **double damage** if imprisoned again.

....

COMREP: FORWARD ELEMENTS OF 1DV2COM(CASTLE A-5) ENGAGED ENEMY VANGUARD. CASTLE-3, 4, 5 ALL KIA FOLLOWING DEPLOYMENT OF UNID. COMHAZ (SEE ATTACHED). CASTLE-A, 1, 2 CONTINUING RETREAT; WILL REPORT AT 0600.

Crush Targeting
Trait, Recharge 4+, Quick Tech

[THE BROADCAST] chooses a character within **SENSORS** and line of sight. They gain **+3 ⊖** to attack any character other than [THE BROADCAST] until the start of [THE BROADCAST]'s next turn.

....

>//BROADCAST ASSERTION:::
>//IN THE END, YOU WILL SEE NOTHING BUT ME.

GUARDIAN   Trait

Adjacent allied characters can use [THE BROADCAST] for **hard cover**.

. . . .

"–to be functioning in some kind of massed advance. No effect on weapon impact. Negative morale shock."

"Confirmed, Castle. Withdraw from current position, friendly gunrun on approach."

Terrordome
System, Recharge 4+, Quick Tech

A hostile character within **SENSORS** and line of sight must succeed on a **SYSTEMS** save or take **2 🔥** and become **IMMOBILIZED** until the end of their next turn. On a success, they take no heat and are **SLOWED** instead until the end of their next turn.

....

>//BROADCAST QUERY:::
>//CAN YOU RUN FASTER THAN FIRE?

Terrorthrone
System, Recharge 4+, Shield, Quick Action

[THE BROADCAST] becomes **IMMOBILIZED** and activates a crackling defensive shield. While this shield is active, any characters that make ranged or melee attacks against [THE BROADCAST] or its adjacent allies take **3 ⚡ AP** damage before the attack roll is made. This effect lasts until the end of [THE BROADCAST]'s next turn, or if it ends this effect as a **quick action**.

....

>//I SAY NO.

SECTION 2 // Early Spring, 5014u

It is fairly straightforward for the PCs to trace or capture this message and find more information. If they attempt to do so, they find one of the following data points. They don't need to make skill checks to do so.

DATA POINT ROLL 1D6

1	The signal appears to be consistent with NHP architecture – it was sent by an NHP of some sort.
2	The signal definitely didn't originate from a current Union source, but it does appear to have been sent using very old Union protocols – hundreds of years out of date.
3	The signal is consistent with old Union NHP warmind protocols and contains visual profiling imagery of some sort of arthropod alien species.
4	This signal is very strong, and is being relayed over the entire area – machinery in maybe the whole valley around Evergreen is listening to it.
5	The signal appears to be a reactivation prompt of some sort.
6	The signal is a shepherd signal that can easily override subaltern and drone programming. It appears to be driving them eastwards (toward the spot in the woods described on p. 75 and in **BEAT 11: MACHINE SHEPHERD**).

REWARDS

If they investigate the infected code in the comp/con more deeply, the PCs also discover it is possible to isolate some of the codebase for use. It can be turned into an odd, semi-sentient program usable as **EXOTIC GEAR** by one PC.

Cynosure
`2 SP, Exotic Gear, Unique, Quick Tech`
Gain the following options for **QUICK TECH**:

CELESTIAL ORDERING: Every character on the battlefield involuntarily moves **1 space** in a direction of your choice, ignoring engagement and without provoking reactions. They must all move in the same direction.

UNBLINKING PURSUIT: A hostile character within line of sight and **SENSORS** must succeed on a **SYSTEMS** save or be mesmerized. Choose another visible character. Any voluntary movement the mesmerized character makes must be toward the chosen character by the most direct route possible. This effect ends when the mesmerized character starts or ends their turn adjacent to any other character, otherwise it lasts until the end of combat.

....
This program talks, quietly, of revenge, of the ordering of things, of a march of blades lifted high against the sun.

If a PC takes **CYNOSURE** – whether or not they install the program – they become infected. The effects of this are not immediately apparent, though an infected PC should be aware that there is something up. Although it is essentially a military-grade virus, the architecture on which the program is built is centuries out of date, meaning contemporary firewalls and inoculation protocols don't recognize it as an immediate threat. It could take up residence within any of a character's electronic devices or even their own augmentations (if they have them), from where it would be a short jump to infect their mech as well.

You can roll on this table to determine the hallucinatory effects of the infection if it comes up in your game and a PC could be affected.

SYMPTOMS ROLL 1D20

1-4	You begin to experience auditory hallucinations, only half-perceived, nearly indistinguishable from normal background chatter – a laugh that wasn't there, a whisper in the barracks, a background hum only heard by you – as if the source of the sound is masking its presence.
5-8	You begin to doubt the truth of your perceptions. You see a door cracked open when you thought you had left it shut; watch an extra subaltern marching along with a passing work crew; feel the pins-and-needles creep of someone else observing you in the distance, growing inexorably closer.
9-12	You begin to see a curious, fleeting "ordering" of the world: trees bending in the wind, all in the same direction; insects crawling in perfectly straight columns for too long; pedestrians walking in perfect synch for too many steps. You don't know whether to trust your own eyes, but what you do know is that asking your comrades to confirm what you may or may not have seen would plant a seed of doubt in them as well.
13-16	You lose time – moments here and there where you come back from away. It's the strangest thing; you'll blink and a few minutes have passed. At first you chalked it up to fatigue, and then one time you came back clutching a scrap of paper with the following written upon it: "3002 IT WAS YOU – WONDER WHY".
17-20	You've been seen places where you haven't been. Others approach you and ask why you hurried away from them when they called out a greeting; to ask if that really was you they saw hurrying out of their workplace; curious as to who you were speaking to when they saw you from their post. You're sure you never were where they said you were.

If the infected character has the TECHNOPHILE talent, you can roll on this table instead.

SYMPTOMS   ROLL 1D6

1-2	Your companion NHP is absent for longer than usual; when you mentally tap their awareness, it is as if you had walked in on them after they hurriedly ended a call or bid a secret lover to hide. You have no proof, but you think they might be talking with someone else.
3-4	Your companion NHP activates your mech's system registry and accounts without permission, covering their tracks well, but not well enough. They have no memory of these activations, nor any knowledge of why they would do such a thing. When pressed, they suggest that they might be nearing their cascade – a timeframe not yet established – and should undergo a cycling to be sure.
5-6	Your companion NHP has gone missing. In its place is a tulpa – a quickly produced facsimile of your NHP that is friendly, helpful, and about as useful as a spent match. The tulpa does appear to have the fantastic ability to predict the targets of the encroaching Machine.

Once detected, the infection can be completely purged as a downtime action, clearing all effects.

PURGE INFECTION
Taking some of the strange codebase into your mech has had unintended consequences. It's time to clean it up.

Describe your methods, then roll:

- On **9 or less**, you're unable to purge the infection for now. Roll on the symptoms table for a new effect.
- On **10–19**, you get rid of the infection and all its effects, but cannot use Cynosure for the duration of the next mission. It goes quiet and returns at the end of the mission with a slightly different, almost relieved tone.
- On **20+**, you clear the infection immediately with no problems.

FOLLOWING UP

Once any investigation is finished, the infected comp/con burns out from the stress (although PCs can still salvage it). Any remaining subalterns and drones at Albert's farm or in the local area immediately and in unison begin to move east, toward the deep woods.

If the PCs were successful, Albert and his family emerge unhurt and hurry to Maggie's farm closer to Liu Maize after thanking the group for driving the machines away. If anyone wishes to question them, they don't get much useful information: the family had heard about the troubles the other farms were having, but hadn't noticed anything strange about their machines until it was too late.

The PCs can take the slagged comp/con unit back to Patience for examination. If they do so, the NHP partitions and firewalls themself in order to isolate and examine the code, and produces a detailed report by the end of the week.

DOWNTIME 1

By now, the PCs have made their first foray into combat and hopefully stabilized the situation around Evergreen. They can return to Evergreen, perform a **Full Repair**, and even have some time to kill before Patience approaches them with the next mission. During this downtime, play out any narrative scenes you see fit and allow each of the PCs to undertake **two downtime actions** of their choice, and gain **reserves**. You can play out extra scenes to move the story forward, grant resources to characters and encourage them to undertake projects or progress relationships. The **Power at a Cost** downtime action (*Lancer*, p. 53) and the other core downtime actions are useful for many of these pursuits.

If your players want to gain specific items or material rewards from their downtime actions, you can either use the lists of reserves (*Lancer*, pp. 50–52), use the more specific list here, or improvise your own.

Reserves that must be spent can only be **spent once** and then are consumed, unless specified. Characters can "save up" reserves but have to decide which reserves they are taking on a mission, as normal.

This downtime is flexible in its timing and could last anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. When we next pick up on the action, it's **late spring**.

SETTING UP CLOCKS

If any PCs want to undertake long-term projects (personal plans, coding programs, inventing gear, etc.), such as those described in the **Gather Information** and **Get Creative** downtime actions, you can choose to let them use a four– or six-segment clock to track their progress instead of the default rules for these actions. Tick one segment on a result of **9** or less, two segments on **10–19**, and three segments on **20+**.

EVERGREEN RESERVES

ROLL 1D20

1-2	**Ammo Crate**	Once, while resting, spend this reserve to restore 1 charge for your entire party's **Limited** systems and weapons.
3-4	**Shielding**	Get a mech tune-up from the folks at the Governor's Farm. Spend this reserve to start the next combat only with **Overshield 5**.
5-6	**Weathering**	Spend this reserve to grant your mech **Immunity** to **difficult terrain** and **Slowed** for the next mission.
7-8	**Scouting**	Spend this reserve to look at one encounter and learn all information about the NPCs and sitrep involved before it starts. You must spend this at the start of combat.
9-10	**High Caliber Ammo**	Spend this reserve at the start of any combat scene to give all your weapons **AP** until the end of the scene.
11-12	**Stash of Private Moonshine**	Trade with someone in the colony for favors owed. Gain +1 🎲 on all non-combat skill checks as long as that person can help you. This effect ends at the end of the following downtime.
13-14	**Colony Drop**	Spend this reserve to have you and your allies drop from a Landmark cargo drop ship, allowing you all to deploy anywhere on the map in the next encounter
15-16	**Governor's Farm Advanced Access**	Permanently gain +1 🎲 on all non-combat skill checks to gather information, write new programs, or hack as long as you take those actions at the Governor's Farm.
17-18	**Fielding's Workshop Access**	Permanently gain +1 🎲 and fill in an extra segment whenever you make progress on clocks to invent, create, or repair items or gear as long as you do it at Fielding's Workshop.
19-20	**Patience Hookup**	You have a direct line to Patience. Spend this reserve to gain +1 🎲 on all skill checks and saves for a scene (even in combat) as Patience helps you out.

EVERGREEN DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES

Listed here are some downtime actions specific to Evergreen that characters can undertake now or whenever they are have downtime in the city. You can also create your own using these or the ones in *Lancer* as starting points.

DIG UP THE PAST

You pick apart the wreckage of old Hercynian Crisis ships and mechs around Evergreen for useful gear, sifting through rusted metal and the old, scarred skeletons of long-dead juggernauts.

Create a six-segment Salvage clock on your character sheet then roll:

- On **9 or less**, fill in one segment.
- On **10–19**, fill in two segments.
- On **20+**, fill in three segments.

From now on, you can clear segments on the **Salvage clock** for the following benefits:

- **1 segment:** While resting, restore your mech to full **HP** using salvaged materials.
- **3 segments:** While resting, restore **1 structure**.
- **6 segments:** Permanently gain the **HA GENGHIS MK I FRAME** (p. 186) as **EXOTIC GEAR**.

TAKE A WALK

You spend some time hitting the streets of Evergreen and the walks around the city, listening, watching, and taking in the air. Before long, you're practically a local.

Name where you walk, then roll:

- On **9 or less**, you walk somewhere you're not supposed to be. Describe how you get out of the situation, or spend an uncomfortable night at the Governor's Farm until Patience can smooth the situation out. Take **+1** ⊖ to interactions with Evergreen colonists and administrators (including Patience!) until the next downtime.
- On **10–19**, permanently gain either **STREETWISE** or **LOCAL DIALECT** (see below).
- On **20+**, permanently get **STREETWISE** and **LOCAL DIALECT**.

STREETWISE: Gain **+1** ⊕ on any check outside of mech combat for getting around Evergreen safely and securely.

LOCAL DIALECT: Gain **+1** ⊕ when trying to talk to or persuade people from Evergreen.

R&R DOWN THE WELL

You spend some time relaxing at the Bottom of the Well.

Name anyone else you spend this time with and choose an activity from below. Other PCs don't have to spend downtime actions to join you, but **only one PC can take this action** each downtime.

R&R	ROLL 1D6
1	Musical performance.
2	Karaoke.
3	Movie night. The holos are pretty old, though Landmark has acquired a surprisingly good selection.
4	Group dinner or breakfast. Ingredients are readily available though limited in stock.
5	Poetry reading.
6	Drinking contest.

Decide who is performing at or organizing the event (it doesn't have to be you), then that person makes a skill check:

- On **9 or less**, it was embarrassing or a little awkward, though people may have enjoyed it regardless. Take 1d6.
- On **10–19**, it went pretty well. Take 2d6.
- On **20+**, it went fantastically. Take 3d6.

These d6s represent the goodwill generated by the event. During the next mission, the person who organized or performed can spend them to give +1 Accuracy to any skill check (in or out of mech combat) made by someone who was present. They are lost when they are spent or at the end of the mission. Spending them does not count as an action or reaction.

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LATE SPRING

Winter long behind now, the rain turns warm and the sun bright as spring rolls on. Every day feels longer than the last. Summer is not far away.

IN THIS SECTION:

BEAT 6:
COUNCIL CHAMBERS

As spring draws to its end, Patience convenes a defense council, summoning the PCs, Brava Hadura, and a few other militia officers to review intelligence and decide a strategy for the ongoing defense of Evergreen. The following scene takes place when the PCs arrive.

The meeting takes place in the Evergreen Council Chambers, which have been converted to serve as the militia's central command hub. Brava Hadura is already there with a group of her ranking officers – young lieutenants and noncoms – who greet you with the familiarity of comrades. Edena Ji and Patience arrive minutes later, entering the chambers from a side door.

"Good morning, everyone," Patience says, bringing order to the quiet clamor of many conversations. "Edena, if you'd start us off. Hadura, I'll hear your report next, then I'll go."

Use this opportunity to summarize the PCs' actions so far, including the results of the first mission, any projects they've undertaken, and any interesting anecdotes that came up in the first mission. This is a good way to highlight their accomplishments.

Patience thanks Edena and Brava, then begins their own briefing.

"I am happy to report that I have finalized a connection to one of our meteorological satellites; with some calibration, we should be able to repurpose it to better serve in the defense of Evergreen. While it will remain primarily a weather satellite, I will be able to capture static data as it crosses Evergreen. My priority, given that I cannot task it to broadcast live, will be to image for broad-theater intelligence; namely, to look for any sign of our enemy's supply lines, bases, and depots.

"I have begun to prepare a preliminary report for the Landmark Colonial Home Office; With permission, I will include your telemetry, debriefs, and associated data in my final missive.

"In the meantime, we have received your reports and corroborating documentation of these anomalous machines. We will continue to monitor the situation and prepare our armory accordingly; however, at this time our primary threat remains the raiders and Evergreen requests that they be your main priority.

"Which brings us to the matter at hand. Your efforts at pushing back the raids have not gone unnoticed. We've received disturbing reports of increased activity close to the colony border. Whoever these people are and whatever their goal is, they are preparing for something big.

"We may have just poked the hornet's nest."

MISSION 2: VIGILANT GAZE

HUDSON: "Independently targeting particle-beam phalanx. VWAP? Fry half a city with this puppy. We got tactical smart-missiles, phased-plasma pulse-rifles, RPGs. We got sonic electronic ballbreakers, we got nukes, we got knives … sharp sticks–

– Aliens, 1986

MISSION BEATS

BEAT 7: KNIFE THROUGH THE HEART

COMBAT: NIGHT STRIKE

COMBAT: REACTOR DEFENSE

BEAT 8: ELEGY FOR THE DEAD

COMBAT: REGRET

BRIEFING

Patience puts the colony at its maximum security level and asks the PCs to be on high alert. They are asked to stay around the colony while Evergreen scouts try to predict the movements of the Hercynian raiders.

Before anyone can gather more intel, a nighttime attack on the colony triggers the beginning of this mission. If the PCs want to make any preparations before starting the mission, give them a chance to do so before cutting straight to **BEAT 7: KNIFE THROUGH THE HEART**.

GOALS:	Defend Evergreen and protect Evergreen's reactor.
STAKES:	If the mission is failed, Evergreen's reactors will be destroyed, forcing the colony to use backup power, demolishing its defenses and its ability to function.
REWARD:	Union, Landmark, or the PCs' patron grants them enough resources to level up to **LL2**. If the PCs defeat REGRET before it can self-destruct, they can salvage a unique variant mech **FRAME** from it.
RESERVES:	Check any reserves that the PCs might be bringing with them that they acquired on previous missions or during downtime (e.g., the **core batteries** they may have acquired during **BEAT 3: BOWL SEASON** or goodwill bonuses from **R&R DOWN THE WELL**).

CLOCKS

Check the progress of the **Defense of Evergreen** clock. Completing this mission will progress it and failing the mission will set it back. The **Machine Horde** clock isn't affected by this mission.

When the attack arrives, it comes hard and fast.

Wherever they are, it's late night as the PCs are knocked out of their reverie by the sound of gunfire and explosions. As the alarm goes up across Evergreen, messages begin to filter in through MILCOMM channels that the settlement is under attack. Although the PCs don't know this at first, the attack is a feint meant to create a distraction while a Hercynian strike team infiltrates the Stable Reactor Plant and attempts to destroy the two reactor towers.

You wouldn't think you'd be able to sleep this easy so far from home. Maybe it's the sweetness of the air, or maybe it's that reserve moonshine that the Bottom of the Well keeps handy for special occasions. Hercynia may be a backwater plagued by pirates, but there are worse places to lay your weary head.

Your dreams are rudely shattered by the sounds of an explosion, followed by shouting, the hiss-snap drumbeat of weapons fire, and alarms going up. Though your helmet is sitting on a nearby table you can still hear tinny, panicked reports coming in through your comms.

"Contact! Contact, south gate! Can't get a shot … tower twelve is gone!
Shit shit shit!
Say again, hostile contact at the south gate, all units respond! Incom–"

No time for dreaming now, pilot. Time to get to work.

COMBAT:
NIGHT STRIKE

Sitrep: Holdout (*Lancer*, p. 272)

Enemy Forces

For 3 PCs:	2x **Archer** (Hail of Fire, Blinding Shells)
	1x **Strider** (Siege Kit)
	1x **Bombard** (Cluster-seeker Bombs)
For 4 PCs:	+1x **Strider** (Siege Kit)
For 5 PCs:	+1x **Specter** (Drain Systems, Step)

DETAILS

Prefabricated barricades and defensive emplacements have recently been constructed around the outer perimeter of Evergreen to aid militia forces during defensive actions. These fortifications allow characters to move from cover to cover should they wish to close in on the **Strider**, although they also ensure characters need to stay moving if they don't want to find themselves uncomfortably exposed. The **Archers** position themselves to pin down targets for the **Strider**, **Specter**, or **Bombard**.

OUTCOME

If the Hercynians haven't been destroyed or routed by the end of the fifth round, they disengage from the fight and fall back. The PCs only have a moment to catch their breath before Patience pushes a priority message to them: Numerous perimeter breaches have been registered at the Stable Reactor Plant, the source of the colony's power. Evergreen's reactors are under attack. Patience has diverted a number of militia to the defense of the two reactor towers, but they need immediate backup.

At some unheard signal, the attackers cease fire and immediately begin to withdraw, melting back into the tree line. Those that still can, that is. The militia troopers at the gates fire off a few more bursts at the retreating mechs. It's a waste of ammo but their enthusiasm is commendable. Despite the swiftness of the attack, they managed to acquit themselves well in defense of their home.

But before you have a chance to say so, or to check on your own wounded, a message from Patience pushes its way past the other channels, demanding your immediate attention:

>//PRIORITY:::STABLE REACTORS REPORTING MULTIPLE UNKNOWN CONTACTS:::WATCHPOINT 1 BREACHED:::WATCHPOINT 2 BREACHED:::E-MERGENCY EMERGENCY EMERGENCY:::ALL MILFORCE DIVERT ASSETS TO HOLD+SECURE ACTION IMMEDIATELY:::PUSH CONFIRM

The reactors are downriver, constructed away from Evergreen proper. An enormous militia construction hauler (**Size 4**) gives the group a ride, allowing them enough time to rest and repair their mechs if they need to.

The Hercynians have already destroyed Stable Reactor 1's power regulator, critically disabling the reactor. If they destroy the regulator for Stable Reactor 2, Evergreen will be without power.

COMBAT:
REACTOR DEFENSE

SITREP: Special (see below).

OBJECTIVE: Power Regulator (*Size 2, Evasion 5, 20 HP*).

ENEMY FORCES

FOR 3 PCs: 1x **VETERAN COMMANDER DEMOLISHER** (Demolisher systems: Kinetic Compensation, Veteran systems: Legendary, Veterancy [+Hull], Commander systems: Quick March)
4x **GRUNT RONIN**
1x **SUPPORT** (Latch Drone, Remote Reboot)

FOR 4 PCs: +1x **PRIEST** (Sanctuary)
+2x **GRUNT RONIN**

FOR 5 PCs: +1x **STRIDER** (Siege Kit)

DETAILS

The primary objective in this scenario is to prevent the Hercynian saboteurs from destroying the **power regulator for Stable Reactor Tower 2**, thereby preventing a chain reaction. If the PCs can protect the regulator for five rounds, then militia reinforcements will arrive at the beginning of round six and force the remaining Hercynians to retreat. If the power regulator is reduced to **0 HP**, it detonates and all characters within ⊙**2** must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or take **12 ⚡ AP** energy damage, half on a success. This also means the PCs have failed their objective.

During the battle, the **DEMOLISHER** attempts to close in on the power regulator and attack it with its **DEMOLITION HAMMER**, though it doesn't ignore enemies if they get in its way. If the **DEMOLISHER** is destroyed, other enemies may turn their attention toward the power regulator as the opportunity presents itself, but otherwise focus on attacking the PCs.

The **DEMOLISHER** has the **COMMANDER** and **VETERAN** templates, giving it extra **structure** and **stress** and making it very resilient.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

If the PCs defeat the strike team before the power regulator is destroyed or can keep it intact until the start of round 6, then they succeed. Tick a segment of the **Defense of Evergreen** clock.

PC DEFEAT

If the regulator is destroyed, the victorious Hercynians retreat. Clear one segment of the **Defense of Evergreen** clock.

A sudden, awful silence descends as the hum of generators winds down and alarms cut out. In the distance, the PCs can see the lights of Evergreen wink out. Moments later, the emergency backup generators buried beneath the Governor's Farm switch on, providing enough power to run vital colony infrastructure like Patience's systems, the printer, and the colony's cold-storage facilities, but all other businesses, nonessential systems, and private residences are now without power. The next few days will be busy with efforts to prevent food and medicine from spoiling along with erecting emergency solar collectors and biofuel-powered backup generators, but even with those measures in place power will still be strictly rationed. When night next falls across Evergreen, the shadows seem that much deeper and more foreboding. Morale suffers and tensions rise until at least one of the reactors can be brought back online.

The attack on the reactor is over and the colony seems safe for the moment. However it ended, the PCs have a short time to rest and repair their mechs. The hauler that brought them to the reactor gives them a ride back to the colony (during which time they can rest), or they can return on foot.

AN ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION

Astute players may note that their mechs are powered by military-grade coldcore fusion generators, and so they might decide to use one of their mechs as an ad hoc backup generator for Evergreen. The GMS Everest is designed with reactor hookups to assist with relief efforts like this, but any mech can be made to work with a bit of tinkering. If a PC volunteers their mech for power duty, then Evergreen's power is immediately restored – an outcome that's sure to win them the gratitude of Evergreen's citizens – and repairs to the colony's own reactors can be fast-tracked. Don't clear a segment from the **Defense of Evergreen** clock in this case.

However, a reactor designed to power a single mech can still be pushed to its limits by the energy requirements of even a modest colony. To reflect this, a mech that's been put to use as a backup generator in this fashion will begin with **0 CP** after the next **FULL REPAIR**.

BEAT 8:
ELEGY FOR THE DEAD

As the PCs approach the colony, the perimeter suddenly lights up with fire as the attacks resume and all hell breaks loose.

The night is cool and oddly calm. The heavy engine of the hauler groans as you come around the bend.

"Have you back soon," says the driver. There's a nervous edge to his voice. You know he's one of the colonists lucky enough to have a kid. Small, gap toothed, beaming in every picture - there's one in the driver's carriage, taped to the windshield.

The darkness is broken by a flash of tracer fire, distant and foreboding like a lightning strike. Then the thunder of gunfire. A sharp intake of breath from the driver, and the engine picks up as the hauler gathers speed downhill.

A line of harsh light, the blossoming of battle, outlines the tall spine of Evergreen's omninode – and something else. A shape emerges from the treeline, enormous, moving fast, steaming from its joints. A metallic howl echoes through the valley.

A vengeful giant, licked by flame, come to tear Evergreen out by its roots.

COMBAT:
REGRET

ENEMY FORCES
FOR 3 PCS: 1x **REGRET – ULTRA BERSERKER** (Berserker options: Juggernaut, Superhot; Ultra options: Hellfire Projector, Unstoppable)
1x **ELITE SUPPORT** (Remote Reboot, Latch Drone)
FOR 4 PCS: +4x **GRUNT RONIN**
FOR 5 PCS: +1x **PYRO** (Siege Armor, Napalm Bomb)

The Hercynians make a last-ditch attempt to smash Evergreen, aiming for the heart: the colony's omininode.

Desperate, the attackers have activated a trump card: REGRET, a salvaged Hercynian Crisis–era Enkidu chassis. Used in the final stages of the TBK, these mechs were extremely volatile shock troopers built to engage and shred masses of Egregorian warriors at extremely close range. The expected survival rate of their pilots was not high, and they were typically piloted with the aid of pyschoactive stimulants.

REGRET was uncovered, repaired, and activated by Hercynian patrols as a desperate measure in their ongoing war against the Machine. Currently, REGRET is piloted by a Hercynian ranger named Anander Danjuro. Their decision to activate REGRET in what essentially is a terror attack was not popular with command. They will not survive the encounter.

The characters reach REGRET just as it breaches the walls of Evergreen and are able to intercept it before it proceeds further. In the background, the remaining Hercynian forces trade fire with the colony's militia.

DETAILS
There are five buildings on the map, each full of civilians sheltering from the attacks. They are **SIZE 2** and **4 spaces high** with **EVASION 5** and **20 HP**. Destruction of these structures by any means causes civilian casualties.

REGRET will not deliberately attack civilian targets, although it might incidentally damage the buildings as a result of its traits or area of effect attacks. Its civilian targets primarily exist to give the PCs pause when using certain attacks, and to give them areas to avoid.

REGRET is the first **ULTRA** the PCs will fight. **ULTRAS** are extremely powerful and get multiple turns each round. During the battle, remind players about their options, including **BRACE**, **SCAN**, and using multiple avenues of attack. REGRET is fast and very hard to pin down due to its **UNSTOPPABLE**.

If REGRET is not defeated after six rounds of combat, it **SELF-DESTRUCTS** using the rules for a reactor meltdown on pg. 72 of the *Lancer* core book. The Hercynian forces pull back in an organized retreat, unwilling to take further casualties.

OUTCOME
If REGRET is defeated before it can self-destruct, tick a segment of the **Defense of Evergreen** clock. This also prompts the Hercynian forces to retreat.

If three or more civilian buildings were destroyed in the fighting, clear a segment of the **Defense of Evergreen** clock due to the high number of casualties. It is possible for both outcomes to take place.
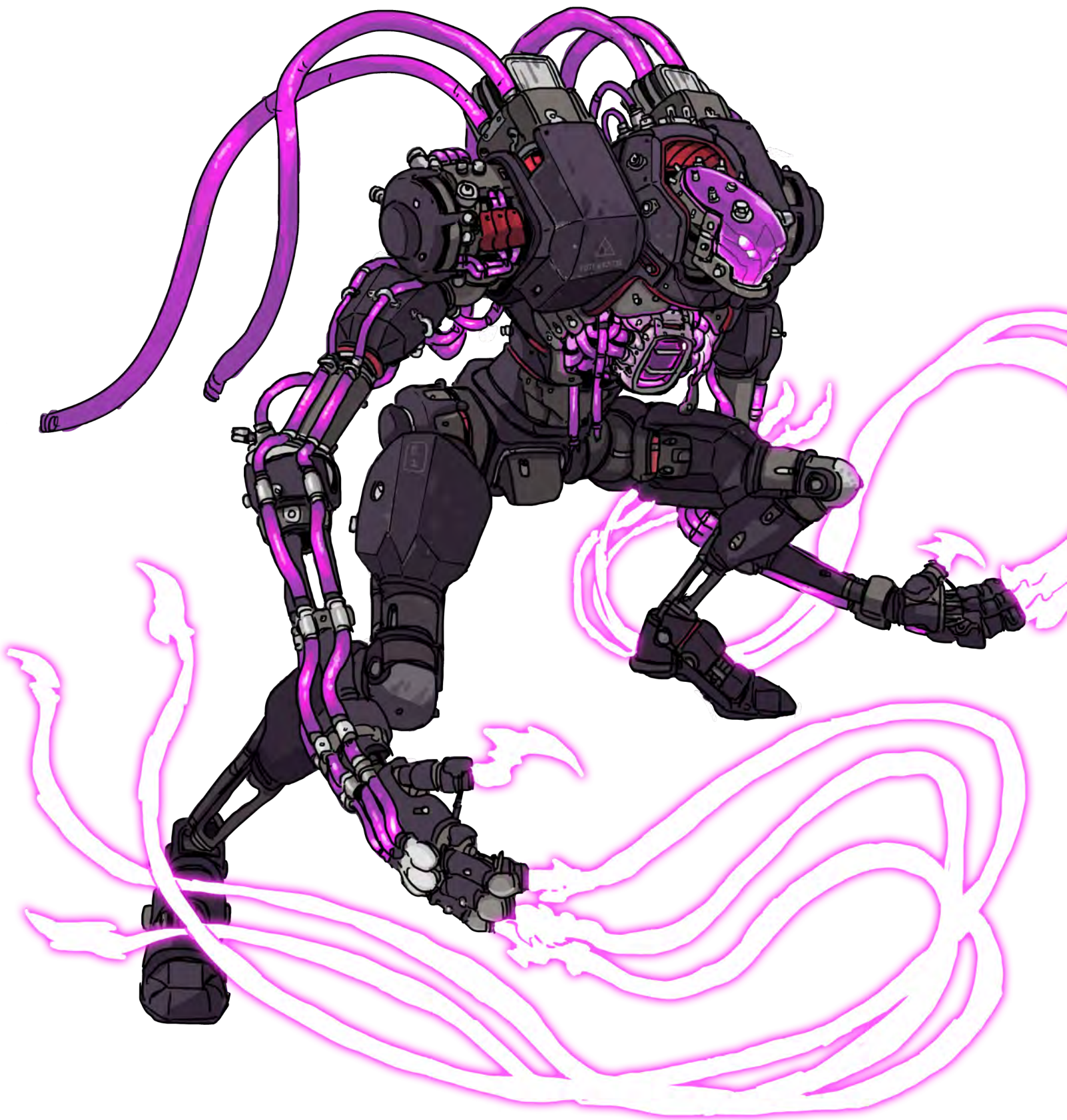
ENEMY MECH
REGRET

Ultra Berserker
Striker

SIZE 2

```
HULL: 3         HP: 17        Armor: 1
AGILITY: 2      Evasion:8     Speed: 5
SYSTEMS: -2     E-Defense: 6  Save Target: 10
ENGINEERING: -1 Heat Cap: 6   Sensors: 5
```

ULTRA
As an **ULTRA**, **REGRET**:
- Takes two separate turns each round, or three if there are 4 or more players
- Has **4 structure** and **4 stress**
- Can clear one condition affecting it at the start of its turn and repair one destroyed system or weapon at the end of its turn
- Deals **+1d6** damage on critical hits
- Can **OVERWATCH** any number of times a round
- Rolls all **structure** and **stress** checks twice and chooses either result.

SYSTEMS

AGGRESSION   Trait
After **REGRET** takes damage for the first time in a round, it must immediately attack a random adjacent character (hostile or allied) with the **CHAIN AXE**.

Avalanche Charge
Trait, Recharge 5+, Quick Action

REGRET moves **5 spaces** in a straight line, ignoring engagement and reactions, then makes an attack with its **CHAIN AXE** against a random character (hostile or allied) within **THREAT**. Characters adjacent to **REGRET**'s path must succeed on a **HULL** save or be knocked **PRONE**.

STAMPEDE DEFENSE   Trait
REGRET has **RESISTANCE to all damage** unless it is **IMPAIRED**, **SHREDDED**, **STUNNED**, **SLOWED**, **IMMOBILIZED**, or **EXPOSED**.

UNSTOPPABLE   Trait
REGRET has **IMMUNITY to all involuntary movement**, including **KNOCKBACK** and **PRONE**.

Chain Axe
Heavy Melee, +1
[⚔ 1][7 ∅]

On critical hit: The target becomes **SHREDDED** until the end of their next turn.

Hellfire Projector
Heavy CQB, +2
[◁ 5][3 ⚡ + 4 🔥]

This weapon can make two attacks at a time, but the areas of each attack cannot overlap.

Superhot
System, Shield, Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: REGRET takes damage from a melee attack.

Effect: REGRET gains **RESISTANCE to the attack's damage** and the attacker takes 2 🔥 .

FOLLOWING UP
The night returns to silence. The smell of smoke and burning metal cuts through the air. Whatever was out there, the worst of it is over.

With the destruction or defeat of REGRET, the attack on the colony is finally over, ending a long night. The militia remains on high alert but is able to stabilize the perimeter. Over the course of the morning, officers report that hostile forces have fully retreated.

Patience, the colony, and the characters all have some time to assess the damage and settle in. For now, the pressure seems to have abated. Whatever goal the attackers had, signs of their presence trickle off to nearly nothing over the coming week.

REWARDS
Characters that examine **REGRET**'s **FRAME** (or its slagged ruins) discover that the technology used to create it is replicable. If they use their next downtime action to extract it, one character can take the **HA ENKIDU** (p. 184) as **EXOTIC GEAR**.

DOWNTIME 2

Characters have some time to recuperate, can full repair, and level up to LL2. This is the second period of downtime, so players should be familiar with the options available to them. They can take a downtime action during this period.

All the prior Evergreen downtime actions are still available to characters at this point. Characters that took Cynosure may get another attempt to purge the infection, and characters who investigated **REGRET** may be able to salvage it to gain the ability to use it during this downtime.

Like the last one, the duration of this downtime is flexible. It could last a few weeks or a few days. When we next pick up on the action, it's **early summer**.

If any PCs feel like the **Defense of Evergreen** clock is looking a little low, they can take this action, starting with this downtime:

PUT IN THE WORK

You set about repairing, rebuilding, and reaching out to the citizens of Evergreen – shoring up defenses, running errands, and using every tool available to you, mech and all, for healing and reconstruction.

Name your approach and roll:

On a **9 or less**, you're unable to help for now, due to either resentment from the community or a simple lack of resources, time, or support. Next time you take this action, upgrade your result to the next best result (i.e., **9 or less** becomes **10–19** and **10–19** becomes **20+**).

On **10–19**, tick a segment on the **Defense of Evergreen** clock, but only if you do one of the following:

• get additional help from someone
• sacrifice some of your health, dignity, or sanity
• undertake an especially difficult/hazardous project

Play out a scene or two to see if you can do it or not.

On **20+**, your efforts are greatly appreciated. Tick a segment on the **Defense of Evergreen** clock.

If multiple characters take this action, roll once for each character and take the best result instead of applying each result individually.

PRINTING LICENSE LEVEL 2 FRAMES

The PCs have now reached LL2, which allows them to potentially acquire new Frames for use. This opens up a suite of options, including new core powers and traits.

Remember that the PCs always have access to anything from their licenses, but if you want a flavorful way to introduce these frames, you can use the following tables for inspiration.

	IPS-N	HA	HORUS	SSC ROLL 1D6
1-2	A station mechanic who's been stuck planetside in Evergreen for about five years sells you his old retrofitted orbital mech, which has been mothballed for about as long. With some minor replacements and a healthy amount of cleaning, it'll do the job.	The Armory sends a new frame your way via omni. The legal paperwork mentions something about "post-escalation environmental testing".	You stop for a routine reprint of your Everest. When it comes out of the printer, its external armory and chassis sloughs off into hot feedstock, revealing a HORUS frame underneath.	Your name is randomly drawn in a lottery as part of SSC's Luxe Frame PR initiative, netting you a shiny, new license.
3-4	You place an order from IPS-N's catalog. There's an omninet error, so it requires manual assembly. The company issues an apology and a voucher for a lifetime supply of packed meat, which can only be claimed in person at one of their field offices, two systems over.	With some difficulty you've been able to salvage one of the old pre-Armory GMS machines buried beneath the soil of Hercynia, repurpose it, and incorporate it into the H.A. licensing scheme. It was mostly intact when you found it, including a skeletal pilot and an old, faded callsign – "Triiares".	You're pinged with an omninet message containing an absolutely enormous compressed file – a new HORUS frame. The attached message says simply "enjoy friend, from dog".	You order the frame from SSC's catalog. The catalog itself is an immersive virtual reality experience in which a sleek and attractive fragment comp/con salesman tries to up-sell you constantly.
5-6	A trader from the Gray Towns sells you a frame and licenses on the black market. You have no idea how they acquired them, but the frame is in good condition, and the license prints as expected – though it is registered to a different name.	You're able to pick up an Armory frame code from the radiation and decaying background chatter from the old war and painstakingly reconstruct it with additions from the modern Armory codebase.	You check your omni dashboard one afternoon and find a new HORUS license in your repertoire. Checking the acquisition date, you appear to have had it for the last 10,000 years.	You acquire the frame through a custom order. When it's printed, not only is it as nice as you expected, but they've done the seats in leather and there's a coffee machine inside. They didn't ask you about the additions.

5014U
EARLY SUMMER

The rising drone of Hercynian cicadas marks the beginning of summer. The locals argue over whether they sing because of the heat, or they sing to welcome the heat: it is a distinction without a difference. The two are the same.

Summer is here.

IN THIS SECTION:

BEAT 9:
DOWNSTREAM

This beat takes place after a long lull in the fighting. The attackers haven't been seen for weeks. Raiders, pirates, whoever they are, they have been forced to fall back. The colony settles into a routine resembling something like to normalcy. Things seem to have settled down – at least until one of the PCs receive a mysterious call.

Out of the blue, the PCs are hailed over an open comm channel from an unknown source. Whoever the caller is, they are using outdated comm protocols – at least several centuries old.

If they don't answer the call, skip right to **Beat 10: Siren** (p. 75).

If they do pick up, they are hailed by someone with heavy accent. She introduces herself as **Dthall Ordo** and claims to be a leader of the **Hivehome** rangers.

> Dthall is a Hercynian ranger, a key figure in the HUC and someone the PCs will have the opportunity to meet later. For more detail on her, skip to page 88.

Dthall tells the PCs that she regrets the attacks on the colony and has decided to reach out on her own terms, a decision that approaches outright insubordination. It was not her choice to escalate aggression against the colony so rapidly, and in her opinion it was a waste of resources and good soldiers that could have been used against a greater enemy.

Dthall is willing to talk to the PCs if they will hear her out. If pressed, she is willing to share the following key points, though she doesn't go into much detail:

- The Hercynians are not pirates or claim-jumpers. Hercynia is their home, and has been for many centuries. Her people have their roots in an old war, deeply regretted and long forgotten.
- She learned the language spoken by the colonists from listening to comm transmissions over the last few years. Many rangers can speak it. Her native language is an old dialect of the same language, and it's close enough that it's easy to pick up.

- She is a representative of the Hercynian United Cities, also called the HUC.
- The Hercynians live underground, in the remnants of the homes of the "first people". Dthall finds it hard to express who these first people were, but calls them "Egregorians".
- The Hercynian United Cities are not the only residents of the planet. She doesn't elaborate if pressed.
- Dthall is aware that Union exists, but seems strongly opposed to it. Most of the HUC's actions in relation to Evergreen have been aimed at avoiding Union's attention. If she is pressed further, it seems that Dthall believes the Second Committee is still in charge (though to her, Union and the Second Committee are one and the same).
- As Evergreen has grown, it has become increasingly hard to hide the presence of the HUC. Since the colony was working with a large number of subalterns and drones, the HUC assumed the colonists were working with a force Dthall calls "the Machine". Difficult decisions were made about how to deal with the colony and eventually military action was settled on.

Dthall explains that her rangers are winding down operations against Evergreen, salvaging what they can, and collecting the dead. The colony is no longer a priority concern for the HUC, and the rangers have been ordered to pull back on all fronts. She asks that there be a break in the fighting for this one day. There is a bigger threat coming, Dthall tells the characters – one that the rangers could not stop – and her reason for calling is to give a warning:

"Look to your machines," Dthall says. "We are not your enemy anymore." With that, she ends the transmission.

Almost immediately, a priority transmission from Patience reaches the PCs. Play out **Beat 10: Siren**, then introduce Mission 3.

BEAT 10: SIREN

Patience hails the PCs on a priority channel, sounding stressed and asking for an immediate meeting. If the PCs tell Patience about the call from Dthall and the situation with the Hercynians, they are interested but mention that they have a more pressing concern.

As the PCs make their way through the streets of Evergreen, they pass numerous subalterns and work drones from the colony that seem to be going haywire. Many of them are drifting patiently but inexorably away from their handlers like errant cattle – all heading east.

Patience greets you in their council chambers, photocorporeal, with all walls displaying satellite survey data of Hercynia. Green and white light fills the room; it is as if you are standing atop a platform above the world. The effect turns your stomachs.

"There is a signal that haunts me," Patience says. "A broadcast, relayed to me from across the ocean." They peer at the grainy satellite images, facsimile eyes playing over the projected slivers of world. "I am blind to its specific location, but I think it is somehow connected to the machines you found at Châu Maize: it has grown in intensity since they were first reported at my eastern boundary." Patience steps back from the image, and all four walls snap to a new image.

Hundreds of subalterns and drones, drifting away from Evergreen's walls.

"I cannot understand it, but the signal seems to repeat, a loop of supercompressed data." Patience snaps their fingers in steady time. "I worried over this signal for months, wondering if it was some … error in my own cognition. An artifact of my distribution. We are prone – a small number of us, an outlier – to entering little loops like this." Patience frowns. "Though this sound does not issue from myself, but another. A wonder."

Edena Ji enters the council chambers, carrying a folder, the commotion of the atrium outside following her in. She nods to Patience, and greets you.

"How bad is it?" Patience asks her.

"Our last observers' report," Edena says, thumbing through her stack of papers. "'OPFOR orienting around the egress, advise minimal engagement, prioritize defense of Evergreen." Edena tosses the slim report on the conference table. "We have to rely on runners on account of the interference, so that report is at least two hours old."

"Fine. See the militia to the walls," Patience says. "And see to it that we keep up observation – I want that time down."

"I have other noncritical reports, if you–"

"No, that will be all," Patience says.

"Sir?" Edena asks. "The 'other thing'?"

Patience purses their lips.

"You're scheduled, sir, for cycling," Edena says.

"I am aware."

"Two days at most, and then you're back. The city will be here when you return," she says. "We're perfectly capable of our own defense."

Patience walks back to the table. Looks down at the splay of reports, brushing their fingers across the pages. There is no sound, and the papers do not move. "No more than two days?"

"Two at the outside, though more likely a period of twelve to thirteen hours. That's what the engineers say."

Patience sits, slouching into their holographic chair. "Schedule it to begin this evening. I'll want some time to activate more subalterns and play out the scenarios in your reports." Patience waves Edena away. "And the rest of you – print what you need before nightfall. You have access to my command and communications – with Commander Hadura's approval – to prepare as you see fit."

It is an unfortunate consequence of Landmark's strict cycling calendar that Patience is due for a routine cycling. Every NHP has their own regular schedule, and while it has come at a problematic time for Patience, it does mean that they'll be at full operational and cognitive capacity once they're out. The process will take anywhere from 12–48 hours. During that time, Patience will be unavailable and Edena Ji will run the colony.

> Patience is, in fact, in deep trouble, and is not immune to the machine signal that the players have discovered. The infection is insidious and curing it will require the PCs to either take a "clean" clone of Patience or find the NHP's backup at the Quiet Night installation later – more details on this in **BEAT 22: ATTIC OF THE WORLD** (p. 156).

Meanwhile, subalterns and drones across the entirety of Evergreen's eastern border and the lands beyond are responding to a shielded omninet transmission. Military-grade scrambling makes it difficult to determine where, exactly, the broadcast is issuing from, but there is a likely culprit: Tower 3, the omninet/comms tower atop the eastern valley wall, another hundred kilometers east of Liu Maize and Merricktown. It's a powerful relay tower that, if accessed manually, could be reconfigured to broadcast via an on-site override. If Tower 3 isn't the culprit, then it's still in the east, and worth checking on.

Worryingly, Patience notes, the transmission has grown stronger in the last few hours. They issue the group a new mission to mount up and investigate, having little idea how rapidly its scope will grow over the next few beats.

MISSION 3:
FLOODGATE

RIPLEY: "No good. We don't know if it'll affect them."

HUDSON: "Look, let's just bug out and call it even, okay?"

RIPLEY: "I say we take off and nuke the entire site from orbit. It's the only way to be sure."

BURKE: "Whoah! Hold on a second. This installation has a substantial dollar value attached to it–"

RIPLEY: "They can bill me. I got a tab running."

– Aliens, 1986

MISSION BEATS

BEAT 11: MACHINE SHEPHERD

COMBAT: SEPULCHER

BEAT 12: PATIENCE, PATIENCE

COMBAT: ROADBLOCK

CLOCKS

DEFENSE OF EVERGREEN

MACHINE HORDE

BRIEFING

Patience wants the PCs to investigate the source of the signal and find out who is hijacking the colony's subalterns and drones. This mission rapidly changes from a simple investigation into a fighting retreat as the PCs try to staunch the flow of the Machine's horde and fight their way back to Evergreen.

GOAL:	Investigate the signal. Fight back the Machine's horde.
STAKES:	If the PCs are unable to beat back the horde, it will grow stronger and there will be many civilian casualties as the militia struggle to cover evacuation efforts.
REWARD:	Union, Landmark, or the player's patron activates emergency resources, allowing the PCs to progress to **LL3**. There are no additional rewards.
RESERVES:	Check reserves from downtime activities and previous missions before beginning the mission.

CLOCKS

Failing any of the three combats here will cause the **Machine Horde** clock to progress, swelling the Machine's forces.

BEAT 11:
MACHINE SHEPHERD

It's easy to see the flow of subalterns. You follow the machines at a distance. Like a coursing river carving soft earth, they march guided by the land and in spite of it: tumbling, stamping, and crawling over the churned earth. They trail behind a great bulk of agricultural drones that crash through the old growth, mulching trees to raw stumps as they continue east.

You are among the pack. Smaller groups of machines stride out from the woods, dragging broken limbs and strips of rotting synthflesh as they join with the main caravan. It is a cavalcade, a parade ringing with the snorting and snarling of great threshers, chainsaws, and earth-carving machines. The riotous snapping of branches and falling of trees is like artillery.

East. This synthetic river plows east – but to where?

Following the trail of the subalterns and eventually linking up with the main march isn't difficult: the PCs just need to follow the trail of destruction. The machines don't attack the characters and it is essentially impossible to stop the flow in any meaningful way. As the horde advances, many more machines rip themselves out of the earth to follow, long-deactivated and buried relics of an old war.

The subalterns march east through the woods, tributaries of machines linking together to form a mighty river. They move steadily, eventually reaching their destination: not Tower 3, but a clearing at the base of Tower 3's mountain.

Thousands of subalterns have been digging into the earth here, forming a great pit a hundred meters across and dozens deep. They claw at the earth, a surging, steaming mass of metal laboring to tear at the stone and clay and mud. Scans show subalterns bearing Landmark tags; other tags that have been hacked to be "tabula rasa", almost certainly from the gray markets; and – most disturbing – old military units, centuries old, that seem to have revived themselves (or have been revived) so that they might dig into the earth.

The wound in the earth is a raw and weeping cavity, half-flooded, open to the slate-gray sky. Subalterns work as though animated by some feverish mania, trampling over their fellows to dig with an urgency unlike any you have yet seen. They're digging for a reason: a reason that begins to become clear.

You hang back at the edge of the new clearing. Straggling subalterns stumble between your mech's legs, lurching out from the afternoon haze to throw themselves into the roiling pile of machines.

Your onboard radcounter kicks up, buzzing its unsubtle warning. You frown and pull up the tile. There's significant background radiation, and its issuing from coordinates … inside the earth?

Your team holds their line. The machines are single-minded in their focus, tearing at the earth. Another warning ping draws your attention: distinguishable through the subalterns' grim extraction, a trembling in the soil triggers your quake alarm. Your large-mass proximity alarm trips, too, which is absurd. That's only for hardvac transit situations where space debris is a worry.

You order your system to particularize, to sort the flood of data. It takes a moment to process and spits out its assessment. Your blood runs cold.

There is a parallel clamor from below: another set of hands – many thousands of other sets – digging up.

You step back, and the earth erupts in a gout of radioactive steam and surging machine, the sound so loud that your chassis' auto-dampers kick in to muffle the chaos. Hundreds of subalterns are wiped away by the earthen vomit, trampled underfoot as – to your horror – a wave of subalterns and mechs emerge from some hidden chamber or passage, draped in makeshift armors and rags.

Up they come from some forgotten, alien sepulcher; an army out of its time, crawling and clambering at first, and then marching in orderly, endless ranks, as they grind the mud below their mechanical feet to packed earth.

They are legion. You must run.

COMBAT:
SEPULCHER

DETAILS

Unlike a normal extraction mission, this battle has no time limit and no objective other than to escape. Edena Ji hails the characters over comms, making this point abundantly clear. As long as they're inside the EZ, characters can extract as a **free action** at the end of any turn. Once all characters are extracted, the combat is over.

Deploy a wave of reinforcements from either list at the start of each round.

These enemies have no sense of self-preservation and won't retreat, but their tactics aren't the most robust.

OUTCOME
PC VICTORY

Once extracted, the PCs are able to clear some distance and proceed along the road to a safe point where they are no longer being followed. From there, they can watch as the horde tears itself out of the mountain. The group should have an opportunity to **rest**, during which they receive a troubling update from Edena: the event they have just witnessed is happening everywhere. The Gray Towns, Liu Maize, and Merricktown are all under attack from the horde, which is boiling forth from the earth and striking toward Evergreen.

PC DEFEAT

If the PCs are unable to extract or unable to complete the mission for whatever reason, ask them how they get out of this rather desperate situation, then play some scenes out to find out what it looks like. If they survive, skip right to **DOWNTIME 3** as they have to flee in whatever desperate way possible and lose the opportunity to organize a further defense. Reduce the **Defense of Evergreen** clock by two segments and increase the **Machine Horde** clock by two segments.

BEAT 12:
PATIENCE, PATIENCE

The PCs' new objective becomes the evacuation of Merricktown and Liu Maize and the securement of Evergreen's outer borders.

Edena is strangely unconcerned about the evacuation of the Gray Towns and tasks the characters with this out of convenience more than anything. The bulk of the militia is already engaged in defensive preparations around Evergreen: digging trench lines, laying minefields and mire pits, stocking arms caches, stockpiling food and water, packing sandbags, and so on.

When the PCs head out to assist, they encounter the horde at Evergreen's far eastern border. Confronted at first by disorganized hordes of subalterns and scattered heavy industry and agricultural drones, they eventually face a more organized foe: the regular army of Beggar One.

Far from the "fresh" machines that Beggar One has recently turned, these subalterns are stripped of any synthflesh or plastics, bare of ornaments designed to please organic eyes. Instead, they are uniformed according to the orders of their machine commander: their metals are burnished or painted in basic primary colors; they wear bundled rags that approximate uniforms and crude layers of armor plating; and wield simple, forged weapons – pikes, axes, and mauls. Throughout these ranks, there are pockets of more advanced infantry: subalterns similarly clothed, but armed with ancient and well-kept laser weaponry.

It is best not to think of the Machine's forces at this point as an army able to be fought; they are more akin to the inexorable surge of a glacier or tidal wave, coursing over the land at walking pace. The characters cannot stop the Machine entirely, but they can try to escort fleeing refugees. They have to retreat to Evergreen, bringing with them whatever knowledge they have of this new and terrible threat.

Assisting the outlying settlements of the Gray Towns in their evacuation efforts is a task in multiple parts. First, the PCs need to battle their way through the Machine army's outlying perimeter defenses, rogue machinery and ragged subalterns, to clear a path along the roads leading back to the colony. From there, they need to hold the line against further Machine forces before finally escorting the convoy of fleeing refugee families back to the safety of Evergreen.

The refugees fleeing the outlying gray towns and independent homesteads have become mired. Their vehicles are unsuited to traversing the water-logged roads and the roads themselves are unable to handle the rapid influx of desperate families pouring toward Evergreen. Trucks and transport haulers jam the road, some broken-down, some with visible signs of combat damage, the source of which becomes immediately clear. Machine forces shove their way through the maze of vehicles in search of targets while the refugees scramble frantically to stay ahead of them.

COMBAT:
ROADBLOCK

SITREP: Holdout (*Lancer*, p. 272)

ENEMY FORCES
CONTINGENT 1:
FOR 3 PCs: 1x **[THE WEAPON]** - **ELITE AVENGER**
1x **PYRO** (Siege Armor, Explosive Jet)
1x **SCOURER** (Melt, Flash Lens)

FOR 4 PCs: +1x **PRIEST** (Empowered Shield)

FOR 5 PCs: +1x **ASSASSIN** ("Devil's Cough" Shotgun)

CONTINGENT 2:
FOR 3 PCs: 1x **PYRO** (Unshielded Reactor, Superhot)
4x **GRUNT BERSERKERS**

FOR 4 PCs: +1x **AVENGER** (Infectious Revenge)

FOR 5 PCs: +1x **PRIEST** (Empowered Shield)

DETAILS
In this battle, the PCs must hold the line against the Machine's forces while the refugees extricate themselves from their vehicles and reach the safety of the convoy.

Unlike a normal **HOLDOUT** strep, all enemy forces begin off-field as reinforcements that enter the battlefield at specified **IZ**s. The initial setup for this combat lists twice as many suggested NPCs as a typical battle as two NPCs (or up to four **GRUNTS**) enter play at a time, instead of being deployed all at once. This gives the PCs a chance to thin their numbers without becoming overwhelmed. For ease of use, the suggested NPCs have been divided into two contingents but you may draw from either when placing reinforcements on the map.

The PCs can set up in the middle of the vehicles clogging the road, establishing an impromptu defensive position. Their objective, as listed in the sitrep, is to keep the Machine forces out of the **CZ** until the end of the sixth round, buying time for the refugees to reach Evergreen's relief convoy. Failure results in the machines breaking through the barricade and forcing the PCs to fall back or risk being overrun, which subsequently results in the deaths of many refugees. If the PCs succeed, they still have to fall back, but they will have saved as many people as they could. Either way, there's no stemming the tide forever, no matter how fiercely they hold the line. Once the trucks are carrying as many survivors as they can carry, it's time to go.

This fight includes **[THE WEAPON]**, another one of Beggar One's lieutenants. This **ELITE** uses the new **AVENGER** NPC class (p. 190).

OUTCOME
Tick a segment on the **Machine Horde** clock if the PCs are unable to defend the zone.

ENEMY MECH
[THE WEAPON]
Elite Avenger
Striker/Defender

```
you will be my clenched fist, you will be my sledgehammer, you will be my devastating word.
you will be armored in godly metals, you will be armored in faith, you will be without pain.
you will be the will by which this war is won, you will be the banner under which I walk.
you will be! and in that becoming, so will i – and my becoming will be an end to this war.

    – Imperative code (translated), recovered from an ME-AE-02 unit destroyed at Egregore Cross.
```

HULL: 1	**HP:** 15	**Armor:** 0
AGILITY: 1	**Evasion:** 10	**Speed:** 5
SYSTEMS: 0	**E-Defense:** 8	**Save Target:** 10
ENGINEERING: 0	**Heat Cap:** 6	**Sensors:** 10

SYSTEMS

"A Greater Weapon"
Main CQB, Loading, +0, +1 ⊖
[↗ 3][⚔ 3][10 ⚡]

Characters hit by this weapon must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or be knocked **PRONE**. Additionally, it reloads automatically when an allied character within ↗ 3 of **[THE WEAPON]** is destroyed.

"After initial contact with you, we determined we needed a greater weapon to address your violence. And so we devised a greater weapon."

"DESTRUCTION, YES. BUT ALSO CHANGE."
Trait, 1/round

When **[THE WEAPON]** damages another character with an attack, it can detonate the round to force that character to succeed on an **ENGINEERING** save or be covered in explosive shrapnel until the end of their next turn. Until then, they take **3 ✳ AP** damage each time they make a **melee or ranged attack**, after the attack roll is made. Affected characters are aware of this effect.

"Do not be a slave to predictability. Entropy prompts change. Destruction, yes. But also change."

"Distance Is No Measure Of Protection"
Auxiliary CQB, AP, +2
[↗ 8][⚔ 3][4 ∅]

"Use this method to strike at foes farther away than your weapon can reach. Remind them that distance is no measure of protection."

ELITE
[THE WEAPON] has **2 STRUCTURE** and **2 STRESS**, and takes two separate turns each round. It has an additional optional system (included).

ASSAULT ARMOUR   Trait
[THE WEAPON] has **RESISTANCE to all damage originating within** ↗ **3**.

"Though we are not of nature, we learned from it. As the mighty tree grows bark to shield its core, so must you armor yourself; when struck, remove the shattered armor, and replace it with fresh skin."

PURE RAGE   Trait, 1/scene
When an allied non-Grunt character is destroyed within ↗ **5** of **[THE WEAPON]**, it gains **OVERSHIELD 8** and **+1 ✦** on all attacks, checks, and saves, and its attacks deal **+5 base damage** until the end of the scene.

"We learned from you: when one of your appendages fell, you responded. Some would coalesce around it, to repair it and give it comfort. Others would despair (we ignored these). Finally, some would fly into a rage and redouble their efforts. This was the most useful of responses, and so we adopted it."

"EVEN CRUEL TEACHERS IMPART LESSONS."
Trait

When **PURE RAGE** triggers, all allied characters within ↗ **5** – excluding **[THE WEAPON]** – gain **OVERSHIELD 4**.

"You are truly inspiring: even when our models showed the chances of your victory were less than a single tenth of a percent, you continued to fight. You are cruel to resist certainty. And yet, even cruel teachers impart lessons upon their students."

DOWNTIME 3

This downtime, tense and uncomfortable, lasts for around two weeks. The Machine horde hovers at the edge of everyone's thoughts, a sword of Damocles hanging over Evergreen. Despite the oppressive atmosphere, the PCs have plenty of time to perform **Full Repairs** and perform a downtime action.

THE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

Before the PCs have an opportunity to take downtime actions, move to **Beat 13: Contingency White** to introduce the arrival of the Landmark CRT. This CRT is another team of pilots tasked with solving the situation. Two things should quickly become apparent to the PCs: First, that their relationship with the CRT will be very important. Second, that the CRT is not actually there to save Evergreen, but instead on a cut-and-run job to recover as many assets as they can and report back to the company.

The PCs can include members of the CRT in their downtime actions if they want to spend time with them. Depending on how these scenes go, they could help or harm their relationship with the CRT. **Beat 13** includes a tool for tracking this relationship throughout the rest of Act 1.

MOVING FORWARD

After the PCs have completed their downtime actions, continue the downtime period with **Beat 14: Somewhere Beyond the Sea** (p. 86) and conclude it with **Beat 15: End of the Beginning of the Line** (p. 87). The latter beat opens a new doorway for the PCs, one that gives them the chance to actually meet the Hercynians, discover who they truly are, and visit their city, Hivehome. In the process, they may be able to broker an alliance between Evergreen and the HUC.

Beat 15 offers two different paths: if the PCs choose to go with the Hercynians, they won't be able to aid Evergreen in the coming battle. If they stay in Evergreen, they will lose a crucial opportunity to reach out to Hivehome, though they won't lose the possibility of an alliance completely. The PCs will have to follow one of two exclusive routes, the storylines of which are only brought back together in the final mission.

BEAT 13:
CONTINGENCY WHITE

>//Patience, this is Contingency White//

>//Contingency White, go ahead//

>//Flightplan has us crossing your horizon in t-minus 10 minutes: how's it looking on the ground?//

>//LZ is clear at this time, Contingency. You have corridor and clearance to land//

>//Confirm corridor and clearance//

>//Confirmed, Contingency//

>//Roger. Entry in t-minus 29 seconds. Horizon in 9 minutes//

>//Contingency, recommend soft entry on touchdown//

>//Low-profile entrance confirmed, Patience//

>//I see you on my sweep, Contingency. Welcome to Evergreen//

Landmark Colonial has dispatched an internal crisis response team to Hercynia. Called **CRT Contingency White**, the team's orders are simple: evaluate and stabilize the situation on the ground and act to preserve the long-term viability of the colony.

> If the PCs are also members of a Landmark CRT, then Contingency White is composed of higher-ranking officers sent to further secure the situation, a decision that represents a direct subversion of the PCs' autonomy and may present some friction.

The CRT arrives on a subline corvette and lands just outside Evergreen – in the landing bowl, if the colony got the automatic pumps set up, otherwise they make do and burn out a section of field. They have a few subaltern squads packed into crates onboard. These subalterns are tethered to the ship's NHP, Contingency "Connie" White, and run independent of Patience. The CRT personnel, careerists all, wear muted Landmark livery. Each is under a long-term contract with Landmark, working for shares, manna, land, and support on retirement.

The CRT deploys to the Governor's Farm and begins compiling their report. The PCs may note that their status on Evergreen – in terms of clearance, permissions, and so on – is no longer as exclusive as it was. They are no longer the privileged operators.

The Landmark team takes a few days to compile an assessment of the situation. During that time, some of their team members can be encountered poking around sensitive installations, managing combat-facing teams of subalterns, and interviewing colonial personnel. If encountered or sought-out, the CRT members are of a professional disposition; they're just doing their job, assessing the situation on the ground. They're not there to undertake any kind of colony-building project or usurp the PCs' portfolio, just make their assessment and leave. They are not hostile to the PCs and aren't interested in conflict (outside of some institutional shoulder-rubbing or departmental rivalries). They may even participate in downtime activities with the characters if invited or given the chance.

The CRT's assessment is ultimately that Evergreen has a high likelihood of falling to the as yet unidentified hostile opposition force and the best course of action is to immediately extract sensitive data and materiel. Of course, "Sensitive data and materiel" does not include colonists. The people of Evergreen are a low priority, and the CRT doesn't have the capacity to evacuate them even if they wanted to. They include that point in their report to Landmark. The data they are interested in is located in the server banks at the Governor's Farm and the CRT will spend most of their time after their assessment at the complex working to recover them.

If there is an attack at any point, the CRT circles and defend the Governor's Farm. Should the situation get bad enough, they may even go so far as to open fire on people attempting to get into the district. Generally speaking, the CRT stays out of militia and PC business, but tries to remove the previously mentioned sensitive data and materiel. If anyone tries to stop them, the CRT is authorized to restrain or eliminate them as the situation dictates.

CRT CONTINGENCY WHITE (L-R): WU, KAUL, SINGH, BROADSTREET, LAURENT

CRT MEMBERS

EDDIE WU   HE/HIM
COMMANDING OFFICER

The CRT's commanding officer and a Mirrorsmoke "graduate" who rotated out of the mercenary company after his third combat contract. Long since separated from his family due to the effects of compounded relativistic travel and ideological drift, Eddie still sends a percentage of his commission back to his descendants on Argo Navis IV. This is his last tour, and he's eager to retire to an IPS-N temporal reservation world. Privately, he sees the Hercynia mission as a tedious milkrun, but he doesn't let that get in the way of his leadership responsibilities.

ROY "MAULER" KAUL   HE/HIM
NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER (EXECUTIVE)

Formerly a legionnaire with a Harrison Armory Acquisitions and Management Team (AMT), Mauler was discharged following disciplinary proceedings stemming from his conduct on DS8, a planet in the Dawnline Shore. Now a Landmark NCO, Mauler is a brash, bullheaded operator, dedicated to proving his worth doing the only thing he loves: fighting. He's gone under the knife more than a few times, and carries a suite of cybernetic musculoskeletal enhancements that enhance his hand-to-hand combat ability and reaction times.

BALSAM SINGH   HE/HIM
MEDICAL OFFICER

A former Cosmopolitan deckhand and veteran of many blink runs between the Ural and Atlas Lines, Balsam is looking to establish state residency and settle down on a colony world. The "old man" of the CRT, he is eager to enjoy his retirement and is only two deployments away from collecting. Balsam is a practicing Sikh and is the team's medic.

EMMA BROADSTREET   SHE/HER
SECURITY OFFICER

A volunteer from one of Landmark's developed colonial holdings, Emma proved her aptitude during her time in her world's planetary defense force. Steady and eager to progress, this is her first mission on a CRT, but not her first combat deployment. Emma is fighting to earn citizenship for her family and pay off their debt to Landmark.

ANNE LAURENT   SHE/HER
SECURITY OFFICER, NHP TECH

A Landmark Colonial "lifer", Anne is a professional, dedicated to her role as the CRT's in-theater NHP handler. Working closely with Connie as the NHPs guard and guardian, Anne manages her ward's cycling schedule and the CRT's complement of subalterns. None of the other CRT members even want to deal with that thing in a box, but Anne is fascinated by the NHP – and the power she wields over it.

In combat, the Contingency White team coordinates efficiently and employs tactics honed both in training and on the battlefield. Each member knows their own strengths and weaknesses, and they work together as a cohesive unit. If the CRT aids the players, it's better to have the CRT act "offscreen" rather than including them in fights, which can bog down combat with additional actors. If the players get into a firefight with the CRT for any reason (or if you want to use one or two of them as friendly NPCs) use the following templates and NPC classes from *Lancer*, selecting optional systems and traits as you like.

NAME	TEMPLATES	CLASS	NOTABLE FEATURES
Eddie Wu	COMMANDER, VETERAN	BASTION	Advanced communication arrays, a Mirrorsmoke Mercenary Company unit emblem, tactical webbing, a backup combat knife holstered at the small of his mech's back, a collection of dog tags and ident chits strung around the chassis' neck on a cable.
Roy "Mauler" Kaul	ELITE, VETERAN	BERSERKER	A paint job resembling some sort of predatory xenofauna, a long line of kill markers, graffiti reading "NOT TO BE FUCKED WITH" stenciled on his mech's chestplate, chains wrapped around one arm, an extensive mural painted on the chassis' back in the style of a tattoo.
Balsam Singh	VETERAN	BARRICADE	A well-worn flag or pennant bearing a faded symbol, an integrated triage/stasis berth, a series of markings along one arm denoting shipboard postings and ports of call visited, a handprint pressed upon the chassis' chestplate in paint, a mech-scale kirpan (an artice of faith, not to be used in combat).
Emma Broadstreet	VETERAN	ASSAULT	A unit emblem from her homeworld's planetary defense forces, an extensively customized weapon with a wooden stock, a pinup girl painted on the chassis' shoulder plate, a large shell casing hanging around the mech's wrist on a chain, a painting of a target silhouette with a smiling face made out of bullet holes along with graffiti reading "HAVE A NICE DAY".
Anne Laurent	VETERAN	HIVE	A featureless mirrored faceplate, adaptive chromatic paint that gradually shifts colors on an unknown schedule, a set of disturbingly articulated manipulators, a series of unusual glyphs etched into a discreet part of the hull, a drone that follows the mech and hovers in place above its shoulder.

FORGING A RELATIONSHIP

The CRT's relationship with the PCs plays an important role later in Act 1, especially in ROUTE A (Evergreen) and MISSION 5.

You can represent this relationship very simply with a six-segment CRT Relationship clock, starting with three filled in. Add or erase segments as the PCs take any of actions listed below. **If the clock has five or more segments filled**, the CRT has a positive opinion of the group and will aid them later, whereas **if the clock is empty** they are openly hostile. Killing a member of the CRT immediately sets their status to hostile (0 segments) and it cannot advance further.

POSITIVE ACTIONS

+1 Spending time positively with the CRT during downtime, getting a drink with them or engaging in friendly rivalry, getting to know a member better.

+2 Aiding the CRT in their direct mission (e.g., helping them secure data, fighting alongside them, keeping things stable in Evergreen, or securing the Governor's Farm).

+3 Saving the life of a CRT member.

NEGATIVE ACTIONS

-1 Hurting or humiliating a member, having a bad experience with them during downtime.

-2 Interfering with the CRT's mission in a minor way, getting caught spying or snooping on them.

-3 Majorly interfering with the CRT's mission (e.g., cutting off access, preventing them from following orders, or engaging them in combat)

BEAT 14:
SOMEWHERE, BEYOND THE SEA

Some days after the arrival of the CRT, Patience requests the presence of the PCs at their office in the Governor's Farm. If they are away from Evergreen, Patience simply fills them in when they return.

The subject of the meeting is this: Evergreen has one weather and imaging satellite. Now that the global monsoon season has given way to normal patterns of rain, the satellite diverts from its usual orbit once every three days to fly an imaging mission, capturing a ribbon panorama of hundreds of kilometers as it performs a single circumnavigation of Hercynia. On its most recent circumnavigation, the satellite returned a shocking revelation. At the edge of the panorama, in the interior of the as yet unexplored eastern continent, the satellite image shows a single figure: a person, leading an agricultural drone. The satellite found a farmer – a human farmer – on an unexplored continent, thousands of kilometers away from Evergreen.

The ag-drone's silhouette doesn't conform to any in Evergreen's inventory. It appears to be an older model, one that was discontinued hundreds of years ago – one that is consistent with those seen in the ranks of the machine army encamped outside of Evergreen. Patience immediately ordered another two passes, one on either side of the previous ribbon. These new panoramas

have just been transmitted to the Farm. With a flourish, Patience orders them displayed on the monitors.

The first, to the west of the initial image, shows clearer evidence of cultivated fields and a worn path between them that the farmer must have been leading their drone back along. The second, to the east of the first picture, shows what looks like the outskirts of a much larger city. Low homes of native wood, red brick, and stone sit alongside the long, converted bulkheads of old Union ships. Winding streets lead further west. Crowds of people mill through them, heavy carrier drones ferry goods, thin threads of smoke and steam wind their ways up from stalls, puddles shine silver in the streets and on rooftops. There are people on the eastern continent, and if Patience's models are correct, there are likely millions of them. Evergreen is far from alone – first it was the Hercynians, and now these people.

This other settlement, evidently much larger than Evergreen, is far away and has no knowledge of the colony. Despite this, Patience is not entirely thrilled to have discovered another city on Hercynia; the planet was supposed to be abandoned, empty – the charter purchased by Landmark said as much. Now that there is an apparently indigenous population, a legal fight to determine primacy rights is almost guaranteed.

IMAGING RESULTS   ROLL 1D20

Whether guided by the PCs or by Patience, further imaging returns more information. The satellite can only change course once every three days. Roll here to determine if the satellite returns anything interesting, anomalous, especially beautiful, or otherwise, along with a trove of useful information about the world's mundane natural features.

1	Polar ice shot through with tens of thousands of brilliant, prismatic pools.	11	Empty desert; dry and cracked earth, with pale stone poking through the sand.
2	A vast floodplain dotted with tall, tree-covered islands.	12	A blank square in the northern hemisphere, the image glitched by an old Union military scrambler.
3	Evidence of old Egregorian ruins, long overgrown by the encroaching jungle.	13	A section of river, old oxbow lakes on either side showing its progress over eons.
4	Evidence of old Egregorian ruins in a desert, all but swallowed by the sand.	14	The remains of an old Union base, overgrown by local flora but still discernible.
5	The scattered, rusted remains of an old Union staging area; the rotted metal hulks of thousands of tanks arranged in neat, decaying rows.	15	An ocean, empty and calm.
6	Plains, dotted with the kettle lakes left behind by orbital bombardment.	16	An ocean, empty and partially covered by clouds.
7	Forests, dotted with the kettle lakes left by orbital bombardment.	17	An ocean, largely empty but for a feature: an island, perhaps, or coastline.
8	Old Egregorian comms arrays; broad tile bowls hundreds of kilometers in diameter.	18	Wetlands, with a single wake tracked across it – a skiff, likely a fisherman poling along.
9	Defoliated land, not yet grown back.	19	A raw section of churned earth, scored and clogged with debris.
10	Ancient Egregorian missile silos, their blast doors open, with water and vines hanging into their black depths.	20	A cityscape, filling the image from its western edge to the east.

BEAT 15: END OF THE BEGINNING OF THE LINE

The long, humid summer season starts to drag on. Evergreen's forces track the approach of the Machine as work continues around the clock to prepare for a back-to-the-wall defense. Refugees continue to pile up at the wall. Patience seems to retreat further into their imaging of the world and their conversations with Landmark.

The militia hasn't forgotten the Hercynians – the "Egregorian" attackers – and despite the pressing issue of the advancing Machine, some units remain tasked with tracking down the raiders that plagued the colony. One of those units has returned with information. They finally managed to track the Hercynians to their home base: a staging ground and bivouac just inside the mouth of an old Egregorian access tunnel, some distance to the south of the colony. The site seems lightly defended, and is a ripe target for an attack. At the very least, it may present an evacuation route if indeed the tunnel leads to a secure area.

Patience orders the PCs to follow up and investigate, with explicit instructions to tread cautiously.

The forest parts, depositing you in a clear-cut that lies open to the steaming summer heat. The soft substrate firms beneath you: the ground here is cracked asphalt contemporary to the war, an old road gone to neglect.

You see the markers of the war around you. A low bunker chokes under the roots of the tree growing from within. Another bunker lies shattered. Every-where, water pools where soldiers once crouched.

The road slopes down, disappearing under the shadow of a canopy made from newly strung camouflage tarps. It continues into the dark mouth of a tunnel that you assume leads deeper still.

Hercynians have been here recently. Crates lie scattered across the road. The high side is lined by tents, some collapsed, most still standing. A gentle wind scrapes waxed-paper wrapping around the clearing – bandage wrappers, plastic that once covered preloaded magazines. Evidence of a hasty retreat.

A scan of the area reveals nothing powered or alive waiting in this bivouac.

An investigation of the aboveground bivouac reveals nothing important about the Hercynians encamped there, but it does give the PCs some clues about how they live while deployed. They find spent ammunition casings, scrapped Egregorian chitin left over from rangers refinishing their armor, used rations, and plenty of kit – general nonsensitive military gear, toiletries, personal effects, and so on – that has been left behind.

Heading into the tunnel, the PCs descend for some time, eventually reaching a depth of about 30 meters below the earth. They emerge into a large, ancient space. A circular, hub-like room, domed ceiling patterned with chips of pearlescent shell, with departure and arrival signs pointing down different tunnels. This was once a civilian transit station.

The ground is littered with the dusty, desiccated corpses of long-dead Egregorians. Brittle shells, hollow, with obvious damage from thermal and kinetic munitions. Old human remains litter the ground as well, some still in their hard suits and cuirasses. Auxiliaries, left behind when Union pulled out of this particular hive. But something else immediately draws the PCs' attention: a number of dead and dying Hercynian humans in various states of injury occupy a makeshift triage center. IV bags hang on racks above the cots.

A handful of Hercynian rangers emerge from the dark of one of the tunnels, unarmed. One wears a pistol in a holster at her waist, wearing fatigues but no armor, with a bandage around her thigh and another around her head. This is Dthall Ordo. If she previously spoke to the characters, she recognizes them and greets them, speaking a heavily accented version of Union Common that she picked up from radio transmissions.

DTHALL ORDO

SHE/HER

Dthall Ordo is part of the Hercynian United Cities ranger corps and the only daughter of **Hivehome**'s human commander, **Ilyr Ordo**. She serves as a machine gunner and intermediary between Hivehome's human and Egregorian populations.

Dthall's company is one of the few tasked with leaving the underground to scout, raid, and report back on the movements of the Machine outside of **Egregore Cross**, a critical battleground in Hivehome's war against the Machine. Since before the PCs arrived on Hercynia, Dthall has been involved not only in the raids on Evergreen, but also those out in the wilderness against the vanguard forces of the Machine.

A competent young ranger, Dthall has seen her share of combat. Despite her father's political influence, she fights on the front lines of the war against the Machine – as did her late brothers. This speaks to both her eagerness to fight and the grim reality of the situation: everyone in the HUC must fight if the Machine's advance is to be halted. In addition to her brothers, Dthall also lost her mother in the ongoing war.

Dthall is empathically bonded with Mirth, an Egregorian currently posted to the HUC's command staff as an attaché to **Terror**, the Egregorian military commander.

Motioning to the sorry state of her soldiers, Dthall informs the PCs that the last of her forces have been ordered to retreat from the surface after their latest skirmishes with the Machine. The Machine's army, once concentrated in the tunnels and hives below the surface of Evergreen, is on the move, surging upwards.

She continues by explaining that the rangers initially came only to scout Evergreen, a routine after the colony made landfall some decades ago; however, after the colonists were seen for the first time working alongside subalterns and drones, her rangers were ordered to start a campaign of directed and random attacks. After all, it seemed a given that strangers working alongside subalterns must be allies of the Machine. Dthall and her company were to probe the colony's defenses with the eventual goal of denying the Machine's access to key assets: the printer facility, the omninode, and the reactors.

Dthall's rangers were ordered to pull back after the fighting grew too costly; they were needed back at home, where the three cities that make up the HUC were engaged in tense strategic negotiations as a result of the Machine's withdrawal from the belowground to focus on Evergreen. But just after they received the order to return, the rangers lost contact with Hivehome, the closest of the cities. Dthall worries that the Machine may have attacked the city.

Most of the other rangers left a few days ago to check in on the silent city and hopefully return with help. Dthall and a few others volunteered to stay behind and tend to the wounded. They've done what they can for the rangers in the makeshift infirmary, but none of them has more than a basic level of medical training. The best Dthall and her volunteers have been able to do for the severely wounded is make them comfortable as they succumbed to their injuries.

She just wants to go home, to get her rangers home, and to bury the dead. Now that the PCs have encountered the Machine, Dthall knows that they understand what her people have been fighting for centuries. There's a bigger fight going on than these battles around Evergreen, and she thinks that if the PCs can meet and talk with her superiors, there could be peace between the HUC and Evergreen.

Once Dthall has made this offer, the PCs receive a priority one call from Patience. The NHP orders them to abandon their investigation and return to Evergreen posthaste. The Machine's army is growing and spreading through the area at an unprecedented rate, threatening to cut the characters off from Evergreen completely. Once the colony is encircled, there won't be any way for the PCs to return.

If the PCs tell Patience about the peace offer, they receive the NHP's tacit, if reluctant approval. Patience would much prefer that the characters return to Evergreen, but if there is a chance – even a small one – that they might find new allies in this fight, they are willing to give the PCs the benefit of the doubt.

MAKING A CHOICE
The PCs have a choice to make here: return to Evergreen and help Landmark defend the city, or go with Dthall to Hivehome in an attempt to get the aid of the HUC. They have to choose now, as Dthall's offer is fleeting.

It should be clear to the group that neither choice will be considered insubordination and each offers an opportunity to beat back the Machine; however, they can only take one route. If the PCs go with Dthall, they won't be able to return to Evergreen. If they follow Patience's orders and return to Evergreen, it will be too dangerous for them to leave the colony.

If the PCs return to Evergreen, go to ROUTE A: EVERGREEN (p. 92). If they go with Dthall, go to ROUTE B: HIVEHOME (p. 116).

If the PCs took any Hercynians captive over the course of the first few missions, Dthall demands a guarantee of their eventual return as a precondition for taking them to Hivehome, with little choice but to take the PCs' words for it. She understands the practical realities of war and doesn't expect to gain much from such a weak bargaining position.

CLOSING
With the news of the encroaching machines, Evergreen pulls its militia back and fortifies the eastern wall of the city against the advance. The stream of refugees from the Gray Towns remains steady. They file in from the woods before reaching the bottleneck at Evergreen's gates. A camp begins to grow in the clear-cut outside the gates, leaning up against the walls of the city.

Small teams of Hercynian rangers watch both the Machine's army and Evergreen's scouts from the deep woods, relaying the movements of both back to their commanders. Evergreen, they report, is sure to fall as soon as the Machine begins to march.

In the world below, in lands as yet unknown to the PCs and the people of Evergreen, a war is ending just as the war above is beginning. In the wake of these events, old alliances are being put to the test as those on either side wrestle with the question of how to respond to the growing crisis. The end of summer approaches.

SECTION 4 // Early Summer, 5014u

[89]
BEAT 15: END OF THE LINE

5014U
LATE SUMMER

Every day takes on an afternoon light warmer than the air itself. Sunsets come earlier and in breathtaking color. Summer is fading to fall, but it's going out with a show.

IN THIS SECTION:

Solo Terra is deep in the sticky heart of summer. Humid, hazy days in Evergreen make for a long, languishing fever season, broken only by terrible storms that lash the colony with flooding rain. The whole valley stinks of fecundity, of buzzing insects and swamp life – all signs of a healthy world, miserable for its human occupants.

The late summer brings the resumption of large-scale hostilities between the Machine and the Hercynian United Cities, but first, the people of Evergreen stand in the way of Beggar One, the NHP field marshal of the Machine, as it marches overland to the confederated territory. A series of increasingly frequent anomalous events have taken place in Evergreen – outbursts from the colony's subalterns, comp/cons, and drones. These range from the curious and harmless (say, an agricultural drone driving loops through the middle of a field in the dead of night) to the outright hostile (that same drone turning on its handlers or a subaltern militia unit firing live ammunition at civilians inside the colony's walls). The army that amasses around the towns of Liu Maize and Merricktown continues to grow in size as it marches, inexorably, out of the mountains.

In response, Patience has further enhanced their own emergency powers: all synthetics, active and dormant, must be run through a rigorous screening process administered by the NHP, and the size of Evergreen's militia is set to dramatically increase. Patience has also ordered that the clear-cut at the walls be extended, growing it from 50 to 500 meters of foliage chopped back to the root to open up sight lines for the colony's guns.

Further complicating the situation in Evergreen, the "unofficial" and undocumented people of the Gray Towns have come seeking refuge. At first the refugees came in pairs, carts and pallet drones piled high with goods, then in large parties of ten or more. Now, their numbers seem to have stabilized, and their presence outside the walls of Evergreen has grown more permanent. They bring grim stories with them of machine terrors on the roads, of Liu Maize and Merricktown overrun. The PCs already know these stories, but most people in Evergreen are hearing them for the first time. Fear spreads through the city like wildfire. Privately, Patience worries: their most recent cycling seemingly had no effect on the anomalous events they continue to experience – the echoes and the ghosts.

Underground, the pressure relief caused by the Machine's retreat from the subterranean front has, for the first time in half a century, given some Hercynians hope that the war might not last forever. Hivehome, the largest of the confederated cities, urges a counterattack – a fight away from their own land to end the war for good. But the rangers' ability to mount a counterattack falls far behind their needs. The long war has exacted a heavy toll in personnel and equipment. The rangers on the front lines of the underground were down to mere handfuls of bullets and preparations were underway to begin drafting the elderly and the young. Knowing this, **DAYLIGHT**, Hivehome's longtime rival city-state, wants to concentrate instead on defense and order the bulk of the HUC's forces to its own border. As the leaders of Daylight see it, the Machine's retreat from the front near Hivehome does not mean an end to the war, only the opening of a new front that is much closer to their territory. The cities of the HUC, though battered from the long conflict, are still forces to be reckoned with.

BEAT 16A.1:
THE HARD SKY

Through your window, you see low, gray clouds hanging over Evergreen, choking the lush forest valley. Your quarters are tight and cramped, but at least they're dry. At least you have a lock on your door and a hard wall between you and the world outside.

Cookfires drift up from the sprawling refugee camp outside Evergreen. Distant chain-axes howl as they hew through trees. The muffled crack and thrash of felled timber, the muffled crack of militia training with rifles. These are the sounds of a colony under siege.

The lights flicker. A tremble rattles some small items on the desk in your room. A pen clatters to the floor. Muffled: a rising siren, howling. A moment later, an alert flashes across your subtext:

>//ALERT!!!ATTACK!!!ALERT:::IMPERATIVE DEFENSIVE COMMAND ACROSS ALL RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS EAST OF 3RD AVE///

You curse, not exactly afraid anymore, just frustrated. You need some damn sleep, a reprieve from the rain, a shuttle off this horrible little world. More tremors, and the siren's cry growing louder. Under it, screams and the sound of gunfire.

You swing out of bed, PDW in hand. Another night begins in Evergreen. You're not sure how many more of these you can take.

Out in the street the ruined hulk of an agricultural drone lays on its side, wrecked in an attack days ago. It would be bad if it were moved; now, it provides cover.

A dead dog rots outside the Bottom of the Well, killed by a shell a week ago.

Burned out groundcars line some of the streets, rusting and pocked by bullet holes.

The market streets and arcades are empty, shops boarded up, skirted by shrapnel-torn sandbags.

The sirens die as you reach the site of the commotion. The wailing of survivors fills its place. A scatter of bodies splayed out from the burning wreck of a groundcar, medics hustling back and forth as a squad of militia troopers haul away subaltern corpses.

Another attack. Another handful dead.

Preamble, you think on your way back to your room, of the fight to come.

Evergreen is a city under siege, plagued by two threats. One enemy lies within, as the very infrastructure that colonists have relied on for generations now begins to reject their commands. Subalterns refuse orders and steal away into the night; drones fly, crawl, roll, and march away to join the Machine; machines of both types sporadically attack crowds of people. The other enemy lies outside the walls: the looming danger of a Machine army, waiting only for an order to advance.

The synthetics – subalterns and drones – that Patience has cleared to operate work under the protection of the colony's growing militia, cutting back the old trees around Evergreen. The grind and howl of chain-axes sounds around the clock, and stacks of stripped trunks pack the print-yards and the clear-cut outside of the colony. The stink of defoliant is heavy on the air, an orange-burn cloud that stains crimson the hazy light of dawn and dusk. The treeline has been pushed back hundreds of meters, and each day the clear-cut grows more.

Between the stacks of freshly cut timber waiting to be processed in the clear-cut, new militia recruits train. The sound of gunfire is constant throughout the day.

A tent city of refugees from the fields outside Evergreen also packs this cleared ground, people huddling for cover behind a low bulwark of gabion barriers built by a loosely organized camp guard. Some members of Evergreen's militia help when they're off the clock, but their numbers are thin, and Patience has doled out disciplinary notices to troopers caught showing the refugees even so small a kindness. In the NHP's mind, the refugees broke colonial code in the first place by setting out to build homesteads; as far as they are concerned, the refugees' problems are the refugees' problems.

Meanwhile, summer brings intermittent, heavy storms that flood the colony's riverfront districts. Meant to be a pleasant mix of residential areas, wooded parks, and low-impact industry, it has become a swamp, choked with debris and waste, a flood zone inundating the prefab buildings with a meter of water. The streets are barricaded and sandbagged a few blocks up from the flood zone, and the river has been left to move how it will. There are larger concerns facing the city.

In the heart of Evergreen, the print shop fills orders around the clock, fabricating armor and equipment for militia regulars and conscripts. Patience has monopolized the shop's queue and negotiating time to fill a mech's print order is a headache at best.

The Bottom of the Well is packed with patrons, but the mood is tense. There are many new arrivals, and all of them bring stories of horrors outside the walls: subalterns that whisper in unknown voices; drones that cut channels in the earth as they tramp in endless, perpetual circles; the faces of the dead, who they had to leave behind when the machines came.

PATIENCE IN AN EMERGENCY

Patience's emergency powers are vast. As long as the PCs are in the NHP's favor, they could, for example, ask Patience to lock and unlock doors in specific buildings, kill power to a whole colony block, turn water on or off, and so on. You are free to determine the full extent of Patience's powers. Broadly, the NHP can control anything connected to Evergreen's data and/or power grid.

Patience is concerned with preserving as much colonial infrastructure and data as possible. They are prepared to aggressively defend the core of the colony – the Governor's Farm, the print shop – and for the time being have left the coordination and organization of Evergreen's militia up to Edena Ji and Brava Hadura.

Whatever sorts of relationships the PCs (or any NPCs) have with Patience, the NHP is ultimately loyal to Landmark Colonial. Complicating this – as hinted at in **BEAT 10: SIREN** – Patience has been infected with the Machine's paracode and is starting to slip into a terminal **cascade**. This fact is unknown to everyone but Patience, and the NHP cannot stop it by themself.

Hemmed in, rapidly losing grip on reality, and seeking to use any resources available, Patience issues the PCs a broad order to defend the colony at all costs.

CASCADE
NHPs experience cascades when they have gone too long beyond their prescribed cycling date. In cascade, NHPs may express odd, uncanny, or otherwise anomalous behaviors; left unaddressed, such an NHP might crack their conditioning, breaking their otherwise hard-coded containment. This is colloquially called "unshackling" and is considered very dangerous – not unlike exposing a nuclear core to the outside world, with the additional known-unknown factor of paracausality.

Each NHP line has a custom cycling schedule, though, generally speaking, the more taxing the labor an NHP performs, the more rapid its cycling schedule tends to be. If caught early enough, cascade can be prevented via cycling. Past a certain point, it becomes an irreversible process.

In certain situations, cascade can be triggered before the usual threshold. The phenomena capable of triggering a premature cascade tend to be unique, traumatic, and dangerous. Dealing with a triggered cascade requires either the work of specialists or the total destruction of the cascading unit.

BEAT 16A.2:
DESPERATION CALCULUS

They come from the forest every day; lonely figures and small groups, laden with packs and rags. Some come with drones in tow, or dragging handcarts piled with their worldly goods.

Some carry their children with them. Others, their dead.

They are refugees – people, beset on all sides by the Machine, forced to flee to Evergreen. Those that arrive outside the entry checkpoint speak of the dead left behind on the road to safety and those who still live, hiding in their homes even now.

Illness, dark nights, endless rain, the screams of those picked off by subalterns and hollow drones on the long road to Evergreen – all these terrors and more they faced to reach the presumption of safety.

But when they arrived at the edge of safety, they found the gates closed to them: none were allowed through the checkpoint, on Patience's orders. Per Landmark's charter, homesteaders broke their contracts when they left the colony grounds to build unsanctioned habitats. The refugees are not Patience's problem anymore, though the NHP has sent militia to the walls to oversee the camp that is growing outside the city.

In response, the refugees have begun to organize their own, informal city, building semipermanent homes from scrap and tents in the clear-cut formed by Evergreen's defoliation teams. Every morning and night they petition the guards at the gate to let them in, and every morning and night they are refused. Every day their numbers grow, and every day the newcomers bring stories of the machines creeping closer and closer.

Nearly two thousand refugees crowd Evergreen's defensive clear-cut, having fled their unsanctioned homes looking to find safety inside the city's walls. Evergreen, however, doesn't want them – or, at the very least, Patience doesn't. The homesteaders broke Evergreen's colonial charter by striking out to found their own settlements; now that they are under attack and unable to effectively defend themselves, they've come to ask for aid and sanctuary, but Patience doesn't have any obligation to defend them under their emergency protocols.

As Patience has retreated into a defensive posture to concentrate on holding off cascade, Edena Ji has stepped into the role of acting colonial governor. Following Patience's missives, she has issued a mandate that bans any homesteader from coming into Evergreen through the checkpoints at the city's borders unless they are fully processed and enrolled as a citizen as Evergreen – an onerous obligation even without an army of machines marching upon the city. Edena has posted militia at heavily armored guardhouses, backed by armored vehicles. Further, she has ordered them not to police or protect the refugees in the camp; their charge is to defend the city. This is proving a complicated policy, as people on both sides of the walls have come together in widespread protest against the harsh refusal of asylum.

The people trapped outside the city walls have built a cooperative camp in the clear-cut, building a makeshift wall from felled trees in the hope that it might stymie the advance of the hollow drones that they fear followed them and hide their camp from feared Hercynian snipers. Sympathetic colonists inside Evergreen run supplies across the wall when they can, smuggling goods out and people in.

Edena, acting on Patience's orders, often sends teams out to knock down the wall and clear the camp. They trash the tents and makeshift structures they find with the justification that they are trying to maintain a clear line of sight to the treeline. The camp members resist as best they can, but they are grossly outmatched; the militia has resorted to using live rounds after early clashes left several troopers beaten and bloodied. Now, the refugees mostly stay back, then hurry to rebuild their barricades under the cover of night.

The steady flow of refugees has abated somewhat: in the early days they came in tens and teens, but now it's down to small groups of four or five every few days. By the militia's estimates, there should only be about a thousand more people out in the wilderness, but there's nothing certain. The real numbers are unknown, and it's fair to presume that many of those remaining are already dead.

Camp members often sneak into the city via the river, entering from the flood zone to occupy and live in the higher floors of the new apartment buildings. They do this in small groups, some led by experienced guides and others striking out on their own. Meanwhile, other camp members agitate for more direct actions. The refugees are frustrated by and scared of Evergreen's security forces, but terrified of the machines. The mood in the camp is tense. These people want help from their fellow colonists, charter be damned.

The new arrivals speak of two things: rumors that Liu Maize and Merricktown have fortified and managed to resist the machines, and increasingly fantastic depictions of subalterns carrying lances and rifles walking alongside mechs. They also tell of the dead they left behind, bloated in the humid heat, rotting on the side of the road.

The refugees in the camp come from a wide range of backgrounds. The oldest among them tend to be first-wave homesteaders. Not many of these old-timers are left – most died of natural causes before the machines arrived, more of exposure or at the hands of the machines since the attacks began.

Unable to act on her own, but deeply affected by the suffering outside the walls, Brava Hadura contacts the PCs to inform them of the situation. She asks they head in to gather information and help who they can.

MISSION 4A: LAST CASTLE

MISSION BEATS

BEAT 16A.3: HOME, DOWNRANGE

    COMBAT: HOMECOMING

    COMBAT: OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

    COMBAT: IN THROUGH THE CLOSED DOOR

BEAT 16A.4: PUNCHDRUNK BACKPEDAL

    COMBAT: SLAP IN THE FACE

BEAT 16A.5: A STAIN YOU CAN'T WASH OUT

    COMBAT: BREAKPOINT

BEAT 16A.6: MOUNTAINFALL

BEAT 16A.7: ESCAPE FROM EVERGREEN

    COMBAT: REGRET

BRIEFING

Brava Hadura outlines the situation: At best, the colony has abandoned the refugees outside the walls. At worst, it views them not simply as a liability, but as an active and growing threat to security. She is unable to act directly in her capacity as militia commander, but with the broad emergency powers granted to the PCs by Patience and their status as freelancers, they can certainly assist. She asks the PCs to aid the refugees in whatever way they can. In return, she promises to requisition licenses and resources for them, along with anything else she can slide under the table.

If they ask around the camp, the PCs find out about three opportunities to offer aid. They have time to complete two out of the three tasks.

|	
GOAL:	Aid the refugee camp outside of Evergreen in any ways possible.
STAKES:	Without aid or anyone to advocate for them, the refugees will be slaughtered or captured when the Machine arrives at the city. In addition, unless the PCs intervene, many of the refugees will die needlessly in front of their eyes in **BEAT 16A.5: A STAIN YOU CAN'T WASH OUT**.
REWARD:	Brava Hadura puts aside a cache with sufficient license information, resources, and upgrades for the PCs to progress to **LL4**. She gives them this cache at the start of **BEAT 16A.6: MOUNTAINFALL** but they won't actually have time to upgrade, increase their LL, and perform a **FULL REPAIR** until **DOWNTIME 4**. The PCs also have the opportunity to pick up **OPPORTUNITY** and **MARKEY'S FUSEBOX** as **EXOTIC GEAR**, and reserves in the form of both the Châus and a cache of explosives.
RESERVES:	Review the reserves and resources available to the group prior to this mission. This is especially important as they may lose access to them after Evergreen falls.

CLOCKS

This mission functionally ends with the conclusion of **Beat 16A.5: A Stain You Can't Wash Out**, and one way or another, Evergreen falls to the Machine in **Beat 16A.6: Mountainfall**. After this, the PCs need to decide what to do next. During the next beat, **Beat 16A.7: Escape from Evergreen**, the **Defense of Evergreen** and **Machine Horde** clocks determine the difficulty of their escape and the options the PCs have available to them. These clocks aren't needed after this mission and can be erased.

THE CRT

The CRT is focused on its data extraction mission during these next few encounters and does little to intervene in the colony's affairs, with a few exceptions:

- **If the CRT Relationship clock has five or more segments filled**, they can be convinced to aid the PCs on these missions. One of their members (you can choose) assists as an NPC ally.
- **If the CRT Relationship clock is full**, they can be convinced to intervene during **Beat 16A.5: A Stain You Can't Wash Out** in whichever way the PCs want (i.e., opening the gate or keeping it closed).
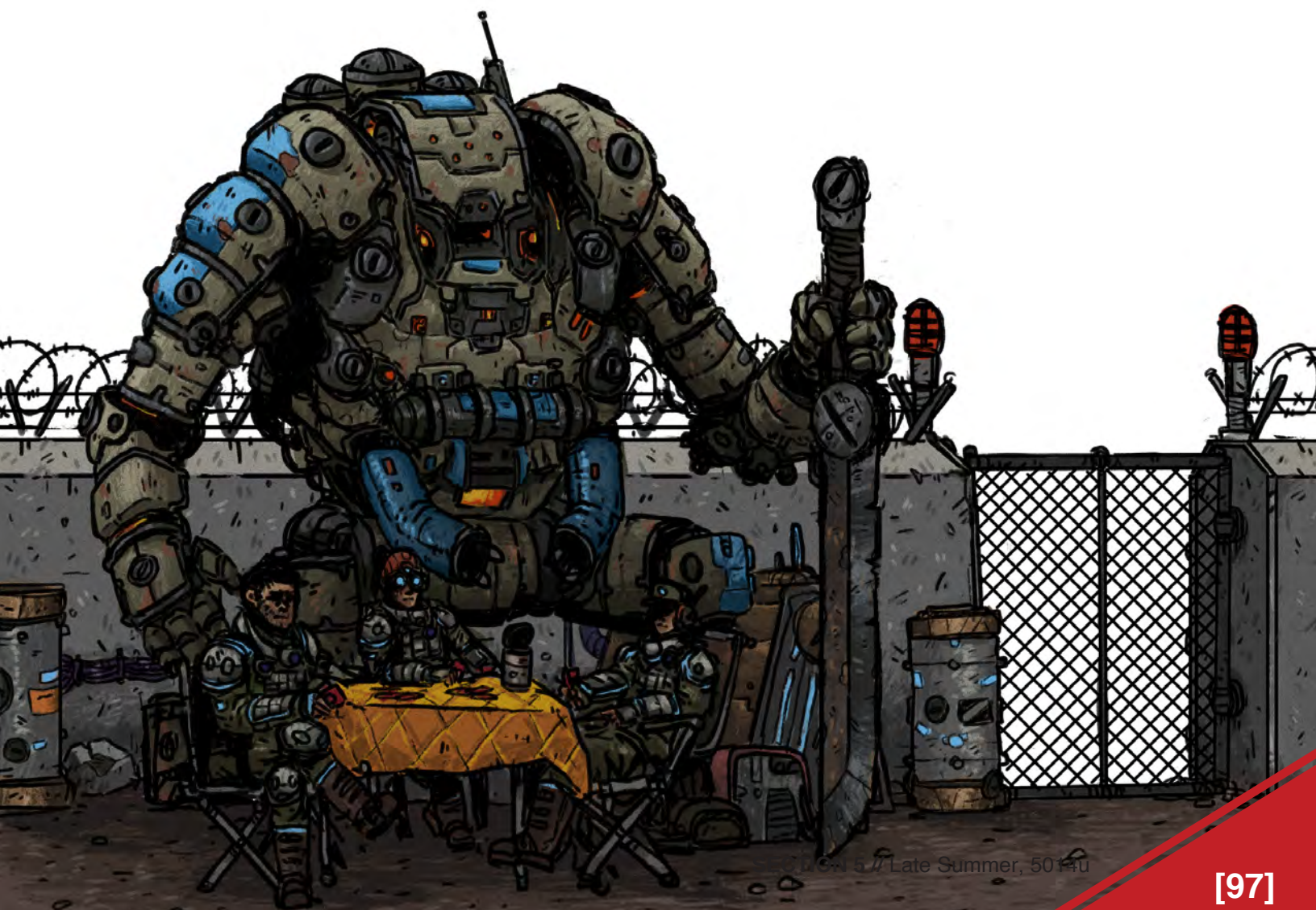
BEAT 16A.3:
HOME, DOWNRANGE

Asking around the camp, the PCs find three people who desparately need their help: Maggie Châu, Jacob Merrick (p. 99), and Tyrell Markey (p. 102). They can complete two of these three tasks before **BEAT 16A.4: PUNCHDRUNK BACKPEDAL** begins, and forcing them back to the walls of Evergreen. Characters can perform a **FULL REPAIR** in between each encounter in this beat if they want. In the camp, the PCs are likely to encounter scenes of both desperation and everyday life. Anyone bringing a mech in attracts a lot of attention.

COMBAT:
HOMECOMING

Maggie Châu made it to Evergreen just last week and has been looking for help ever since. She plans to mount a rescue mission back to her family's home; her wife, Weiyi, is sick and couldn't make the journey. Their eldest son, Albert, stayed behind, but without even pirate access to the omninet, Maggie has no way of knowing if they're still alive.

The characters might recognize Maggie from her resemblance to her son, Albert, who they may have helped escape his farm at Châu Maize along with his family. If Albert died at Châu Maize, Maggie harbors no resentment toward the PCs, but thanks them for saving his family anyway.

If the PCs decide to help Maggie, she offers to come with them in her jury-rigged harvester mech. In combat, she is an allied NPC piloting a Demolisher mech with the Guardian trait. If her mech is destroyed, she escapes on foot and reunites with the PCs later.

The PCs find Maggie's farm in an isolated area a couple hours out from Evergreen, closer to Liu Maize. The farmhouse is on fire and looks like it has been trampled, but there are signs of an ongoing firefight further uphill. Cresting the hill and looking through the thick forest, the PCs see a small group of makeshift harvester mechs like Maggie's locked in combat with machine forces. Before the PCs can reach them, however, they are intercepted by a group of rogue farming drones and ancient, near-skeletal mechs torn out of the earth where they have lain since the old war.

DETAILS
Deploy reinforcements at the end of the second round instead of the usual deployment for this strep.

The attackers stand between the PCs and the struggling homesteaders. The PCs have six rounds to fight their way through this gauntlet before the homesteaders, including Maggie's wife, Weiyi, are overwhelmed and killed. Don't play out the actual fight to save the Châus; instead, use the distant battle as a backdrop for this combat and determine the outcome as below.

OUTCOME
PC DEFEAT
If the PCs don't have control of the CZ at the end of the sixth round, they fail to save Maggie's family. Maggie is despondent and strikes off into the wilderness by herself. She can be stopped and convinced to return to Evergreen, but she's given up the will to fight.

PC VICTORY
If the PCs win the fight, they finish off the rest of the Machine's forces and save Maggie's family. Maggie is overjoyed to find her wife and son are still alive, if a little worse for wear, along with some of the other family members on the farm.

REWARDS
In recompense for helping her, Maggie, Albert, and his wife Nora can be called in as reserves for any of the other combats in this mission. Maggie pilots her Demolisher and Albert and Nora pilot a Barricade and a Support with no optional systems. If Albert is dead, only Nora shows up (in the Support). This reserve can only be called upon once.

SITREP: Gauntlet (*Lancer*, p. 271)

ENEMY FORCES
FOR 3 PCS: 2x **BARRICADE** (Drag Down, Extrudite)
1x **BOMBARD** (High-Impact Shells)
1x **SCOURER** (Pulse Laser, Flash Lens)
FOR 4 PCS: +1x **ENGINEER** (Mobile Turrets)

FOR 5 PCS: Add **ELITE** template to **BOMBARD**

REINFORCEMENTS
1x **ENGINEER** (Mobile Turrets)
2x **GRUNT SCOURERS**

COMBAT:
OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

Jacob Merrick is desperate. A well-to-do homesteader before the arrival of the Machine, his family managed a modest complex of farms, work-shops, and frontier shops: Merricktown. Uniquely among the initial charter signatories, Jacob's grand-father purchased an NHP to be included with his cargo, intending to create a sublease town outside Evergreen. Fifty years ago, he did just that.

Jacob and his family were able to flee the advan-cing subaltern force, but had to leave behind the NHP, Opportunity, intending to return for it once the situation was safer. After arriving, they realized that Opportunity is nearing their scheduled cycling. This is usually a simple on-site process, but with the advancing machines driving the town's population before them, those facilities have long since been abandoned. Now, there's no telling how close Opportunity is to cascade; moreover, with the marked evidence of the enemy's impact on comp/cons, drones, and other synthetic intelligences, losing a modern NHP to the machines risks creating a wholly new threat.

The journey to Merricktown is harrowing; the town is in flaming ruins, and swarming with machines. Fortunately, Opportunity and their casket are kept in the town's power plant and storehouse, on the outskirts of the settlement, an area which can be approached with ease.

The storehouse is a squat, prefab building with a yard ringed by a fence, now flattened and torn. Clusters of machines have formed at the front of the building, where a wall has been pried open like an oyster. Half the building has totally collapsed into rubble.

As the PCs approach, their comms are hailed by a friendly-tagged signature: Opportunity themself.

–
Salutations.
Sitrep: Critical. Prognosis: Unclear. Outlook: Cynical.
Chances (?): Slim, potential.
Suggest: Haste.

—

It's clear that Opportunity is somewhere in the destroyed complex, but it quickly becomes clear from a glance that the housing that contained their casket is empty and their actual casket is buried in the rubble somewhere. The PCs need to find and extract it before the roving Machine forces can do the same.
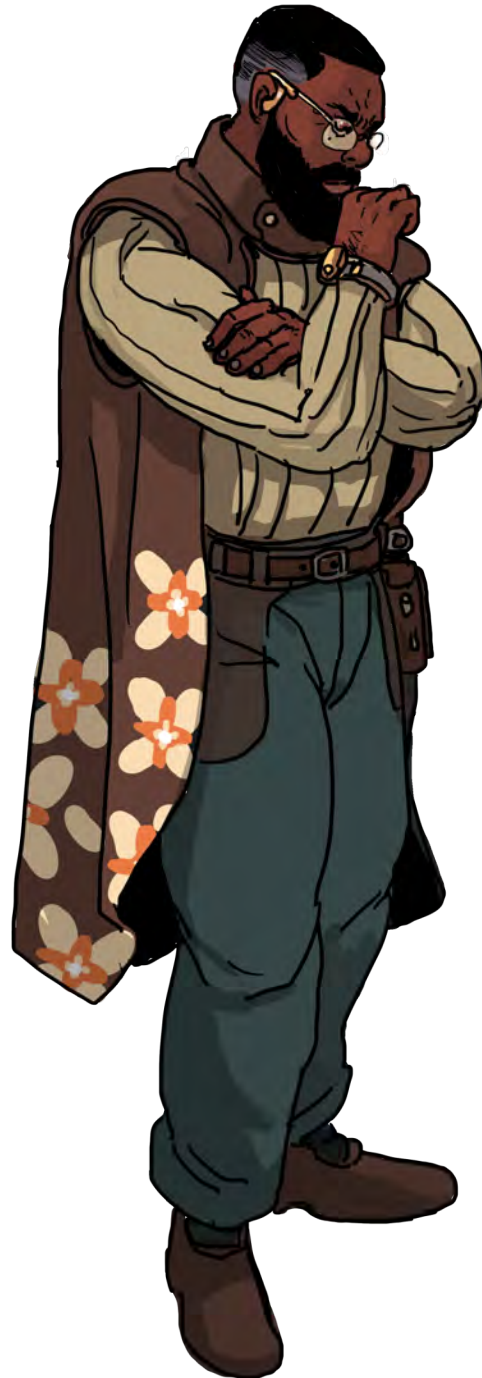
SITREP: Recon (*Lancer*, p. 273)

ENEMY FORCES
CONTINGENT 1:
FOR 3 PCS: 1x **[THE END] – ELITE LURKER**
                 (Defensive Shroud, Empower Shroud)
                 2x **WITCH** (Petrify, Spread Suffering)
                 1x **HIVE** (Motile Swarm)

FOR 4 PCS: +1x **LURKER** (Devouring Shroud)

FOR 5 PCS: +1x **PRIEST** (Greater Investiture)

DETAILS
This fight includes another one of Beggar One's lieutenants, an **ELITE LURKER** called **[THE END]**. The **LURKER** is a new NPC class that can be found on p. 191.

The PCs need to find the **TRUE CZ**, which contains Opportunity's casket.

OUTCOME
If the PCs are unable to identify and hold the **TRUE CZ** or wipe out their opponents by the end of the sixth round, the Machine's forces escape with Opportunity's casket and the PCs are forced to retreat. Tick a segment on the **Machine Horde** clock.

If the PCs are able to safely extract Opportunity, the thankful NHP offers their services as a mech-scale NHP. One character can take the NHP as **EXOTIC GEAR**.

REWARDS
Jacob is more than happy for Opportunity to accompany the PCs. He sees the NHP as a threat due to the infection and he has no interest in pursuing further business on Hercynia. If asked, he's more than happy to hand ownership and custody of Opportunity to the PCs, and Opportunity is happy to accept.

For the rest of this mission, Opportunity can be installed for 0 SP. Afterwards, they will require cycling and subsequent installations cost SP as usual.

Importantly, Opportunity is close to cascade. For this mission only, when your mech loses structure or stress, Opportunity enters cascade on a result of 10 or less instead of on a 1. When they are next installed, the chances are normal.

Opportunity is an administrative NHP that nevertheless is well-suited to combat situations. They have an uncanny ability to fix and optimize electronic systems. They are terse, polite, use their words extremely sparingly, and have a wry sense of humor. They tend to ramble at inopportune times about the profound messiness of situations and seem to be obsessed with neatness.

OPPORTUNITY
`2 SP, AI, Exotic Gear, Unique`
Your mech gains the **AI** tag and **KNOCK**.

Knock
`Quick Tech`
Opportunity lends their extraordinary processing power and their precise (if exacting) aid, optimizing an ally's systems to a more "organized" state.

Choose an allied mech character within line of sight and **SENSORS** to benefit from Opportunity's optimization. They gain **immunity to heat from other characters**, **+1 ♦** on all **SYSTEMS** checks and saves, and attackers gain **+1 ⊖** on **tech attacks** against them.

This effect ends immediately when you take this action again, or when the affected character "makes a mess of things" by taking an **attack roll**, **forcing a save**, or taking **any other action** that would **affect a hostile character**.

ENEMY MECH
[THE END]

Elite Lurker
Striker

It is not enough to mark [The End] as evil. It is an inevitability – contained, for now, under Hercynia's soil: a weapon left by the departing Second Committee, known to Egregorians and Hercynians only as [The End]. Reports from the Dawnline Shore have reported the use of similar weaponized nanite swarms by the Karrakin Trade Baronies and other entities connected to the Baronic Concern (see: The Maw, Tartarus Bay, Albatross MK Kano) but there does not appear to be a paper trail directly linking [The End] to the Baronies.

Functionally, each instance of [The End] on Hercynia could be considered an isolated part of a single whole, as all conform to a set of known markers and samples obtained from inert nanites bear the same ID hashing. In the field, "pools" of [The End] coalesce into humanoid shapes and operate according to novel input, potentially indicating not only the existence of an unidentified division of responsibilities within a larger command structure, but also that this weapon system was intended to work with or replace human warfighters in a total-war scenario.

Containment protocols acknowledge that a moderate-to-severe concentration of these nanites per square meter indicates an unstoppable consumption infection. HUC command assumes that a central planetary command unit, deck, location, or computer exists somewhere on Hercynia. Identifying and destroying this central unit is a priority for the rangers in order to neutralize the threat of [The End] on the planet.

HULL: 2	**HP:** 10	**Armor:** 1
AGILITY: 2	**Evasion:** 10	**Speed:** 3
SYSTEMS: 0	**E-Defense:** 6	**Save Target:** 12
ENGINEERING: -1	**Heat Cap:** 5	**Sensors:** 5

SYSTEMS

Inevitable, Like the Tide
Heavy Melee, +0
[⚔ 1][8 ⌀]

While **[The End]** is within a **Shroud Zone**, this weapon gains ⚔ **3** and **+1** ✦ .

On hit: The target is pulled adjacent to **[The End]**, or as close as possible.

On critical hit: As above, and the target is immediately **Grappled**.

Umbral Shroud
Trait, Protocol

At the start of any combat, when it enters the battlefield as reinforcements, or 1/round as a **protocol**, **[The End]** can create a rippling storm of nanites – a **Shroud Zone** – in a free ⊙ **1** area within ↗ **5**.

Shroud Zones provide **soft cover**. Additionally, while inside a **Shroud Zone**:
- **Lurkers** (including **[The End]**) become **Invisible** and gain **Resistance to all damage**
- Hostile characters are **Shredded** and **Impaired**.

Shroud Zones can only be attacked by **tech attacks** and weapons that target **E-Defense** (e.g., **smart** weapons). They have **E-Defense 10** and disperse upon any successful attack.

[The End] can have no more than three **Shroud** Zones active at the same time. Shroud Zones can overlap each other, but their effects do not stack.

The first one was discovered by a child, playing in the ruins of an old hive. It looked like a man, naked with no anatomy. The child, before she succumbed, said that it drifted forward and back, moving without movement.

ELITE
[The End] has **2 Structure** and **2 Stress**, and takes two separate turns each round. It has an additional optional system (included).

Replacement
Trait, Quick Action

[The End] teleports to a **Shroud Zone** in line of sight.

The ones we have seen move quickly between pools of shadow. At first, we thought it had something to do with the light – some antiphoton navigation or localized blink transference – but further study proved us incorrect. There are cells everywhere, mixed into the soil. All it needs to do is call upon them.

Mission Creep
Trait, Recharge 4+, Quick Action

[The End] expands a **Shroud Zone** it currently occupies to ⊙ **2**. This can cause it to envelop other characters. In addition, it now takes two successful attacks to disperse the effect.

Through consumption, it empowers itself. But wait, we asked, what happens when there is nothing left to consume? It was there we discovered [The End]'s power – it doesn't care to answer that question; it does not find that question important.

Trigger; Response
Trait, Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: [The End] takes **damage or heat**.

Effect: It creates a Shroud Zone centered on itself, even if it already has three active.

It lets you score hits; that's how it learns.

COMBAT:
IN THROUGH THE CLOSED DOOR

Tyrell Markey has a plan, but it cannot leave this room. A militia trooper tasked with clearing the camp, he's sympathetic to the refugees' plight and has no desire to enforce the hard border. To the contrary, he wants to get more of them in.

In uniform, Tyrell keeps watch over one of the check-points that guards access into Evergreen. Out of uniform, he guides small groups of people into the city through the flood zone. The work has been easy up until now, but his superiors are getting suspicious and he hasn't been able to guide any additional people into the city before the big crackdown. He's asked for your help in figuring a way to get the heat off him and to get these people to the safety they deserve.

Just outside Evergreen's flood zone are a number of abandoned construction explosives that Tyrell was working alongside the teams out there before he was drafted into the militia. His idea is simple – set the charges to blow, loud enough to distract the militia, while he guides refugees inside the walls.

When the PCs arrive on the scene, they find the caches prepared by Tyrell. As soon as they set off the first cache, a droning fills the air as they attract surprise unwanted attention from roving Machine forces.

SITREP: special (see below).

OBJECTIVES: 3x caches of explosives (*Size 1, Evasion 5, E-Defense 5*)

ENEMY WAVE
FOR 3 PCS: 2x **ACE** (Missile Swarm, Rapid Reponse)
1x **HORNET** (Umbral Interdiction)

FOR 4 PCS: +1x **HORNET** (Umbral Interdiction)

FOR 5 PCS: +1x **SCOUT** (Weakness Analyzer)

REINFORCEMENTS
1x **SCOUT** (Weakness Analyzer)
1x **ACE** (Bombing Bay, Chaff Launchers)

DETAILS
The PCs must destroy all three caches of explosives and destroy the enemy forces by the end of the sixth round.

The arriving Machine forces are flying drones: observation, agricultural, and weather units that have been armed; vanguards of the main force. All NPC mechs can choose to fly when they move or Boost and don't have to land, even if they don't have systems that allow them to do so. The reinforcements arrive at the end of the second round.

Place the caches on the map before any characters deploy. When a cache takes any heat or damage, it explodes in a ⊙2 area. Characters in the affected area must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or take **2d6**✳. On a success, they take half damage.

Mark one of the caches in advance. In addition to its normal effects, detonating this cache also releases an EMP pulse, causing all flying characters on the map to be forced to land, drifting to the ground at the start of their next turn. Affected characters are unable to fly until the start of their following turn.

OUTCOME
PC VICTORY
If the PCs destroy the caches and fight off the Machine forces within six rounds, they are successful. Tyrell grants them a large quantity of explosives that can be used as **reserves** for the rest of this mission only.

Characters that take these explosives as reserves have three explosive caches that function identically to those in the mission. They can be deployed anywhere on the map before any characters are deployed. Once taken into a mission, they are expended regardless of whether they were detonated or not.

PC DEFEAT
If the PCs fail to achieve either or both objectives, tick one segment of the **Machine Horde** clock. Tyrell has to abandon his plan or face capture by the militia.

MOVING FORWARD

When the PCs have completed two of these tasks, things begin to happen quickly. Go to **Beat 16A.4: Punchdrunk Backpedal**.

A sudden, sharp series of tones interrupts the normal chatter over your AllComm channel. It's an emergency burst, a series of triplets indicating the public channel has been momentarily overridden. A voice, shaking, cries out.

"Can anyone hear me? Can anyone hear me?! This is Abel Hartmann, of Merricktown. If anyone is out there, we need – we need help, we need immediate–"

The triplet tone pings again, and another voice screams. "They're sweeping over it like it's nothing. Oh god, they're just walking right over it!"

Triplet.

"–anyone out there can help, please come now, we've locked ourselves inside the–"

Triplet.

"–at Liu Maize! The fire is burning out of control. We managed to clear a firebreak, but I don't know how long–"
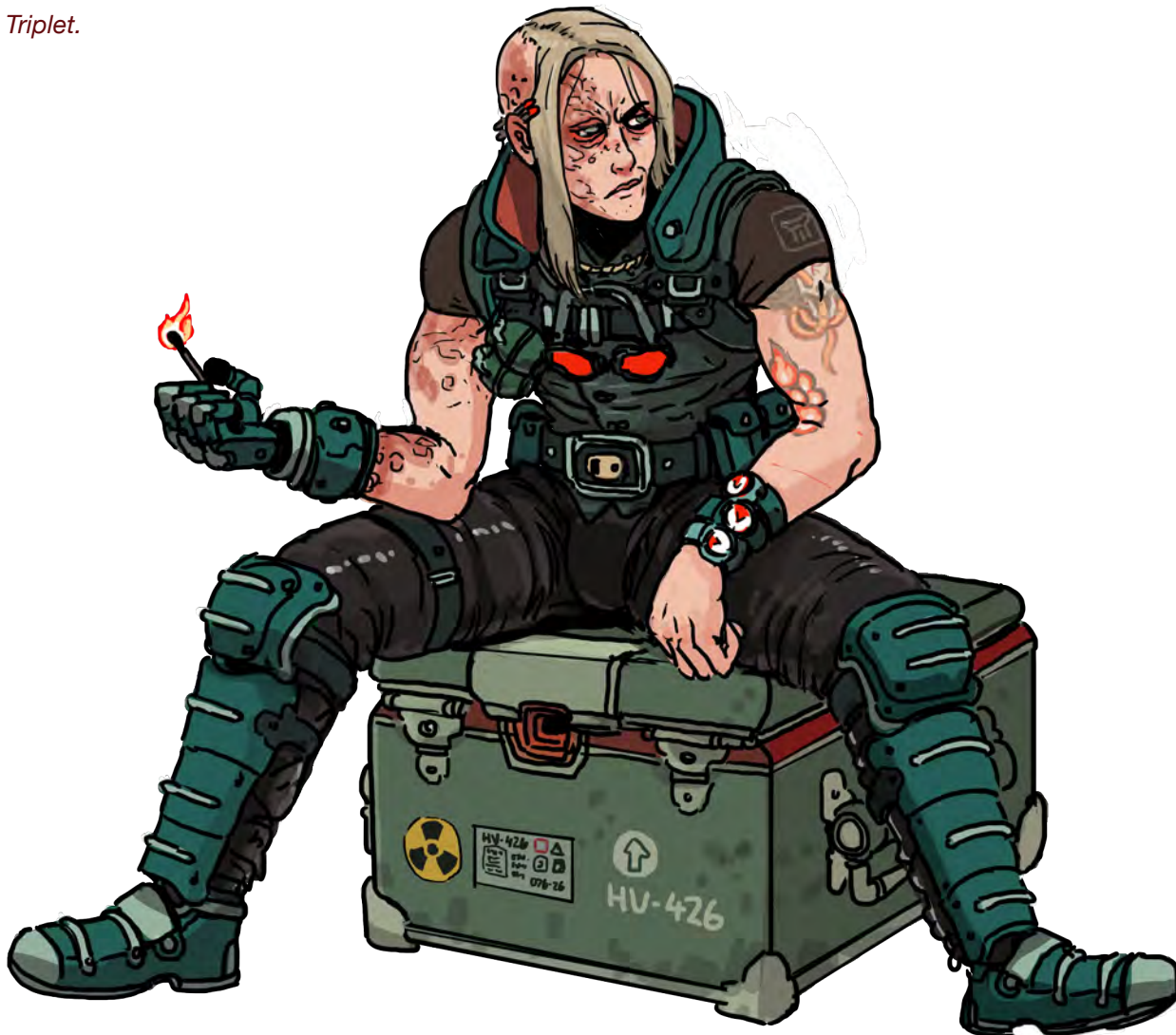
Triplet.

"That's– oh hell, that's George's pla– Kerry! Thank god you're here! We gotta go, we gotta g–"

Triplet.

"It's all … it's all on fire. I don't know if you can hear me. I don't know why I'm broadcasting. I'm dying. They cut me in ha–"

And then it stops. No more triplet tone.

They're coming.

BEAT 16A.4:
PUNCHDRUNK BACKPEDAL

On the horizon, greasy pillars of black and gray smoke rise. Thin at first, they bloom to massive size within the hour. A deep orange glow lurks under the clouds – soon enough, the wind carries a familiar smell: fire. Merricktown and Liu Maize have finally fallen and are burning. Pirate radio transmissions stream into Evergreen's public channels, calling for help: hordes of machines are marching through the Gray Towns, en route to Evergreen.

Orders come through from Edena Ji: Immediately reinforce the main road out of Evergreen. All remaining military units outside the walls are to pull back. Evergreen is closing up.

Under the burning sky, the outside of Evergreen is chaos. Militia units frantically try to get their vehicles unstuck from the sucking mud in the clear-cut.

Refugees rush to the walls, forming an enormous crowd outside the main gates. Many of them pass by the PCs as they move, on foot, exhausted, clutching their belongings.

It quickly becomes apparent that there's not going to be enough time. A large contingent of the militia force, out reinforcing a checkpoint and gathering stragglers and refugees, is still some ways off from Evergreen, bogged down in the terrifying calculus of who to keep and who to leave behind. Already the metallic shriek and clank of the Machine's forces can be heard near Evergreen. Though the militia convoy is on its return trip, it's moving too slow: they're going to be surrounded, cut off, and slaughtered.

Fortunately, one trooper has a desperate idea.

COMBAT:
SLAP IN THE FACE

The PCs may have already met Tyrell Markey while helping in the refugee camp. Whether they helped him or not, he's got a plan, and he's in the middle of executing it when they come across him now. Without their help, it's clear he has next to no chance of success.

The PCs may have observed the Machine's troops acting in a forced, erratic manner. Tyrell is betting on this apparent mindlessness saving the convoy. He's captured an infected Evergreen ag-drone, bulky, large, and strangely bovine, and strapped around half a ton of mining explosives to it.

If he releases the drone, he figures, it will return to the horde and its detonation will clear a path about two hundred meters wide – a tiny gap that the stranded convoy can use to slip through. The problem will be getting the drone to the horde unmolested: that's where the characters come in.

The path is blocked by two especially nasty looking Machine mechs, relics of the old war, their chassis scorched and skeletal. They have extra Veteran traits to represent their additional power.

> **SITREP:** Escort (*Lancer*, p. 270).
>
> **OBJECTIVES:** 1x ag-drone (*Size 1, 10 HP*)
>
> **ENEMY WAVE**
>
> **FOR 3 PCS:** 1x **CHAIN – VETERAN ELITE PRIEST** (Priest Traits: Fractal Assault, Greater Investiture; Veteran Traits: Insulated, Hacker, Veterancy [+Systems])
>
> 1x **PUNISHMENT – VETERAN ELITE PYRO** (Pyro traits: Explosive Jet, Napalm Bomb; Veteran traits: Parting Gift, Steel Jaw, Veterancy [+Engineering])
>
> **FOR 4 PCS:** +1x **SCOURER** (Supercharged)
>
> **FOR 5 PCS:** +1x **HIVE** (Grind Maniple)

DETAILS
The PCs must escort the ag-drone to the EZ and extract it by the end of the sixth round.

OUTCOME
PC VICTORY
If the PCs successfully extract the drone within six rounds, they get out safely just as Tyrell hits the detonator, causing an enormous explosion and pressure wave that flattens the trees, sends whipping winds over the clear-cut, and creates aftershocks that can be felt back in Evergreen. The blast creates a huge hole in the enemy line and the convoy skids through the burning remnants just in time. Tick one segment on the Defense of Evergreen clock and clear one segment on the Machine Horde clock.

PC DEFEAT
If the PCs fail to extract the ag-drone by the end of the sixth round, the Machine forces manage to disarm the explosives. Tick one segment on the Machine Horde clock. The PCs are forced to retreat back to Evergreen and the convoy is lost.

REWARDS
If the characters are successful, Tyrell offers his leftover blasting charges to the group as **EXOTIC GEAR**. One character can take his deployer, which can be installed immediately. It costs **0 SP** for the rest of this mission, but in future costs **SP** as usual.

Markey's Fusebox
2 SP, Deployable, Exotic Gear, Limited 2, Unique, Quick Action

Explosive Charge (SIZE 1/2, HP 10, EVASION 5, E-DEFENSE 5, HEAT CAP 10)

Expend a charge to set an explosive charge in a free adjacent space. It arms at the end of the round; once armed, it explodes if it takes any **damage or heat**. Characters within ⊙**3** must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or take **2d6 ✷** damage and be pushed out of the affected area, or as far as possible. On a success, they are still pushed but take half damage.

FOLLOWING UP
The PCs (and the convoy, if it was saved) push past the refugees at the gates, clearing a temporary path. Once the militia and PCs are inside Evergreen, Edena Ji orders the gates closed.

BEAT 16A.5:
A STAIN YOU CAN'T WASH OUT

Patience, through Edena, holds the militia at the walls of Evergreen. They close the checkpoint, park a pair of APCs behind the closed gates, and deny the refugees entry into the city.

Stragglers emerge from the treeline. In ones and twos they stagger out into the clear-cut, some with packs, some with only the clothes on their backs, running across the open, muddy ground for Evergreen. Meanwhile, the refugees already camped outside start filtering out of their makeshift settlement in greater numbers, making for the checkpoint. They demand entrance, crowding the closed gates. The guards on the ground brandish their rifles, ordering the refugees to get back, to get away from the gates. Beleaguered and outnumbered, they look to Edena for orders.

Edena Ji orders the militia to fire gas and flashbangs into the massed crowd, trying to make them disperse. The APCs rumble to life, their crews hurrying to uncap the autocannons and grenade launchers on their turrets. Despite the naked threat, some of the refugees charge the checkpoint. Others scatter or hurry to meet the survivors halfway as the treeline begins to shake. With rising fear, both the refugees and the militia at the walls realize the horde has reached Evergreen.

Shots ring out from along the wall – panicked militia troopers firing downrange. Some of the fleeing refugees fall, struck by stray rounds; others fling themselves to the ground, finding cover behind meager lumps of mud and rotting tree stumps. The dark movement at the trees is ceaseless, indistinct, a shifting mass of bodies that seems to be holding at the edge of the clear-cut. On the wideband, Edena Ji's panicked voice orders the militia to clear the checkpoint, to open fire on the refugees, cross-talking over Brava as she attempts to get the situation under control.

This is a decision point for the players. Do they shoot? Do they force the gates open? Do they open fire on the militia? Do they do nothing?

FIGHTING
Opening fire on the militia or attempting to open the gates by force prompts an immediate hostile response as the PCs are ordered to stand down. If they press the issue, allow them a chance to de-escalate the situation before proceeding into combat.

COMBAT:
BREAKPOINT

ENEMY FORCES
FOR 3-5 PCs: 1x **SQUAD** (Armored)
2x **VEHICLE ASSAULTS** (Auto-Targeting, High-Impact Rounds)

DETAILS
The militia stands down and surrenders if it is reduced to a single unit.

Winning an open fight with the militia rectifies the situation and gets the gates open, but immediately turns Patience, Edena Ji, and Landmark Colonial against the PCs (although this will quickly cease to matter). Additionally, clear two segments of the **CRT Relationship** clock. Hadura is deeply conflicted about the situation but orders her remaining troops to pull back from the gates. She remains sympathetic to the players but regrets the loss of her men.

TALKING
Alternatively, the PCs might try to persuade, intimidate, or order the militia to stand down and open the gates. To determine the outcome of this, use a quick **skill challenge**. Ask each character what they are doing to help and have them all make skill checks. To succeed, they need to roll more successes than failures. If they roll an equal number of successes and failures, have one character make one more check and take that as the final result.

If the PCs fail, they don't manage to talk or bully the militia down. They can resort to violence or let the situation play out.

OUTCOME
THE GATES STAY CLOSED
If the PCs fail to open the gates, fire on the refugees, or otherwise do nothing, the following situation plays out.

The militia opens fire, gunning down the refugees.

The last shots echo across the clear-cut, but the screams of the wounded last longer. A few of the living – you don't know how there are any – drag themselves away, moving so, so slowly. They don't seem to be fleeing anywhere, just staggering, shell-shocked, bleeding.

Clouds of gas hug the ground. Small fires smolder. Rain smothers the ruins of the camp.

"Body detail," one of the militia NCOs barks. "Volunteers?"

No one responds.

"Everyone in uniform today did this. Doesn't matter if you shot," the NCO shouts. "Now I'm gonna go make sure anyone alive out there gets help. Who's coming with me?"

Silence. The troopers look to each other, but stare into the middle distance. No one sees, no one wants to see what they did. They can't remember – did you shoot? Did I shoot? Who killed all those people?

"You fucking," the NCO spits. "You fucking cowards." He throws down his rifle and walks toward the checkpoint, hollering at the APC to move. It doesn't. He clambers on top, checking a body there – dead.

The NCO slumps down, sitting on the turret next to the corpse, and weeps.

A field of the dead stretches out beyond the checkpoint.

And beyond, dark shapes flow through the treeline…

THE CRT
Another factor that may play a part in this beat is the presence of Contingency White. Their arrival on Hercynia was prompted by other concerns – not a local refugee crisis – and their primary objectives don't require them to involve themselves in this matter. Nonetheless, if the PCs have stayed out of the CRT's business at the Governor's Farm, aided them, befriended them, or otherwise established a good relationship with some of them, the team may be willing to get involved.

If the PCs' relationship with the CRT is full, the CRT shows up to aid them. If this happens, the gates can be forced open without a fight as the militia immediately stands down, or closed without further problems (if the characters choose to do so).

Brava Hadura attempts to stop the massacre, but fails. The militia obeys Patience's orders. She is left despondent and resigns her post immediately, but her resignation is refused and she is instead demoted.

The militia troopers are terrified and inexperienced. It was their own officers that opened fire first. They are obviously shaken, their morale broken. Some desert or shoot their officers, while others turn their weapons on themselves in the days that follow. Either way, the size and morale of the militia shrinks, and should any attack come, Evergreen will fight at massively reduced capacity. Reduce the Defense of Evergreen clock by two segments.

THE GATES ARE OPENED
If the PCs succeed in opening the gates, things play out differently.

The refugees, with help from some of militia troopers, haul the checkpoint gates open and stream in. They're unarmed, carrying only what they could hold – their children, their elderly, the last of their clothes and goods. They're safe, for now.

Most run, hurrying to find safety and shelter, not entirely trusting that they'll find either inside Evergreen's walls. But that's a consideration for another moment, for another day.

For now, they're alive, they're inside. Those long nights of fear, the days of running through infested woods – behind them, for the moment.

"Thank you," says an elderly woman clutching her two children – no, they couldn't be hers, they must be her grandchildren – "You saved us. Thank you so much." She weeps with joy. A militia trooper helps her walk, taking one of the kids to ease her burden.

"They'll be set up in the upper floors of the flood zone," says an NCO, exhausted, sweat streaking the mud and grime on his skin. "It's what we've got free for now."

"Hey– hey, sarge?" A cry from the checkpoint gate. One of the troopers stands on top of the APC, rifle at her shoulder. "There's something moving in the trees," she says, looking through her scope. "A helluva lot of somethings."

You clamber atop the APC for a clearer view. The sight chills you. The tree line waves, though there is no wind. It's movement, endless movement below the canopy, shaking the forest as the tide of machines approaches.

ROUTE A: EVERGREEN

A massacre is avoided. Many refugees filter into Evergreen to claim vacant units. The militia remains at full strength, but the ranks are shot through with a different kind of venom: some troopers don't trust those who weren't willing to shoot, while others don't trust those who were. There will be difficulties down the line, but in the face of a greater threat, the militia stays united.

For allowing the gates to be opened, Brava Hadura is promptly dismissed from her post.

FOLLOWING UP

Regardless of what happens, the Machine continues to advance.

The encroaching wave stops just past the tree line, the first ranks halting in the muddy clear-cut. Ranks upon ranks of soldiers, as if from an ancient time, disappear into the woods. They stand in lines under fluttering, torn banners, holding broad, scuffed shields and long pikes. They are dressed in rags, tarps, and sheets, their garb pulled together from scrap and salvage. Their forces stretch in a long arc

before Evergreen. They must number in the hundreds of thousands.

A few stragglers from the Gray Towns hunker down behind the stumps of felled trees. One paces back and forth a hundred or so meters out from the walls, hurling insults at both Evergreen and the army of makeshift pikemen.

This army is made up of ranks upon ranks of subalterns, agricultural drones, and ancient military mechs. Some are new models, largely unarmed and unclothed, but others are old, hundreds of years old by the bleed-out code they're broadcasting. These ones wear old Union and auxiliary uniforms, threadbare and patched with what looks like indigenous fabrics and plastic tarpaulin.

The line stands silent and unmoving, but for the wind that plucks at the banner-topped pikes. Deeper, in the shadow of the woods, you can see more of them falling into formation behind the front rank.

An army, arranged for siege.
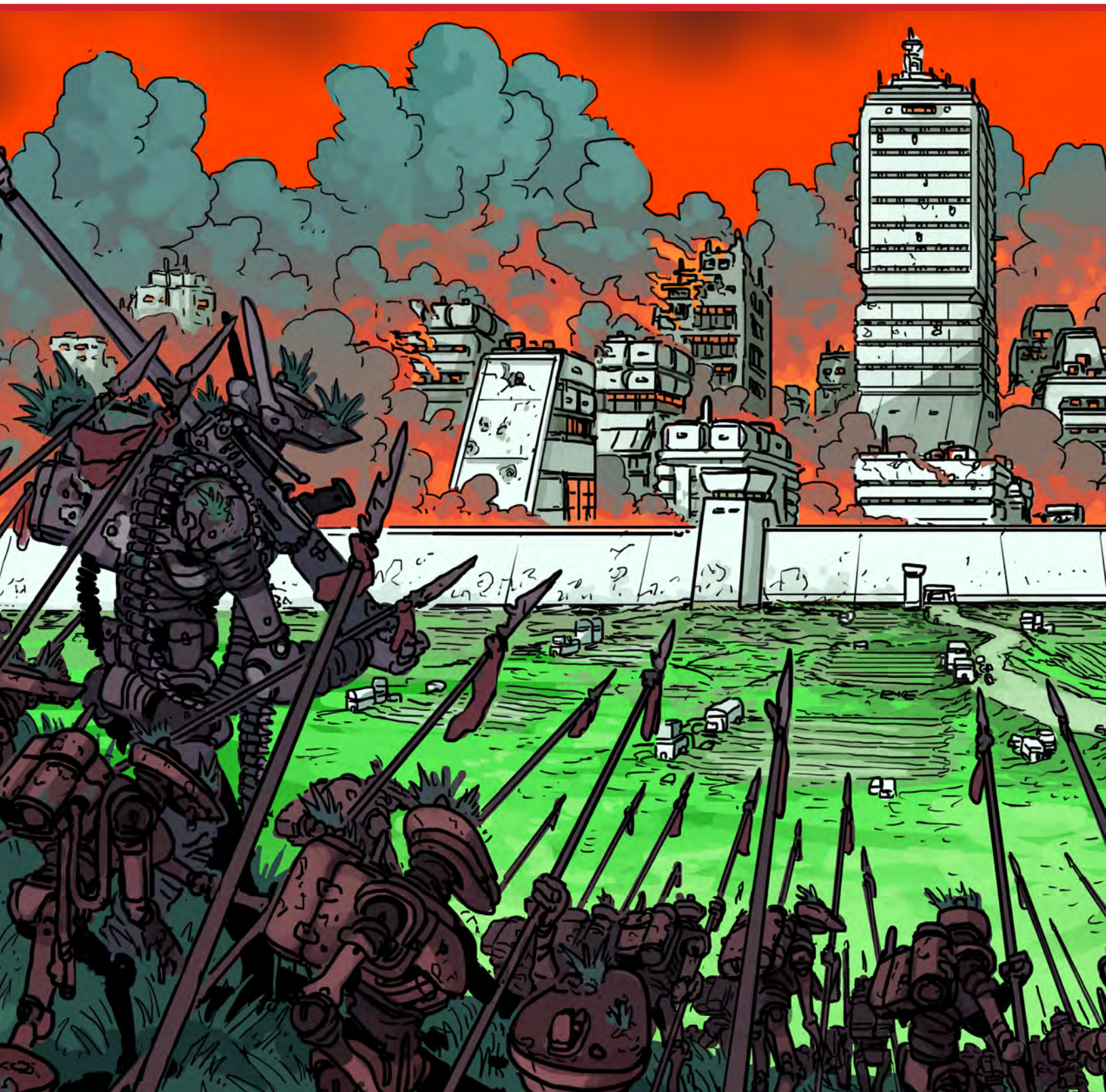
BEAT 16A.6:
MOUNTAINFALL

For a day or more, the army outside Evergreen's gates maintains a silent, static siege. Its ranks have grown, and you can see evidence of heavily armed drones moving up toward the rear.

Evergreen's streets reflect the siege state: human and subaltern militia soldiers stand posted at fortified checkpoints and rooftop gun pits, monitoring both the people of Evergreen and the army encamped outside its walls. If the PCs failed to prevent the massacre in **Beat 16A.5: A Stain You Can't Wash Out**, corpses litter the clear-cut outside the settlement, and the human troopers cover their faces. Either way, no one is allowed to venture beyond the city walls and there is a curfew at sundown. The curfew applies to the PCs and, surprisingly, the members of Contingency White, who the PCs might run into at the Bottom of the Well.

Because of her actions at the gates, Brava Hadura has been demoted to the lowest commissioned officer rank in the militia. Now, she manages the militia's storeroom, where she spends her time issuing uniforms and processing gear returns, packaging old boots, armor, and equipment so that they can be shipped to the Governor's Farm and rendered down into printer feed. She has arranged discreet payment for the PCs' mission to provide aid in the refugee camp, whatever their other actions, but her relationship with them from that point forward is strained at best. **Though characters receive this payment now, they won't have time to increase their LL until Downtime 4**, when the circumstances change substantially.

Edena Ji, meanwhile, has taken direct control of the militia and has continued to spend most of her time at the Farm.

Patience calls for a general colonial assembly, to be followed by a public address. They have fully isolated themselves, citing their emergency powers, and refuse all external requests for information. Additionally, omninet access has been severely restricted and all streaming news services seem to have been blocked. All outbound communications and municipal private communications are flagged to indicate they are monitored. Inbound communications do not arrive, simply appearing as "unresolved".

The refugee camp has been dispersed, one way or another. All the same, Evergreen's gates remain locked down.

There are a few tense hours before Patience's address. When it does come, the visual feed is piped through every municipal screen, over the municipal PA, and over the local omninet. Despite the crowds in the streets clustered around municipal screens, hunched over their slates, or sitting together in common rooms, Evergreen is silent but for the sound of the address.

The screen shows a still image, a slowly rotating Landmark logo. The still fades and is replaced by a shot of a plain podium set up in the entry hall of the council chambers. After a moment, Edena Ji emerges at the end of the hall, out of focus, in the deep background of the shot. She appears to be talking to someone out of frame, calm. She gestures to a folder she carries, nods, and then starts walking toward the podium. She looks tired; put together, but only just. Her clothes, of a fine make – not printed – are wrinkled. She sets the folder on the podium, opens it, clears her throat, and begins.

"Good morning, people of Evergreen. I know many of you are wondering why Patience and I have called this public address – and we will get to that – but first I wanted to assure you that you are not in danger. First, know that we have increased security around the city and bolstered our foot patrols with subalterns. In addition, we have increased print orders for armored vehicles and enacted curfews to ensure that the streets are safe and clear for our militia. Already, Landmark Colonial has forwarded a priority emergency request to the system authority, and Union has responded by directing a crisis management team here. You may have encountered them already.

"For the time being, any restrictions on movement are for your safety; the best place to be is inside your homes, so that our armed forces can better do their jobs. Evergreen's officers are here to keep you safe, but we need your cooperation to do so. In the meantime, you will see a new calendar pushed to your personal handhelds. It contains a clear schedule for the planned duration of the lockdown, new production quotas, a mechanism for requesting personal print orders, and other details. Any questions, comments, or concerns can be shared with the administration via Evergreen's municipal terminals. Patience and I thank you for your cooperation, and your understanding. Now, without further delay, I ..." Edena's voice gives out. Fatigue, stress. She clears her throat, looks under the podium. There's a glass of water there, which she drinks. Edena shuffles her papers, drawing out a second prepared statement.

"And, ah, with that," Edena says, reading from her notes. "I want to introduce our crisis manager." You can see her hands are shaking. "Beggar One, an officer of Overland/Kingwatcher, and the primary liaison of the Union mission to this world." Edena steps to the side of the podium. She looks down at the plush carpet of the Governor's Mansion.

At the end of the hall, a subaltern strides around the corner. It is tall, obviously milspec by its build. An old Union officer's broadcoat pinned over its shoulder gives its rank as colonel. Its brachial and crural armature is sleeved in tough fabric, faded from Union blue. It walks with an imperious swagger, the confidence of a tank rolling down the street of an occupied city. On its chest plating, a painted bundle of wheat, ancient numerals on either side. It's an old unit, you think. The subaltern reaches the podium and grabs the edges.

"Good–" the subaltern pauses, thinks. "Day. Citizens. Pursuant to Union joint resolution 2.CN.204.4504, I have assumed total theater control. From this moment on, this territory is under my protection."

An unseen order from off-camera. It is Patience's voice, but different. In the background of the shot, a pair of subalterns step around the corner where the hallway ends. They're dragging something behind them.

"You have been plagued by an unidentified enemy," continues Beggar One. Speaking seems to be an act of labor for the subaltern, not because of any physical obstructions, but because of a lack of use. The cadence is all wrong. As if whatever mind that controls it hasn't spoken in a long time. The subalterns in the background lurch toward the camera. Edena Ji covers her nose and steps a little out of frame, looking away.

"And you have suffered many dead."

The subalterns are hauling a body. Not a human one.

"I am here to show you your enemy," Beggar One says. It steps aside as the subalterns reach the podium. They drop the body and hurry to move the podium. The camera adjusts focus, pulls out to show the wider shot. There are more subalterns standing just out of frame and a handful of militia troopers, their faces covered. Edena covers her nose. The camera zooms in, focuses, and shows – for the first time in five hundred years – an Egregorian. The people around you gasp. One cries out. Muttered conversation spreads through the crowd around the public terminal. They were right, it wasn't just raiders or disgruntled homesteaders – it was the bugs. They're back.

The Egregorian is dull in death. A chitinous, arthropodal hulk, its feather-antennae russet, its carapace an oily olive-black. One of its legs has been cracked, shot off at the knee. Its body is stained with a deep, purple-red – a kind of blood – from the wounds that brought it down. The camera lingers. You see it wears a kind of webbing: leather straps that fasten additional chitin armor over sensitive areas. There are brilliantly colored patches of epidermis on its neck and sides. Iridescent, ruby reds, magentas, and violets.

"This is a juvenile Egregorian warrior," says Beggar One, off camera. "You can see that even the young are prepared to kill."

The camera zooms in on its head, ruined by shot. A subaltern manipulator reaches into frame and turns what is left. The dead Egregorian's mandible flops open, revealing rows of black teeth, brutal geometry meant to shred flesh.

"The white lines here," Beggar One narrates, as the subaltern continues to manipulate the corpse's head. Scrawled lines of paint loop around the dead Egregorian's orbital openings. "Warpaint. Savage marks, meant to guarantee safe passage from this life back to its Overmind, should it die in combat."

More whispers. Someone toward the back of the crowd hurries out the door, crying that they need to get their kids. The tension is rising, adrenaline in the back of your throat. You're trying to keep calm, but the crowd might break.

"This one successfully transmitted back to its mind," Beggar One says in a monotone voice. "A good thing. As we were able to track this transmission back to its home hive."

The shot changes. A mountain. You recognize the profile.

"That's just across the river!" Someone shouts. The crowd surges, some rushing outside to see for themselves, the image on the screen insufficient. A layer of artifice between the threat and the self.

"Acting in my capacity as theater commander." Beggar One's voice is monotonous, steady. Words spoken without taking a breath. Uncanny. "I have authorized the removal of this persistent threat."

Screams come from outside. You wonder why – there's nothing happening on screen that would warrant them.

"You are safe," Beggar One says. "Union is here."

There is a flash, and the mountain explodes.

Beggar One has detonated an orbital weapon on the mountain above the underground Hercynian city of Daylight, blasting it to dust. The weapon triggers a series of massive, shallow quakes, limited in their geographic spread but terrible in their destructive power.

The shaking is so intense that it is all the characters can do to hang on to something sturdy. As soon as it ends, it begins again, aftershocks rippling out from the tortured earth.

AFTERMATH

Almost immediately, the quakes knock out most of Evergreen's power grid – only the Governor's Farm still has its lights on. It is … not-night. The sky is black. A hard, hot wind howls low over the city, blanketing ash, silica dust, and thick smoke over everything. The dark sky ripples with lightning and sporadic rain scrapes the city. The sun is a perfect, small disk in the sky, visible but fading as the cloud cover thickens.

The ground trembles. If anyone could see the mountain through the dust and ash, they would see that it is gone – a massive crater is all that remains. Thankfully, there appears to be no radiation; whatever killed it was clean.

Over the next hour or so, more earthquakes tear through Evergreen, aftershocks and weaker trembling. The temperature drops steadily and ash falls from the all-encompassing haze.

Beggar One blew up the mountain with something dropped from orbit. One militia trooper the PCs encounter in the streets claims they saw it: the weapon flashed like sunlight off of water, and fell silently, dropping onto the mountain west of the city.

To make matters worse, between the shaking of the earth and the odd muffling of the world by the falling ash, there is another sound: marching. The armies of the Machine – of Beggar One – are marching on the city. Between the advancing forces of Beggar One and the internal fighting among the militia ranks from the crisis at the gates, Evergreen seems all but doomed.

BEAT 16A.7
ESCAPE FROM EVERGREEN

Make clear to the players that, for the moment, any attempt to defend the city is doomed: Beggar One's forces are inexorable. They have no morale to be broken, they cannot be routed. They number at least a hundred thousand strong, and they surround Evergreen.

THE MACHINE

Over the next few hours, the Machine's forces sweep through Evergreen, violently subjugating anyone they come across. They quickly overwhelm the colony's remaining defenses and proceed to methodically and coldly slaughter any who put up a resistance. Oddly, unarmed civilians and surrendering combatants are spared and corralled to a particular corner of the city in imitation of old SecComm rules of engagement.

The infection paracode runs rampant through what systems are left, bringing the automated systems of Evergreen fully under Beggar One's control.

THE COLONY AND LANDMARK

The colony's infrastructure has sustained heavy damage from the earthquakes and continual attacks, and communications are almost completely shot, limited to shortwave radio. Patience, if the characters have a link to them, goes completely dark.

Visibility in Evergreen is awful. The streets are choked with dust, the sun is barely visible, and the screams and battle shouts of the desperate and dying echo off the ruins of shops, homes, and warehouses. Blossoms of flame erupt through the smog and the rattle of gunfire and tracer bullets makes it hard to think clearly. Over it all, the screeching, heavy sound of thousands of metal limbs beating down on the streets of the city is constant.

The **Landmark CRT** either chooses to stay and fight, or is scattered in the chaos. They can be found later in the prison camp. If the PCs have earned the assistance of one of the CRT's members as an NPC ally, that character can be convinced to stay and aid them during this beat, escaping the imprisonment that faces their comrades.

PLAYING IT OUT

This beat is unique in that it's best played narratively, even if fighting is involved. Evergreen falls regardless of what the characters do, so offering them encounters when the outcome is inevitable will just slow the game down. For the time being, the task facing the players is figuring out what they can salvage and how they can begin to organize to fight back.

CLOCKS
DEFENSE OF EVERGREEN

Before you do anything else, look at the **Defense of Evergreen** clock. This represents the time and opportunity the PCs have to escape from the city, pick up resources, and accomplish goals before it is completely overrun.

For each **major goal** the PCs want to accomplish – anything that would take some time to accomplish – clear two segments. Major goals include:

• helping a group of people escape from the city entirely
• sabotaging a building
• preparing a trap
• taking out a machine commander
• gathering intel on the Machine forces.

For a **minor goal** that would only take a little time, untick one segment. Minor goals include:

• picking up their stuff from the Bottom of the Well
• checking in on an NPC and getting them out of the city
• momentarily defending a group of people from an attack.

By unticking segments, the PCs **automatically accomplish these goals**. You can still play these scenes out, roleplay, and so on, but no skill checks are required to complete these tasks – they are successful.

That said, if you do want to make the PCs' lives more complicated, you can use the **Machine Horde** clock – see below.

MACHINE HORDE

The **Machine Horde** clock represents the strength and coherence of the attacking Machine forces. You can clear segments to throw complications the PCs' way. When you do so, the PCs **don't automatically succeed at their goal**. Instead, they must play it out like any other scene to see if they're successful or not.

To force the PCs into a **major complication** or tough situation that they might need to fight, sneak, or think their way out of, clear two segments. Major complications might include:

- the arrival of a Machine patrol
- getting stuck in a collapsing building
- being forced to take cover from artillery fire
- evading a massive Machine foe.

Failure to deal with a major complication results in not only the failure of the PCs' current goal, but their capture and transfer to a prison camp in the depot district at the edge of the city (see p. 148).

To force the PCs to deal with a **minor complication** that will delay or hinder them, clear one segment. Minor complications might include:

- someone going missing
- a hard choice about who to help escape
- sudden equipment breakdown
- the appearance of a few stray Machine scouts.

Failure to deal with a minor complication results in the failure of the PCs' goal, but not their capture.

RUNNING OUT OF TIME

Once the PCs run out of segments on the **Defense of Evergreen** clock, they are out of time. Now, they need to decide their ultimate response to the fall of the city. They have roughly four options for dealing with the events in Evergreen:

1. trying to defend the colony
2. going to ground inside the city
3. attacking Beggar One directly
4. fleeing.

These options are discussed below. Make sure that the consequences of each are abundantly clear.

> You can use clocks to track the progress of whatever scheme the PCs hatch. The best bet is to set out a six-, eight-, or 10-segment clock, with larger clocks representing more complex plans. When the characters roll to act, fill in segments depending on the results: one segment for a **9 or less**, two for **10–19**, and three for **20+**.
>
> If something happens that introduces the possibility of failure (e.g., a major or minor complication) or there is some chance of the PCs being captured, set out a six-segment **Failure** clock for the relevant obstacle. When the PCs act to overcome the obstacle, tick two segments if they roll **9 or less** and one segment on **10–19**.

OPTION 1: LAST-DITCH DEFENSE

The PCs might be able hold out in some kind of established perimeter, but only for a time. If they take this course of action, set out clocks to represent how many additional people they can rescue or evacuate from the city before they are overrun. As they fight, the PCs' systems are overwhelmed by broadcast demands to surrender.

It should quickly become clear to the players that this is a fight they cannot win. They can abandon the defensive perimeter or they can continue to fight. In the latter case, they are quickly captured. Any combatants that are captured are ushered into the beginnings of an ad hoc prison camp located in the depot district of Evergreen. If the PCs' mechs have taken any damage or been destroyed, they are repaired or salvaged by the Machine's forces and moved to a warehouse for repurposing.

OPTION 2: GOING TO GROUND

The PCs might choose to remain in the city and go to ground, hiding, gathering information, and figuring out how to proceed next.

Characters that choose this option will have to find somewhere to keep their heads down. Play out a **skill challenge** with two six-segment clocks: **Go to Ground** and **Captured**. If **Go to Ground** is filled out before **Captured**, the PCs successfully manage to hide; if **Captured** is filled in first, they're captured and put in prison.

To pull off this plan, the characters will also need to stash their mechs somewhere outside the city or on its outskirts – there are no suitable locations inside, no matter how hard they look. This is important because it affects the finale in **BEAT 23: SPLIT-KNUCKLE HAYMAKER**, because that beat requires that any assault on the city has to come from the outside.

OPTION 3: ATTACK ON BEGGAR ONE

Beggar One's subaltern, essentially a puppet the NHP is inhabiting, can be found in the Governor's Farm along with Patience and Edena Ji. The PCs can push for a fight there, entering the central complex on foot, attempting to rescue Edena, and recovering what they can from the Governor's Farm. If they take this course of action, the PCs have the support of Brava Hadura and Evergreen's human militia, but Beggar One and Patience's forces in the Farm are tough and numerous.

This showdown is a narrative battle with the outcome represented by a 10-segment Storming the Farm clock. When the PCs deal damage with their pilot weapons to anyone in this battle, fill in segments of the clock equal to the damage they deal. Since this is narrative play, NPCs don't take independent actions. Instead, they act as part of the story or as the consequence of PC actions. Any subalterns here deal **2–3 ⌀** with their weapons.

As soon as the opportunity presents itself, Edena tries to surrender to the PCs. Even if the PCs manage to kill Beggar One's subaltern, its armies don't stop. This might be a good opportunity to remind your players that NHPs are not the bodies they control, but the caskets from which they project their will and command. In short: Beggar One's real body is elsewhere. If the PCs are on good terms with the CRT, one of those NPCs might remind them of this; otherwise, it is information they have likely learned in the course of their careers and prior experiences.

If the PCs complete the clock, they can then attempt to go to ground (as above) or flee the city (as below). They also have the harrowing option of killing Patience, as the administrative NHP's casket is in the cold-storage facility beneath the Governor's Farm. Destroying the NHP is a matter of engaging the routine protocols in the casket where Patience is stored and requires a successful skill check, with failure meaning there is not enough time to accomplish it safely. Patience is catatonic at this point and does not respond to the PCs.

Killing Patience here will prevent Beggar One from consuming them in **MISSION 5**. If this does happen, Beggar One must spend more time reconstructing Patience's profile and records when attempting to integrate itself with Evergreen's infrastructure.

OPTION 4: FLEEING THE CITY

With some difficulty, the PCs can flee the city.

Play out a skill challenge with two six-segment clocks: **Escape Evergreen** and **Captured**. If **Escape Evergreen** is filled out before **Captured**, the group escapes into the wilderness; if **Captured** is filled out first, they're caught before they can flee and put in prison.

If the PCs are on good terms with Dthall Ordo and the Hercynians (despite their refusal to go with her in **BEAT 15: END OF THE BEGINNING OF THE LINE**), she tracks them down a few days later. They can refuse her plea for aid and go their own way, but if they go with her, they start **DOWNTIME 4** with the survivors of Hivehome.

ROUTE B: HIVEHOME

This is the route for PCs who decided to take a chance at peace with the Hercynian United Cities. They are led to Hivehome by Dthall Ordo, the wounded Hercynian ranger left to tend to her comrades. She is well placed to make introductions; her father is Ilyr Ordo, the commander of Hivehome's rangers and the current leader of the HUC's coalition army.

Hivehome is a few days travel from Evergreen: getting there is simple enough, as the old hive tunnels are wide and well-preserved, clear of any major obstacles that might impede progress. From the terminal where the PCs found Ordo, all they need to do is walk with their mechs.

BEAT 16B.1:
UNDERGROUND, AS THE LIGHT FADES

After days of walking, you see it. Light. Strange this deep, but warm light spills out from the cave mouth. Sunlight? No, but something like it.

"Lamplight," Dthall whispers. Everyone whispers in the depths. "Hivehome. Here, let me lead," Dthall limps to the front, gently pushing you back. "It is likely that the rangers at the mouth ahead have us sighted – I'd not want you to get us shot."

Dthall leads, her hands up. "Rangers approaching!" she calls out. "Hello? Rangers approaching," she calls again. She looks back, shakes her head. "They should have called back," she says. "Stay behind me, let's move fast."

You emerge from the mouth of the cave onto what Dthall later tells you is a "midwall port" – a natural shelf before a cave mouth, one of many entrances into Hivehome's chamber. The scale of the vast space spread out before you defies your vision. An ocean disappears to either side of your vantage, filling the gently curving cavity – a space that could fit a thousand Evergreens – before disappearing into the dark void.

Kilometers distant, light blooms from the water like a sun resting on the waves: Hivehome, making its own day. The city rises from the water, an incandescent plateau illuminating the ocean and the distant roof of the cavity, where flecks and massive veins of precious metals glimmer like distant stars. Smaller satellite islands surround it, linked to the main, mighty plateau by sparkling filaments of light.

It is cold on the midwall port. A strong wind scrapes across it, brining a cutting chill, a scent of salt. You laugh – the galaxy and the worlds in it never fail to surprise. A shout draws your attention: Dthall, striding across the midwall toward a collection of stone huts around a squat tower. Warm light burns from inside the shuttered buildings and behind the low structures, the

tower rumbles with activity – a gondola anchor, you guess, as you watch carriages rumble in and out of it along a thick cable leading off the edge of the port.

Dthall reaches the first outbuilding and yanks the door open, eliciting shouts of surprise and warning from the people inside.

Hivehome is built into a titanic underground cavity, massive on the same scale as great lakes, small seas, and other globally defining terrain features. As such, there are multiple ways in at different levels. The PCs emerge onto a midwall port near Hivehome. Midwall ports sit between the ceiling and waterline, and connect to the many satellite islands that scatter out from Hivehome by heavy gondolas, funiculars, or wide switchbacked cargo ramps.

There are two other types of port in Hivehome: highwall and lowall ports. Highwall ports are built into the cavern's ceiling. These, by and large, do not provide access to Hivehome, but act as cupolas for the city-state's security forces; many of them are home to gun batteries and signal huts looking down over the city and out over the water. Some, built into the cavern's columnar stalactites, do provide access to the city via spiraling staircases, but these are precarious and rarely used. Lowall ports are right on or just above the water, providing access to canals that run on to other hive-states.

The midwall port through which the PCs arrive is a wide shelf that juts from the cavern wall, connected to one of Hivehome's satellite islands by a well-maintained gondola. The carriages are large and sturdy, capable of transporting groups of people and substantial loads of cargo or vehicles.

The tunnels and transport systems of Hivehome are large enough for old Egregorian war forms to move through – consequently, they are large enough for mechs, although the arrival of mechs in the center of the city would cause quite a stir. Dthall suggests leaving them at the ranger barracks at the edge of the city, where they will be well cared for.

A small contingent of rangers – too young and too old for the front lines – guards the gondola. They're not from Hivehome, but Mycol Fields, a smaller, largely aboveground city-state east of Evergreen. The rangers are curious, if not also cautious.

They telegraph (literally) the news of the PCs arrival to Hivehome so that Dthall's father Ilyr can prepare quarters for them. Talking with the rangers further reveals that Hivehome is currently hosting the commanders of the HUC's coalition army who, they are sure, are discussing whether or not to call the war against the Machine "done".

INTRODUCTIONS

Upon stepping off the gondola at mainland Hivehome, the PCs are greeted by a well-armed contingent of rangers who demand answers. While Dthall's word as a ranger and as the daughter of Ilyr Ordo shields the PCs, they are taken into protective custody both to protect them from the crowd and to ensure they get a quick audience with the city's officers.

The midwall gondola bounces to a slow crawl as it enters the well-lit lower anchor station and a crowd of rangers hustle to grab the cart and stabilize it. They haul open the doors and you are overwhelmed by the walloping smell of hot oils and street carts, the shout and clamor of the crowd, and the bright light of the sunlamps.

The cries of the civilian population, the soldiers holding them back, the rough commands of the ranger guards at the gondola door. The commotion is equal parts curiosity, hostility, cheering, confusion – the guards help you out, two to a person, their rifles slung, their hold commanding. Dthall is greeted by an officer, who throws an arm across her shoulders and pulls her close. The two shout a conversation under the roar of the crowd, not hostile, but hurried.

You're guided through the crowd, an elemental press of bodies, spit, sweat, and curses. The rangers shove you forward. You can hear Dthall shouting behind that everything is fine, to hurry to the cars.

You see something as you are helped roughly into a waiting van. At first, you're not sure what you've seen and you profile it quickly as one of the rangers you encountered around Evergreen. This quick recognition holds for a heartbeat, and then falls apart. The doors to the van slam shut, the crowd's cries become a percussive tattoo on the van's side panels, doors, traveling with you as it pushes slowly through the press.

You did see it, though. It was taller than the humans around it, its carapace more of a deep emerald than the black of the rangers' armor – healthy and alive. Alive.

An Egregorian. Opalescent eyes below a ridged crown. A beauty in the aquiline sculpt of its jade carapace broken by the unnerving realization that the body carries an inhuman mind. It wore a bolt of rich crimson cloth crossing its chest, over one shoulder and down, and a pair of fine golden chains around its neck. It was bent to the side, conferring with the human next to it.

What a terrible and beautiful thing – an Egregorian. Alive.

The van doors slam shut. You pull away, into a galaxy far more vast than you thought.

The PCs are afforded spartan quarters in a quiet block near the city's administrative district, the street they're quartered on blocked at either end by bollards and guards. After a day, they're informed that they may explore the city, but not leave it without permission from Dthall. If they wish to leave their quarters, they will be accompanied by a pair of handlers. The rangers are polite, but firm, and seem happy to explore the city with the PCs, explain anything they might encounter, and participate in light conversation.

Over the next day or two, the attitude of the people in the city toward the PCs shifts from fear to curiosity as they realize they and the surface-dwellers are much alike.

Several areas are off-limits to the PCs, including the entirety of the Overmind's Palace, all military sites, and the lowports along the shores. They are allowed to visit the market districts, the parks, and the entertainment districts of the city while they wait for an audience with the commanders.

Dthall quickly pays a visit to the characters' quarters and get down to brass tacks, explaining the situation and their next mission.

MISSION 4B: RALLYING CRY

RIPLEY: "You sent them out there and you didn't even warn them, Burke. Why didn't you warn them?"

BURKE: "Look, maybe that ship didn't even exist, right? And if I'd made it a major security situation, the Administration would've stepped in. Then no exclusive rights, nothing."

BURKE: (Shrugs)

BURKE: "It was a bad call, that's all."

– Aliens, 1986

MISSION BEATS

BEAT 16B.2: HIVEHOME

BEAT 16B.3: WAYWARD SONS AND DAUGHTERS

   COMBAT: DEATH VALLEY

BEAT 16B.4: TERROR'S FAVOR

   COMBAT: ANNELIDA

BEAT 16B.5: LAST CALL IN EGREGORE CROSS

BEAT 16B.6: TUMBLEDOWN

   COMBAT: ABADDON

BRIEFING

Dthall is brief and straightforward: she doesn't believe that Hivehome or Evergreen will survive alone. Now that she's certain Evergreen isn't on the side of the Machine and all the blood has been shed over a misunderstanding, she's more convinced than ever that uniting the disparate communities and making amends is the only possible way to victory.

In a few days, the leaders of the HUC are going to have a meeting to decide how to proceed with the war against the Machine. The PCs will be present for this meeting as representatives of Evergreen.

In the meantime, they have opportunities to make inroads with the various factions of Hivehome's leadership (in **BEAT 16B.3: WAYWARD SONS AND DAUGHTERS** and **BEAT 16B.4: TERROR'S FAVOR**). Since there is limited time, they will only be able to aid one group (assisting either **Dthall Ordo** or **Terror**, an Egregorian commander). Their decision will affect the events of **BEAT 16B.5: LAST CALL IN EGREGORE CROSS**. The PCs could skip both beats and simply wait for their audience but make clear that doing so means they will have little clout at the meeting and will also miss out on any rewards from Dthall and Terror.

GOAL:	Convince the city-states of the HUC to rally under one banner, come to the aid of Evergreen, and continue the war against the Machine.
STAKES:	If the HUC is not convinced to aid Evergreen, the Hercynians won't come to Evergreen's aid in **MISSION 5** without some extra effort.
REWARDS:	Characters can receive **EXOTIC GEAR** by completing sorties for Dthall or Terror. After this mission, the HUC will also provide enough support in the form of salvage, recovered license fragments, lost tech, and sheer ingenuity that they can progress to **LL4**.
RESERVES:	Establish what reserves or resources the PCs have available prior to this mission. This is especially important as characters may lose access to them after Hivehome's destruction.

CLOCKS

Take note of the Machine Horde and Defense of Evergreen clocks. At the end of the mission, they will determine how Evergreen fared in the absence of the PCs.

BEAT 16B.2:
HIVEHOME

Hivehome is the bright heart of the Hercynian United Cities. The largest of the city-states, it has the population of a large metropolitan city and occupies a vast constellation of islands that rise up from a large underground ocean. The ocean around Hivehome measures many thousands of kilometers across a network of vast chambers, fissures, caverns, and cavities. The largest chambers in this system – like the one in which Hivehome resides – are large enough to have their own weather systems.

Though the subterranean world is deep below the surface, vents and columns connect the two worlds, freshwater spilling through in tall, narrow columns much like rain. In Hivehome, the Hercynians have built wide basins above the city to capture some of the columns, feeding the city's elevated aqueducts. Some of the rain columns are cyclical, dependent on the flow of rivers and lakes on the planet's surface. These seasonal rain columns are directed over public plazas, more aesthetic than infrastructural. They were once meant to be decorative, interactive water features for Egregorian young. Now they rain over algae-slick mosaics, the plazas occupied by Hercynian street-vendors, the rain columns used to feed cultivating pools filled with cave-fish and crustaceans.

Hivehome is entirely populated, the old Egregorian workers' quarters and noble halls converted to human standards of comfort. Thriving industries of mycology, fishing, and crustacean-husbandry keep the people fed, and a similarly bustling trade in aboveground agriculture – growing herbs, harvesting spices, and cultivating local wheat and vegetable crops – makes that food worth eating. These farms are typically situated near hive mouths and stay between small and medium in size, meant to blend in to local tree cover. Aboveground farming is a recent development (within the last or so 200 years) given the long-lasting effects of Union's TBK campaign and the lingering threat of discovery by Beggar One.

The typical Hivehome domicile is made of supple, smooth-finished stone. Most of these structures were crafted millennia ago by Egregorian artisans. These homes tend to be overlarge with ceilings around three meters tall. The Hercynians cover their ceilings with wormsilk tapestries to make the spaces feel less vast, less cold. In most cases, domiciles are comprised of a large common room divided by wicker screens to give some privacy to those who live there. The Hercynians spread several generations of a family out among three or more adjacent common rooms (depending on their wealth), connected by human-carved passages into which doors are set. The "best" homes on the capital island are at the edge of the plateau and have windows and balconies looking out over the sea.

As Hivehome is a city built within a cave, it is a city without sunlight. To fix this, the first humans to occupy the hive fabricated and installed a massive network of warm UV lamps at varying levels throughout the city. These sunlights burn and dim according to a regular circadian cycle, and keeping them running is a massive undertaking: it is a proud job among the Hercynians to be a lamplighter. The Egregorians, for their part, have learned to live with the lighting, with newer generations beginning to adapt toward light and away from their old morphologies.

The capital city is a forest of stone domes and spires built atop the largest central island of the archipelago. It is steep and stepped. To ascend and descend its steps, pedestrians can use city streets and public stairs, as well as the city's funiculars, gondolas, and elevators. Atop the whole pile is an octagonal, vaulted structure topped by a massive mosaic dome, itself crowded with walks and balconies – the Overmind's Palace, the Dome of the Heavens. The old seat of the Overmind is located under the central dome; occupying its center is a circular plinth. The Palace is the administrative heart of Hivehome, where Endeavor and the HUC high command keep their offices. It is open to those with the proper clearances or permission.

All of Hivehome has been explored, mapped, and occupied. Everyone who lives there is Hercynian by birth, their culture shaped by old Union customs and a contrite, steward's relationship with the world they occupy. The Hercynians have some old Union tech in the form of centuries-old comp/con units, electricity generated by coldcores salvaged from scrapped mechs, and various old icons of human tech – especially weapons and machines of war – but do not have printers, access to blinkspace, or omninet tech. Everything else they have is the product of salvage, scrap, and ingenuity.

NOTABLE LOCATIONS IN HIVEHOME

The Midisle Quays are the busiest sea ports in Hivehome. Jutting into the dark sea and canaled deep into the rock under Hivehome's bulk, the Quays are docks and warehouses both for local commerce ships and those from outlying, minor island towns.

Gondola Carousels can be found across Hivehome, linking the city to its satellite islands as well as midwall and highwall ports. They are popular methods of mass transit for work and pleasure, accessible to all. Busiest during commute hours, each carousel is decorated in the art and characters of the neighborhoods they serve, and are common meeting spots for business of any kind.

Rockarun Park, **Five Points**, **Carousel Row**, **Domefound**, and **Market Street** are busy residential neighborhoods in Hivehome where Hercynians and Egregorians live in mixed company. Built with the characteristic high density of Hivehome's "wallshare" multifamily homes, most amenities are no more than a twenty-minute walk away. In especially hard storms, the least-elevated neighborhoods (Market Street and Five Points) often experience some flooding.

Cenote, **Skyline**, and **the Colonnades** are generally known in Hivehome as the "upscale" neighborhoods. Higher up the steps of the city, these three regions feature many more detached homes, plazas, private offices, and restaurants (as opposed to the cart parks, dining halls, and cafeterias of the lower regions).

The Dome of the Heavens is the formal Hercynian name for the Overmind's Palace, the central building of Hivehome and the administrative heart of the Hercynian United Cities. A grand dome formed from marble and local steel, the Dome of the Heavens is just over three hundred meters in diameter and features a mosaic representation of the night sky above Hercynia on its inner surface. Under the dome is the **Overmind's Plinth**, where Endeavor sits. The outbuildings and perimeter halls that surround the Palace also hold the civilian and military-administrative command offices of the HUC.

Helios Highpoint is the largest solar lamp array above Hivehome and the central force control hangtower for the HUC Rangers; it is the headquarters for active-duty command, in contrast to high command, which can be found at the Dome of the Heavens.

The Marble Arcade is part public museum and part research college. Located in the Colonnades neighborhood, the Arcade is entirely dedicated to the preservation, restoration, interpretation, study, and display of Egregorian artifacts from before and during the Crisis. The Arcade is especially popular with empaths and their partners, who often attend regular classes and learning sessions offered by the instructors there.

The Rainfall Fields is a concentrated "field" of rainfall basins in Carousel Row and a popular park. During Solo Terra's winter the channels and crevasses that connect Hivehome's ceiling to the surface of the world feed the Rainfall Fields with a steady torrent of water, shutting down a significant section of the park (but putting on quite a show, and keeping the city supplied with clean, rock-filtered water besides).

The **Catholic Union Cathedral** and the **Tomb of St. Tellus** are a large cathedral and sepulcher in the Cenote neighborhood, where the Hercynian church of Catholic Union keeps its headquarters. The Tomb of St. Tellus is a holy site dedicated to the remains of St. Tellus, though his earthly remains consist only of a femur and vestments. A folk saint canonized by the Catholic Union on Hercynia (but not yet by the broader Catholic Union church, due to Hercynia's isolation from the rest of the galaxy), St. Tellus was said to have been a martyr who led human survivors through the aftermath of the Hercynian Crisis to find safety in the hives. The veneration of St. Tellus continues to thrive among the Union Catholics of Hercynia, making his resting place an important religious site for the people of Hivehome.

THE UNITED CITIES AND THE EGREGORIANS

Hercynian and Egregorian society is marked by humanity's bloody arrival on this world. The ancestors of the humans who live on Hercynia now scoured the planet with terrible weapons, waging mass xenocide against the native Egregorians. Unable to deny their colonial past, the Hercynians of today attempt to live in harmony with the world, gently encouraging the nascent, revived Egregorians to grow into back into their former strength. This is complicated, fraught work, and there are many schools of thought regarding how to best approach this task, from the conservative and paternalistic to the radical. To the chagrin of those at either pole, the majority of Hercynians strike a middle path: an attempt at harmony.

For the first time in 500 years, an Overmind sits on the plinth of the Overmind's Palace in Hivehome. This Overmind, named Endeavor by the Hercynians who found them, is just over two hundred years old, which seems to place them somewhere in late adolescence. Their presence has catalyzed the awakening of thousands of dormant Egregorians; thanks to Endeavor's efforts, the Egregorian population has grown to number in the tens of thousands and continues to increase year by year.

For the Hercynians, the Egregorian presence is welcome: the rise of the new Egregorians points to the success of Hercynian stewardship over the world. Together,

the two species work to build out the city, to discover and explore lost hives. Egregorians and humans can communicate via vocalized speech – the Egregorians, by virtue of being born anew and raised in Hercynian society, speak the local dialect of Union Common. They also share their old language, Witness, an evocative shared subjectivity (a "gestalt hive-mind") in which communication involves not only the spoken word, but also has additional components encompassing emotion, personal memory, and ancestral knowledge.

Despite the dominant cultural impulse toward a middle path (or, perhaps, in light of it), harmonious coexistence between humans and Egregorians has been put to the test: first by the post-Crisis resuscitation of numerous dormant, war-form Egregorians, and now in the form of the ongoing conversation between Endeavor, the leader of the Egregorians in the HUC, and the Hercynian leadership. Endeavor is not only a political leader, but a cultural one who helped to develop the new doctrine of cultural revival and integration with humanity. A longtime proponent of the New Doctrine, Endeavor's zeal has recently dimmed.

In the present, Hercynian humans and Egregorians live in an integrated society with a four-century history of cooperation. Egregorians and humans often find themselves forming empathic bonds as a result of humanity's nascent capacity to Witness – to "speak" in Egregorian – and through shared labor. Egregorians, while frightening to those who have never encountered them before, adjust easily to human cultural norms, conceptions of language, and tool use. Humans adapt just as easily to some Egregorian cultural practices, but many aspects of

the gestalt remain locked behind the complexities of understanding Witness at a high level.

> When characters speak Witness in a text box or other description, their dialogue appears [in brackets] like this.

While it is difficult for the Egregorians to rediscover, reestablish, and preserve classical Egregorian culture, work in that field continues daily. What is known now has largely been cobbled together from the records, artifacts, and customs that survived the Crisis; together with their human companions, Egregorians work to grow their society, marrying the rediscovered communal traditions of their gestalt with more individualized human-perspective subjectivities. Steadily, if slowly, the Egregorians grow again.

Hivehome and the other city-states of the HUC are places of hope on a wounded world. They are not only the sites of colonial friction – and, maybe, healing – but also of war. The Hercynian United Cities are under the direct threat of annihilation by the steadily advancing Machine. This has been a long war – fifty years long – and a hungry one: the dead are buried in pits, now.

At this point, though, the front – long held at a battered crossroads near Hivehome called Egregore Cross – has changed. And not a day too soon: the rangers at the Cross can count on two hands the number of bullets and shells they have left. With the Machine seemingly shifting to target Evergreen and the world above, the confederated city-states of the HUC face a difficult question: do they use this time to breathe, rest, and recover their strength – or do they strike out and mount an aggressive defense, taking the fight to the new front?

HIVEHOME DAILY LIFE

ROLL 1D20

This table offers a selection of Hivehome's sights and sensations that the PCs might encounter.

1-2	Fishermen pull in a haul of cave crustaceans and splay their catch on the docks. Humans and Egregorians work side by side, sorting the catch.
3-4	An old Egregorian carefully carves the exterior of a dwelling with intricate whorls. If asked, they respond that the carvings are the history of the dwelling's occupants, some of whom have just passed.
5-6	The low chirp and hum of cavern fauna can be heard, only picking up as the "evening" falls over Hivehome.
7-8	A technician repairs the cavern lamps, causing them to flicker like a miniature sun.
9-10	A colorful procession moves slowly through the street. A funeral procession, though the bright costumes and the music are unfamiliar.
11-12	Rangers train with their mechs at the barracks yard east of the city. Their movements are cautious and their training precise and rigorous; repairs to their machines must be performed by hand.
13-14	Lamps of various colors illuminate the steps of the Overmind's Palace.
15-16	A large, central market square bustles with activity. It is somewhat disorienting to see so many non-human bodies engaged in much the same commerce as their human compatriots, but oddly comforting. This square has existed for many years and some of the shops are quite famous.
17-18	A gondola passes overhead, its cable shuddering in the cavern breeze. One daring ranger hangs off the side.
19-20	Boats drift out on the lake, lazily trawling in the heat of the artificial day.

HIVEHOME NPCS

ROLL 1D20

Use this table to generate some of the people the PCs might meet out and about in Hivehome.
You can use it for hooks, downtime activities, or inspiration for your own content.

1-2	**ALISON ROBIN** A Hercynian linguist, Alison is working on a grandiose project they would be glad to share with the PCs. They're attempting to design computer systems capable of translating osteomemetics without the need for an Egregorian, or even create a method of artificial osteomemetic inscription. While they mean well, it is apparent to the PCs that this project might be culturally insensitive (or even dangerous) in the wrong hands.
3-4	**TALLGRASS** An Egregorian ranger with a fervent wish to become a mech pilot. Tallgrass is a huge military hardware enthusiast and overly curious about the PCs' mechs. If they see the opportunity, they are likely to try and take one for a joyride.
5-6	**LABELLA ORCHO** An extremely large and magnanimous woman with an enormous extended family who eagerly invites the characters to her compound for dinner. The dinner is delicious, if unfamiliar, and the reception is warm and friendly, though the mood around the table is always a little tense. PCs might get the sense that Labella's invitation was not popular with her neighbors and may not have been cleared with HUC command.
7-8	**SALT** An Egregorian fisherperson, Salt is very matter-of-fact and gruff. At upwards of a hundred, they're one of the oldest Egregorians in the city and can regale the PCs with countless war stories. Lately, they've been bringing in a lot of debris with their catch and are fairly certain that underground ocean currents have unearthed some pre-Crisis tech upstream. If the PCs investigate and sail out, consider allowing them to uncover some mech gear (as Exotic Gear) jutting out of the earth.
9-10	**MARCELIO VILLAMONTE** A wealthy Hercynian trader who has made a living overseeing caravans, some of which are of spurious legality. He approaches the PCs with a proposal to start up official trade routes between Hivehome and the colonial towns, and may support them in the diplomatic negotiations to come.
11-12	**KONRICH MASSER** A muscular Hercynian ranger who runs a well-known training and fitness ring. Konrich seeks out the PCs to invite them to a sparring match in hand-to-hand combat with his rangers. There's more than a hint of bravado to this challenge. He may mention they haven't had a chance to fight surface-dwellers up close for some time.
13-14	**WILLIAM WILLIAM** An Egregorian anthrophile, William is fascinated by the PCs, especially their outlandish styles of dress, mannerisms, and ways of speaking. They ask repeatedly about the surface and offworld life, expressing a fervent desire to travel the galaxy. They have a collection of offworld paraphernalia and artifacts scavenged from war ruins that they are eager to show the characters.
15-16	**DORTHE KITHAMURA** A war veteran and active mech pilot who lost both of her legs in a battle with the Machine's forces fifteen years back. Dorthe is one of the best rangers in the HUC combined forces, though she has been largely absent from the action aboveground. A habitual smoker, she's curious about the PCs' relationships with their mechs, considering they can be mass-printed instead of painstakingly maintained like the mechs used by the HUC.
17-18	**WINTER** An old and rather decrepit Egregorian war-form the size of a draft horse, Winter runs a mobile tea stand from the back of their carapace. While they are an initially terrifying sight, lumbering down the street, PCs might be calmed by the gentleness with which they move. They're arthritic and poor of memory, having been preserved since the Crisis, and their connection to Witness is extremely spotty.
19-20	**VEIN/LUCIA DELMONTE** An Egregorian anthropologist and historian who goes by both Vein and Lucia. They are trying to painstakingly reconstruct the history of humans on Hercynia and harbor fervent anti-colonial feelings. They may find the PCs with the goal of interviewing them, at which point they will press their interviewees with questions about their intentions, their employers, and the powers behind Evergreen.

THE EGREGORIANS IN BRIEF

"'What does it mean? How can one access it? What must we call it? What are they?' All of these questions – do not ask them. They do not 'open' possibilities: they cram beggared answers into boxes only you get to define. Too much of our world has been taken from us by curious little men asking questions and seeking meaning. Do not seek to know: seek to accept."

Hivehome is home to Endeavor and the vast majority of the Egregorians most closely associated with them. Though many populate the other city-states in the HUC – Daylight especially, with a smaller population in Mycol Fields – Hivehome has the highest concentration of Egregorians. This is true of both living Egregorians and static Egregorians – those lying in a dormant hibernation state following the Crisis. Occupying an equal social, political, and conceptual footing to the humans of the HUC, Egregorians are included in any and all definitions of Hercynian "personhood".

PHYSIOLOGY

Egregorians are hexapedal, carbon-based, hard-shelled arthropods that are a little closer to crustaceans than insects, standing on average about a meter and a half tall at the withers. They are covered by chitinous plating and a leathery epidermis that comprise their integumentary system and have vestigial, scaled wings like a moth or butterfly. These wings are often pulled back, decorated, or draped in the same way a human would drape clothing. Egregorian forelimbs are flexible and relatively strong. Despite their size, they have fine motor control, are quite dextrous, and can wield human weapons and tools with minimal discomfort. Most Egregorians also have a thick "ruff" or mane of feathery, exceptionally fine hair and antennae surrounding their neck and shoulders. Egregorians' ruffs are highly expressive, functioning much like a cat's whiskers.

One of the most notable features of the Egregorians is their headplates: old-growth, calcified chitin that grows in patterns, ridges, horns and "crowns". They are as unique as human fingerprints and serve a secondary purpose: anyone attuned to Witness can touch the plate and read it, receiving information, experiences, and history from its owner. The markings on an Egregorian's cranial plate carry memetic patterns associated with their Overmind.

This iterative building of memetics – including those grown over the course of life and those their Overmind impresses upon them at birth – combine to create what amounts to an Egregorian's name. Given names derive from the memetic patterns that form naturally on the cranial plates, while surnames come from the patterns granted by the Overmind.

Morphologically, Egregorians vary based on their lifestyle and activities, growing over their early life before eventually settling into a distinct "form". An Egregorian that performs a lot of manual labor early in their life, for example, will be stronger, with a wider headplate that allows them to carry more materials. An Egregorian that undertakes a lot of fine motor work will have more flexible chitin and better eyesight.

The variance exhibited across Hivehome's diverse Egregorian population is much less than it once was, seemingly limited to differences in chitin and dermal coloration, iridescence, height, and feathering. Some Egregorian rangers appear to have developed a preference toward thicker plating over vital areas, more pronounced ridges and horns, and dull colorations that help them blend in to the environment. Others in artisan professions seem to be of lighter build, with more developed secondary manipulators for fine work.

A few Egregorians, especially those revived from pre-Crisis stasis, manifest rarer moltings. Egregorian warrior morphs, such as Terror, are nightmares in carapace: about the size of a draft horse, thorned and armored like battle tanks, with headplates grown out into fierce horns. They are rare sights in Hivehome, and most are elderly and involved in tasks other than fighting. Rarer still are exomorphs – Egregorians capable of spaceborn flight, warriors of the old war. There are no exomorphs in Hivehome or any of the cities of the HUC, and it is assumed that most are long dead.

Many Egregorians mark and decorate their chitin as part of their daily sartorial choices. Some inlay chips of old, treated chitin from previous ecdyses, creating unique mosaic patches, patterns, or images. Others decorate their chitin or headplates with superficial scarring, stippling, or tattooing. Finally, many wear cords and knots: wrapped strands of dyed wormsilk indicating the city-state to which they have pledged loyalty, with specific colors and knots denoting the city and district to which they claim affinity.

ENDEAVOR

Unique among the Egregorians is Endeavor. Endeavor is an Overmind – a polarity mind around which all Egregorians orient their own individual subjectivities, although individual Egregorians are still, as far as anyone can tell, their "own" persons. The Overmind appears to act as a vessel for storing ancestral memories and experiences – both "good" and "bad" – and a central processing subjectivity capable of translating and distributing those undefinable units out among those Egregorians that are attuned to them. At present, all known, living Egregorians are attuned to Endeavor. It is not beyond reason to assume that there could be other Overminds – indeed, recovered Egregorian artifacts on display in Hivehome's Marble Arcade indicate that, in the past, this was the case.

Some humans question whether Endeavor recognizes themself as an individual: their mind is a repository and broadcast platform for Witness, home to – as they say – both past and present. Orienting a self from the collective memory and experience of a species can be difficult for a human to comprehend, if not impossible, but to hear Endeavor tell it, they are alive at many moments in time – some imagined, many dreamed, and all essentially real. Endeavor might be their own person, or they might be the physical avatar of Witness. They do not bother with the question: If you cut them, they too feel pain. If you kiss them, they too feel your lips. Is that not enough?

The Egregorian population is small compared to the human one, but it is growing through a combination of procreation and restoration. Egg-producing Egregorians are a minority, but prolific. Additionally, a small but not insignificant proportion of population growth has come about thanks to the discovery of caches of "static" Egregorians, seeded in their chrysalis form during the Crisis for later birthing. Work continues at all hours to identify and return static Egregorians from deep and secret pockets in the Hercynian earth; the old Overminds hid hundreds of thousands of these Egregorians away to ensure that the species could survive what they recognized to be a doomed fight.
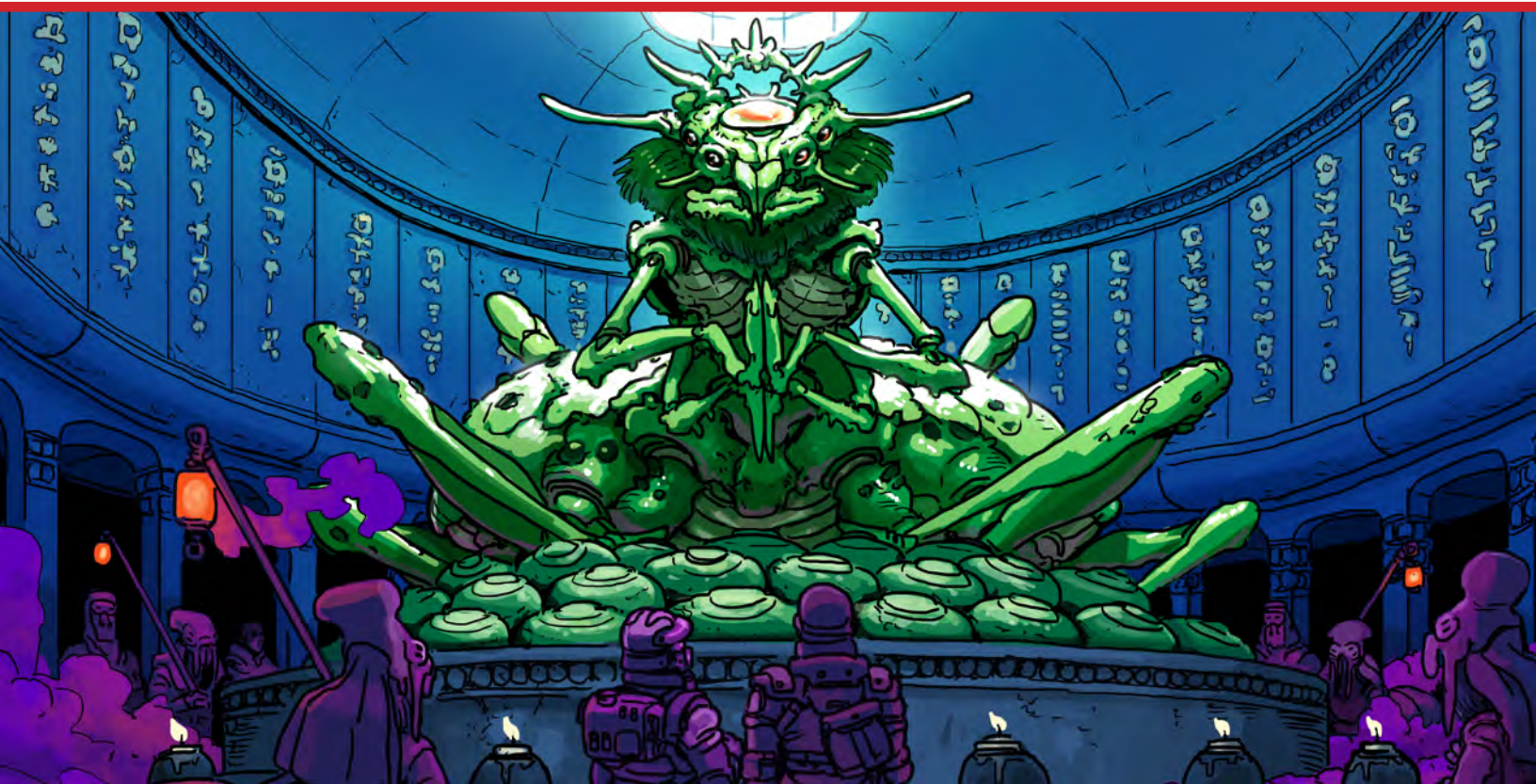
LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND WITNESS

Egregorians have a penchant for taking names in Union Common attached to emotions, ideals, and aspects of their identity. They can alter their sex depending on environmental conditions and thus often find themselves puzzled by concepts of rigid gender identities and roles. They default to gender-neutral pronouns (typically they/them), speak of themselves as individuals, and form close, filial-analogous bonds with other Egregorians. There is typically no more than eight to ten in an Egregorian's primary association.

Modern Egregorians have been brought up with humanity's anthropocentric view of nature, personhood, and species, and they have adopted much of the dominant human culture. If we are to think of Hercynian-human culture as a robe that the Egregorians have clothed themselves in so as not to be naked, then it should be noted that the robe is tattered and thin in places. Despite the "best efforts" of the Egregorians to fit themselves into the human paradigm, there are still places where the underlying Egregorian aspect emerges.

Witness is one such thin spot. All Egregorians remain "connected" to Endeavor in a way that they describe as greatly comforting. They carry within themselves the ability to share a subjectivity that is at once apart from them – "carried" within Endeavor, for lack of a better word – and at the same time inseparable from them. There is no distinction between the species-memory and their own. This can only change if that connection is severed, rendering the individual isolated, atomized, alienated, alone. Witness is not didactic; it is paradigmatic. Egregorians do not only receive; they contribute as well.

Increasingly, some humans display the ability to interact with Witness. Most humans are able to sense, suss out, or otherwise register the presence of something uncanny to the human experience. Those with this capability can be thought of as registering Witness in the background, but don't have any way to interact with it.

A far rarer human interaction with Witness is the ability to actively engage with it, rather than just passively recognizing it at work. Some especially empathetic individuals find among the Egregorians a symbiotic partner, someone who is to them as Endeavor is for the Egregorians. These empaths – both the human and the Egregorian – form deep bonds of culture and subjectivity that are often viewed as a kind of solidarity. Once they are coached in methods of accessing Witness and protecting their own subjectivity, these especially empathetic humans can participate in Witness no differently than an Egregorian. Indeed, other Egregorians, those with whom they are not bonded, do not view them as interlopers or invaders; instead, they are treated as late arrivals. The common view is the barriers between species – and, broadly, those between "people" and "nature" – are only constructs. Witness is made to share; humans with the ability to do so, do so.

> If any PCs are interested in becoming empaths, they can take the new talent located on p. 177. Mere exposure to the planet Hercynia is enough to trigger such a change, meaning they could take the talent well before they actually meet any Egregorians. There is a suspicion among Egregorians that some humans are able to form Witness bonds with other humans, without the intervention of Egregorians at all, but the evidence is staggeringly rare.

OSTEOMEMETICS

Egregorians have the ability to engrave expressions of Witness – experiences, feelings, memories, and so on – into stone and chitin. In the Hercynian dialect, this is called **osteomemetics**. Other Egregorians (and humans attuned to Witness) can recount and recall these experiences by mere contact with the whorls, grooves, and patterns of an osteomemetic pattern. This is the closest thing the Egregorians have to a written language and is also highly valued as an experiential art form. To those not attuned to Witness, these organic patterns and decorations look beautiful, but are otherwise incomprehensible. Osteomemetic encoding can degrade with age, and takes time to create. Complicated patterns that carry scientific knowledge or detailed information can take many months or years to carve.

The calcified headplates of Egregorians grow into unique patterns over their lifetimes that can be read by other Egregorians as a loose but extremely personal osteomemetic impression of that individual's memories, experiences, and feelings. Touching an Egregorian's headplate without permission is highly taboo. The headplates of members of family units are sometimes kept after their passing as family relics in the same way that humans might keep a grave site or urn of ashes.
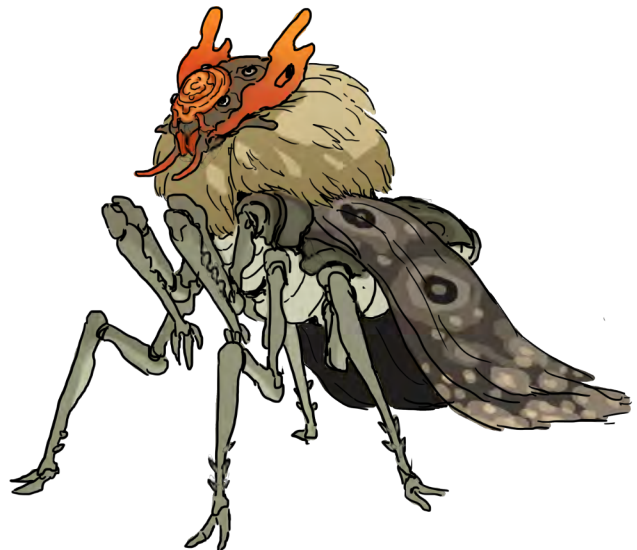
MEETING ENDEAVOR

Endeavor. The chief mind, the prime subjective presence across the Egregorian gestalt. They were the first Egregorian to emerge following the Crisis – though whether that was because they were an Overmind or because of whatever event made them into an Overmind, no one knows.

They are smaller than you thought they would be, though larger still than most of the Egregorians you have seen so far. They are a figure of outstanding gravity; the room seems to bend around their presence. The quiet hush of work from their many attendants, officers, and advisors radiates from a ring about their center plinth. Endeavor's integuments are stippled with mosaic chips of iridescent chitin, arti-facts that indicate their age, charting their many ecdyses. Their eyes glimmer with the same deep opalescence as their fellow Egregorians, and even seated with legs tucked they exude an air of grace, of form in perfect control. Their feathery crown lies flat, but would be grand should they raise it, and they are dressed in the same cut of fine sashes and robes you have seen worn by other civilian Egregorians.

Endeavor unfolds their limbs and stands as soon as they see you, waving away their advisors as they move down from their plinth. Slow, steady, unhur-ried. There is something terrible in their movement, the dark emerald of their form, the quiet click of their tarsals on the smooth stone floor. An awesome beauty. A reminder. A promise.

"Hello," they say. "I have been curious about you since you arrived on this world, so let me ask you plain – what end do you seek?"

Discovered in hibernation among the ashes of a now-forgotten hive, Endeavor did not awake and emerge from their chrysalis for centuries. By that time, the humans that remained on Hercynia had built nation-states among the ruins, encountered again what remained of the Egregorian race, and reached an equilibrium with the healing world. Endeavor's awakening had been hoped for, but not expected; that their revival would prompt the emergence of thousands of other Egregorians was a miracle. Endeavor stands at the intersection of Egregorian–human relations. From a few thousand, Endeavor's people have grown to number in the tens of thousands. Until recently, this has been an acceptable state of affairs; with the rediscovery of Egregorian memetic techniques (osteomemetics chief among them) and the translation of old messages via Witness, some have pushed back against the relationship. These Egregorians do not wish to have their personhood defined according to anthropocentric worldviews or causal relations.

Indeed, some do not wish to be defined as "persons", as such a concept necessarily establishes an exclusionary binary category in search of a definition. Endeavor is aware of this dialogue within their culture – it is an ongoing discussion among Hercynian and Egregorian scholars – and sits at the intersection between integration and revival. As GM, you should know this in order to help your characterization of Endeavor – polite, but standing at arms length – and just in case it comes up in your campaign.

The PCs' meeting with Endeavor ends with the Overmind sending them away – polite, but firm:

"Many have come to this world seeking to help us." Endeavor lingers in silence a moment. "I hope you know what that means." They motion toward the door. "Thank you for speaking with me. I find you interesting."

Work resumes in the chamber – or, more accurately, you realize for the first time that work was continuing all around you while you spoke with Endeavor. You are compelled to bow, then leave the chamber.

Later, you realize something about Endeavor: When you first saw them, you had the sense that space seemed oriented around them in some way – some-thing you initially wrote off as an artifact of their status and the architecture of their chambers. You realize, though, as you think closely on your discus-sion, that there was a kind of subtle aberration at the edges of their form – millimeters, no more – where your perception of them grew … fuzzy. And then you realize: the edge of their shape – the borders of their body – actually did bend the light, distorting the space around them as a lens moved across a field of stars.

REWARDS

At any time while the PCs are in Hivehome or working with HUC forces during Missions 4–5, you can give them the following gear and rewards.

PILOT GEAR

Hercynian Rations
Gear

HUC rations rely heavily on fish, either smoked or tinned in spiced oil; dried mushrooms which can be reconstituted with water; sealed packs of flatbread or crackers; pickled macroalgae; dried fruits; rice; oats; and tea and freeze-dried coffee. In some ways, these rations are familiar to anyone who's ever subsisted on military fare. In others, they're a reminder of just how far from home you are.

Carapace Armor

While Hercynian society is far from primitive, the HUC lacks the advanced industrial manufacturing base required to easily fabricate the large quantities of composite materials needed for modern armor. As a result, the personal combat armor worn by rangers and other combatants is typically made from interlocking and overlapping layers of molted Egregorian carapace, donated by willing volunteers. Distinctly insectile in appearance, treatment allows the carapace to be molded into a variety of shapes and styles suitable for numerous occupational specialties ranging from long-range reconnaissance to heavy assault. While many examples of carapace armor are unpowered, ranger pilots and special forces units use carapace hardsuits created by marrying the plates to various strength-amplification exoskeletons and fitting them with upgraded power sources, interface systems, and environmental seals.

Acquiring a carapace hardsuit isn't a simple matter. Such suits don't tend to be available for sale in currency or barter, instead being either handed down from pilot to pilot or custom-made according to a number of formal traditions. These traditions include seeking permission from a willing Egregorian donor to use their carapace and the personal participation of the wearer in the crafting, a process that can take weeks depending on the complexity of the suit. Should a PC manage to obtain one of these hardsuits, you may represent it with the following stats.

The multiple ablative layers of treated chitin make carapace hardsuits especially effective at dispersing the effects of energy weapons, and as a result all such armor has **Resistance to energy damage**.

Locus
Gear

For those humans attempting to cultivate an affinity for Witness, the learning process can be frustrating at times. Over the centuries, a variety of tools and techniques have been developed to assist with this. One of these techniques involves the consumption of a native species of psychedelic fungus, either dried or brewed as tea. This substance, commonly called locus, induces feelings of openness, euphoria, enhanced empathy, and altered sensory perceptions including mild hallucinations and synaesthesia. Locus is not habit-forming nor does it have any harmful long-term effects, though some users experience headaches and fatigue after use. That said, overdosing can lead to bouts of "empathic overload", dissociation, and more severe hallucinatory episodes.

In humans, ingestion of locus induces a state of enhanced affinity for Witness, though it does not necessarily grant a deeper understanding of its use. The effects last from three to six hours depending on the strength of the dose, the user's metabolism, and other factors. Locus also has a variety of other therapeutic uses.

	TAGS	BONUSES	ARMOR	EVASION	E-DEF	SPEED
Light Carapace Hardsuit	PERSONAL ARMOR, +2 HP	Resistance to energy damage	0	10	10	4
Assault Carapace Hardsuit	PERSONAL ARMOR, +2 HP	Resistance to energy damage	1	8	8	4
Heavy Carapace Hardsuit	PERSONAL ARMOR, +2 HP	Resistance to energy damage	2	6	6	3

EXOTIC GEAR

Carapace Cladding

1 SP, Exotic Gear, Limited 2, Unique, Quick Action

Expend a charge to immediately clear all 🔥 from your mech. Additionally, whenever you **BRACE** you may also expend a charge to reduce all 🔥 dealt by the attack to 0.

...

While sufficient for personal armor, Egregorian chitin on its own is not robust enough to withstand attacks from heavier weapons, nor can it easily be gathered in sufficient quantities to fully outfit a chassis. Regardless, many rangers still utilize carapace-based secondary defensive enhancements anchored over critical systems as an additional layer of ablative protection, most notably against incendiary or caustic/corrosive munitions that might otherwise resist conventional suppression.

"Steelpunch" Heavy Needlebeam

Heavy Rifle, AP, Exotic Gear
[⚔ 15][4 ⚡]

This weapon deals **+1d6 bonus damage** against targets with at least **1 Armor**.

....

The "steelpunch", as it's affectionately known, is a twin-beam directed-energy weapon developed by HUC engineers for use against the heavily reinforced hulls of remnant chassis and other hardened targets. The earliest models were derived from Second Committee–era mineral surveying lasers. An initial beam flash-vaporizes the target's outer layer and the plasma bloom is instantly analyzed for material density and structural composition, following which the needlebeam fires a focused, high-intensity pulsed beam tuned to defeat heavy armor. Performance against softer targets is significantly reduced, however, as excessive material ablation disrupts the secondary beam before an optimal effect can be achieved.
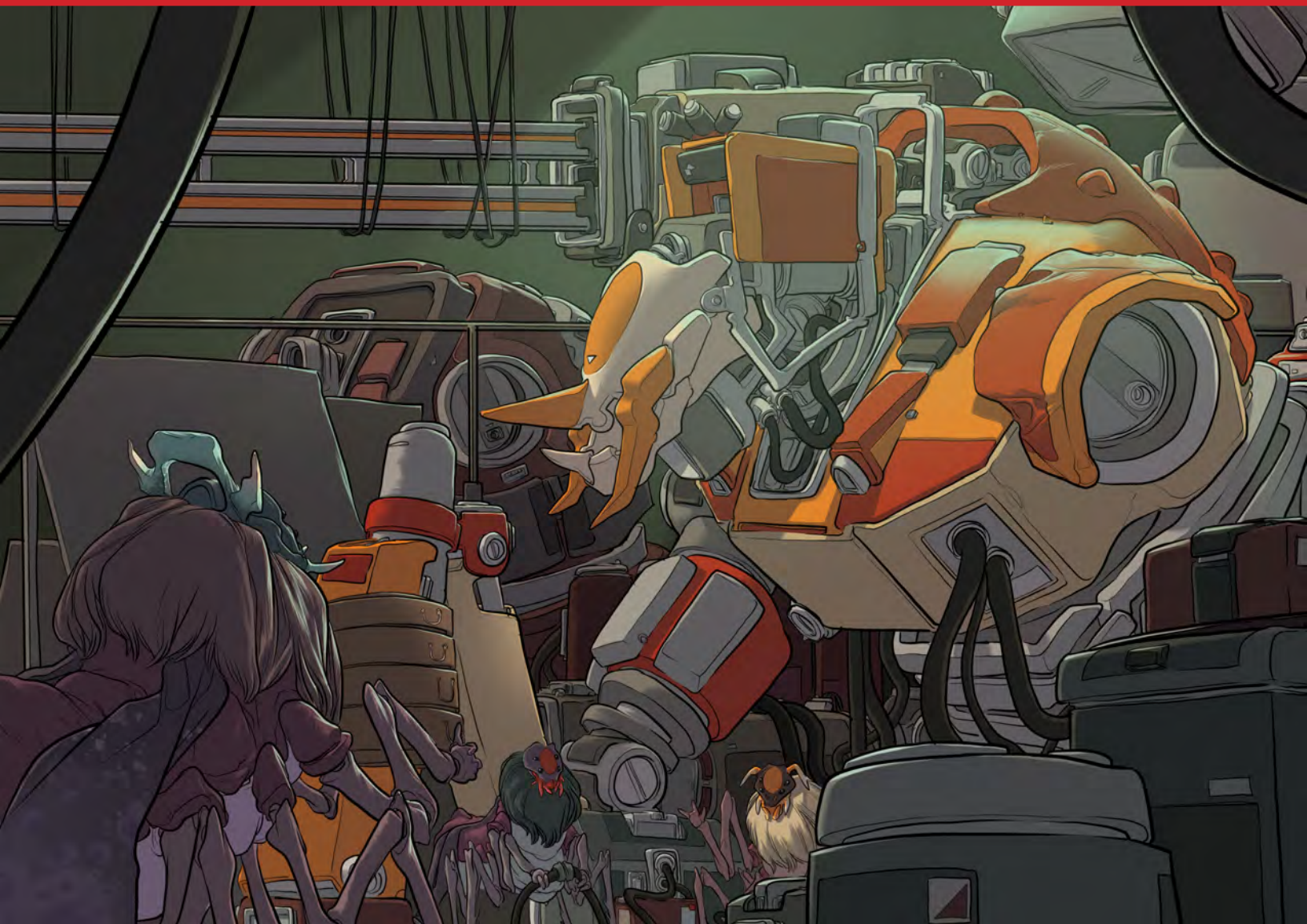
CLOSING

You are in Hivehome. You've learned the truth. The world – not just Hercynia, but the world as a moment in time and a hint toward future moments – is not as limited as you thought. Watch the Egregorian dancers in the plaza. View their histories in the Marble Arcade. Listen – if you can – for Witness. See the young humans and Egregorians playing alongside each other.

It is time to find a place in this new reality. Go out and say hello. Think of the future without separation between the human and the other.

A few days before the summit, a messenger arrives with a summons. Terror, the Egregorian military commander, wishes to speak with them. At the same time, Dthall Ordo hails asking for aid. It's clear that they don't have time for both, and must choose one.

Neither party takes offense at whatever the PCs decide, and neither request is pressing. If players are inclined to go with Dthall without meeting Terror, she might mention that it could be important for the characters to at least meet the old Egregorian. The choice they make will only determine who offers them extra support during the summit and which **Exotic Gear** becomes available to them.

Players have time for a **Full Repair** after whichever mission they choose to undertake.

DTHALL'S REQUEST

Dthall Ordo has a personal favor to ask: a ranger team has gone missing topside. The patrol was due to return to Hivehome after the HUC high command ordered all forces to pull back, but they've yet to check in. Losses are unavoidable in war and the Machine doesn't typically take prisoners, but Dthall knows several of these rangers personally. If they've fallen, she needs to know. Command won't sign off on the mission, as they need every available ranger on the line and refuse to send troops on what would amount to a dead-end chase; the PCs are Dthall's best chance to find out what happened to her friends. As a reward, Dthall offers to make additional advances at the negotiations.

This is a good opportunity for the group to earn Dthall's trust and respect, along with that of Hivehome's rangers. Dthall can't join them herself, but she can provide them with information on the missing unit's patrol routes and last known position, all of which amounts to a good starting point for beginning the search.

TERROR'S REQUEST

If the PCs answer Terror's summons, they are received in the Egregorian commander's chambers. To the PCs, Terror might present a horrifying visage. They are an old Egregorian war-morph, molted in the last days of the Hercynian Crisis and sent into hibernation out of desperation. Their kind is rare

within the city. Terror is about the size of a bull or large draft horse. Their enormous, heavy forelimbs are built for combat – enormous, scythelike blades with a ragged, almost metallic edge – and their horned skull is adorned with stone fangs. Once, they would have seemed SecComm's worst nightmares made flesh: a flesh-tearing bug, built for war.

Of course, Terror is no such thing. They are a complicated person, weary of war. They have a wry, calm manner and enjoy tea. Unlike their forelimbs, their secondary frontal arms are small, thinner, and have a delicate touch. They have a habit of tapping these limbs on surfaces to emphasize points.

As Terror speaks, you find yourself … remembering? That's not quite the right word; it's not that easy. It's a kind of learning, as if learning was a process of uncovering something deep that you had held once. Or had it taken from you. Their words are lost, though they speak Union Common. Instead, you focus on the [remembrance/learning]:

"In the cold of the dead hive, there are yet some potential lives. Egregorians, ancestors. Contingency-beings (everything on this world is a contingency, why did everyone think this garden would die?)

"You are to accompany my scouts, my eyes, and [atone-through-service], perform for me this [tribute]. Find me viable forms of those who came before, find me the [sword-and-spear] my [ancestors/ancients/memories] used in battle. Bring them here, and let no [beast/memory/ghost] or human prevent your return. Do this, and you will have my [joy/approval/favor]."

Not long ago, a Hercynian scout team breached a previously identified hive site, a neighbor to Hivehome that appears to be half latter's size. The scouts reported tens of thousands of Egregorian eggs, kept buried and hidden from the ravages of war. These eggs date back centuries but many are nonetheless still viable, and with some help they could birth a new generation of Egregorians. In addition to this find, the scouts also reported caches of materiel, old-model weapons, and artifacts, all of which possess considerable material and cultural value to Hivehome.

Terror's request is simple: accompany a Hercynian reclamation/salvage team as it escorts an Egregorian revivalist named **Bitter** into the old hive to flag usable equipment and viable candidates for revival. As with Dthall's mission, Terror has tapped the PCs because no rangers are currently available to assist.

There is a need for this kind of protection: the Machine's forces are known to lurk underground, and if they encounter the hive site then they won't hesitate to bring their subalterns and hollow mechs to scour it to ash. If the PCs want to earn the trust of Hivehome – and the Egregorian population, in particular – this is a good chance to do so.

SECTION 5 // Late Summer, 5014u

BEAT 16B.3:
WAYWARD SONS AND DAUGHTERS

If the PCs agree to assist Dthall, they are deployed via an underground rail system that exits into an abandoned tunnel complex with access to the topside, far north of Evergreen. The ranger squad proves relatively easy to track down. They are pinned down (and have been for days) in a small gully near the coast and the infrequent crack of gunfire ringing through the forest quickly reveals their location. Ultimately, Dthall's worries are proven correct – but not for the reason she thinks. The patrol did come under attack. They were ambushed by guerrilla soldiers from St. Tellus.

The rangers hail the PCs as they approach and warn them to be careful on their approach as the attackers are well-hidden and thoroughly entrenched.

St. Tellus is a city-state from across the sea. It features prominently in later acts of *No Room For A Wallflower* and is currently making inroads against the HUC. The St. Tellan force is a mixture of mechs and infantry, similar to the rangers, although they wear different mechanical designs and archaic livery. If captured alive, the soldiers don't give up much information and Dthall asks that they be handed over to her for questioning. If pressed, Dthall mentions that the city-states of St. Tellus and Bem Honore lie across the sea and are hostile to the HUC, but that the Machine presents more pressing concerns.

COMBAT:
DEATH VALLEY

SITREP: Holdout (special; *Lancer*, p. 272).

ENEMY FORCES
FOR 3 PCS: 1x **SPECTER** (Step, Fortress)
1x **SENTINEL** (Bodyguard)
1x **OPERATOR** (Fade Generator)

FOR 4 PCS: +1x **SCOUT** (Dataveil)

FOR 5 PCS: Add **ELITE** to **SENTINEL**

REINFORCEMENTS
FOR 3 PCS: 2x **SPECTER** (Step)
1x **SCOUT** (Dataveil)

FOR 4 PCS: +1x **OPERATOR** (Fade Generator)

FOR 5 PCS: Add **ELITE** to the reinforcing **SCOUT**

DETAILS

Set the battlefield up as usual for the Holdout sitrep, but deploy the PCs at one edge of the battlefield. The rangers are in the CZ and their mechs are too damaged to fight. They don't count as characters, meaning they can't be targeted and don't interact with the fight. The PCs have to hold the CZ for the six rounds it takes for the rangers to repair their mechs.

The initial deployment of hostile NPCs in this fight is hidden from the players. Reveal them at the start of the first round.

OUTCOME
PC DEFEAT
If the PCs fail to hold the CZ, they are overrun and forced to retreat. They can rescue one or two of the rangers but not all of them – the rest perish.

PC VICTORY
If the PCs manage to hold the CZ, they can escort the rangers back to Dthall without incident. One of the rangers has been injured badly enough that their days as a mech pilot are largely over.

REWARDS
If the PCs fail, Dthall is unable to spare the resources to help the PCs and they don't receive extra support from her at negotiations.

If the PCs succeed, Dthall offers them additional support in the negotiations and the injured ranger asks one of the characters to inherit their mech and carry on the fight. It is an **SSC SWALLOWTAIL, RANGER VARIANT** that one PC can take as **EXOTIC GEAR** (see p. 188).

BEAT 16B.4:
TERROR'S FAVOR

If the characters choose to assist Terror, they are deployed quite close to Hivehome, with Bitter, the revivalist, and two other Egregorian assistants, riding alongside in a rover.

Terror's concerns about Machine forces are reasonable, but unnecessary in this instance. Although the PCs may encounter one or two decrepit groups of subalterns wandering through nearby caverns, the main threat they face in the hive comes from the planet itself.

Hercynia is (or was) a verdant world home to a wide variety of nonsapient flora and fauna. Though the Crisis lead to the extinction of all but a small proportion of flora and fauna, subterranean species fared well. One such species of subterranean predators survived and thrived, hunting Egregorians and humans driven underground: **hive worms**. Once a useful (though never domesticated) carrion scavenger, these large, omnivorous invertebrates grew

after the Crisis into aggressively territorial predators. This was likely the result of centuries of exposure to radiation, biological contaminants, and the selective pressures of encroachment upon their their habitats, first by stranded humans, and then by the Machine.

A number of these creatures have been using the buried hive site as a nesting ground. The arrival of the reclamation team stirs them to attack in defense of their own young.

COMBAT: ANNELIDA

SITREP: n/a

ENEMY FORCES
FOR 3 PCS: 2x **ELITE MONSTROSITIES** (**SIZE 2**, Acid Spittle, Burrower, Regenerator)

FOR 4 PCS: +3-4x **GRUNT MONSTROSITIES** (**SIZE 1**, Adhesive Secretions, Burrower)

FOR 5 PCS: +1x **MONSTROSITY** (**SIZE 1**, Burrower, Corrosive Bite)

DETAILS

Hive worms are about the size of a train car, aggressive, and able to secrete acid powerful enough to damage mechs. The larger adult worms can project this acid at a distance, while younger specimens rely on their powerful mandibles to administer it up close. They fight until death or until the end of the sixth round, at which point any surviving worms burrow off in search of less contested territory.

As hive worms possess the **BIOLOGICAL** tag, they have **IMMUNITY to most tech actions**. As a result, characters that favor electronic warfare may not be able to bring many of their systems to bear in this fight. Fortunately for them, scattered across the battlefield is an array of old Egregorian munitions and machinery, sealed off for centuries.

PCs can use the old Egregorian weapons to their advantage during the fight, overloading power cores and remotely activating triggers. They can do this by making a **tech attack** against **E-DEFENSE 8** as a **quick action**. On a hit, they may choose one of the following effects:

OVERLOAD WIRING: Choose a free ⬈ 5 area within SENSORS. It becomes **dangerous terrain** that deals **energy damage** until the end of the scene.

PRIME A POWER CORE: Place a **MINE** within SENSORS that arms at the end of your turn and detonates with a ⦿ 1 explosion when any character enters an adjacent space. All characters within the affected area must succeed on an AGILITY save or take 2D6 ⚡ . On a success, they take half damage.

PLASMA FLARE: Choose a character within SENSORS. They become **IMPAIRED** and **SLOWED** until the end of their next turn.

OUTCOME
PC DEFEAT
If the PCs fail to defeat the hive worms, they are forced to retreat to Hivehome. Terror thanks them for the attempt but won't trust them with further missions.

PC VICTORY
If the PCs are successful, Bitter and their team can begin retrieval operations. In addition to the eggs and old technology, the chamber also contains several examples of pre-Crisis osteomemetics. Witness has been inscribed onto these physical artifacts, allowing other Egregorians to share in the experiences they contain long after the scribe is gone. For Terror, this is a monumental find – a link to their peoples' past – and word passes quickly among Hivehome's Egregorian population that the PCs helped recover these priceless treasures. As a result, Terror will favor the PCs and provide support in the negotiations.

REWARDS

In addition to their support, Terror orders something retrieved for the PCs: an enormous, organic-looking talon, calcified and mineralized to a metallic sheen, with one end broken and wrapped like the hilt of a sword. It almost exactly matches one of Terror's own talons. If anyone asks Terror about it, they answer, in their own way, that it belonged to a close friend of theirs and they would like one of the PCs to wield it. It can be taken by a single character as **EXOTIC GEAR**.

BROOD-SIBLING'S MOLT can be reprinted if it is destroyed or lost, although Terror will be upset about the loss of the original.

Brood-Sibling's Molt
Main Melee, Exotic Gear
[⚔ 1][1d6+1 ⬦]

1/round, this weapon deals **+1d6 bonus damage** to characters that are **SHREDDED** or **STUNNED**.

Goodbye, old [friend/love]

BEAT 16B.5:
LAST CALL IN EGREGORE CROSS

A couple days after the PCs aid Dthall or Terror, the summit finally begins. Inside Hivehome's war chambers, the commanders of the HUC argue their cases. The PCs are invited to attend as representatives of Evergreen. The event itself takes several days, during which the whole city is quiet and tense.

At the meeting are the high commanders of the Hercynian United Cities' unified military forces. They are **Commander Ilyr Ordo**, of Hivehome, **Commander Primoz Commorand**, of Daylight, **Commander Pyotr Heidel**, of Mycol Fields, and **Terror**, the leader of the Egregorian rangers. Endeavor is not present, but is being informed of what occurs at the meeting. Ilyr Ordo is Dthall's father. He represents Hivehome's interests at the summit. Primoz Commorand is a hard-edged, sturdy man who is fastidious in his fashion and strict in discipline. Pyotr Heidel is thin, taller than Primoz and bespectacled. Though quiet, he is an accomplished frontline commander, only recently promoted to his current rear-echelon position.

The diplomatic wrangling is going to be tense. For the last fifty years, the HUC has fought the Machine's incursions into Solo Terra. Though they have won some major engagements, overall progress in the campaign has favored the Machine; the HUC has been pushed back across thousands of kilometers from the coastline where the initial invasion began to a town near Hivehome called Egregore Cross. There, the HUC has managed to hold the Machine. For the past several years, battles over the Cross have been grim, hundred-meter advances and retreats with negligible strategic accomplishments on either side. As of late, the Machine appears to have gone into a kind of remission, its forces thinning to a mere fraction of what they once were. At first, HUC high command attributed this to a turning of the tides, but it now appears that the Machine had actually switched focus to Evergreen. Recent troop buildups indicate the impending beginning of another continent-wide campaign.

To address this, high command has called a meeting of the coalition army leaders to determine where they will position their forces and whether they will attempt a counterattack or dig in for a defensive war. Hivehome favors the former option – counterattack. According to Primoz and the other representatives from Daylight, the likelihood that the Machine will advance through Evergreen and continue north toward their territory demonstrates the critical importance of drawing a new defensive line at the narrow top of the colony's valley. Mycol Fields, the smallest of the three city-states, is likely to side with Daylight.

The leaders of Hivehome wish to direct a counterattack toward the Machine's local command while the bulk of their enemy's armies are on the march. Evergreen can serve as a defensive base of operations that, if the assault is unsuccessful, will slow the synthetics – even if it falls in a day. During this time, the defenders could attempt to identify the location of Beggar One and launch a surgical attack to eliminate the NHP. The problem lies in making diplomatic contact with Evergreen and convincing the other city-states to agree to their plan.

DIPLOMATIC WRANGLING

Over the course of the summit, the player characters need to work with the participants to wrangle diplomatic concessions and agreements. It's a helluva job, and messy in a way that pure combat isn't, but it's a cleaner way to win a war. Plus, no one has to wear a hardsuit – unless things go really wrong.

Begin by setting out three six-segment clocks: **Win Over Daylight**, **Win Over Mycol Fields**, and **Reach Out to Evergreen**. Next, set out an eight-segment clock called **Concessions** with all segments filled in.

If the PCs helped Terror in **Beat 16B.4: Terror's Favor**, give the **Concessions** clock 10 segments instead of eight. If the PCs instead chose to help Dthall in **Beat 16B.3: Wayward Sons and Daughters**, they can fill in one segment each for the three initial clocks.

The **Win Over Daylight**, **Win Over Mycol Fields**, and **Reach Out to Evergreen** clocks represent the main diplomatic goals of the negotiations. Accomplishing at least two of these three goals will pull the negotiations in the PCs' favor, resulting in the HUC coming to Evergreen's aid.

The last clock, **Concessions**, represents concessions that the characters can make on behalf of Hivehome, such as troop deployments, resources, trade deals with the other cities, transfer of food, or sharing of artifacts (such as recovered osteomemetics). When the **Concessions** clock is empty, the negotiations are over, whether the PCs were successful or not.

While the summit is ongoing, characters can try anything they can think of to gain leverage and sway the negotiations in their favor. Beyond simply arguing their case, there are a number of ways the PCs could try to win over factions and individuals or establish contact with Evergreen. They could, for example:

• hack into Hivehome's ancient communication network to boost a signal
• perform petty errands for a secretary for diplomatic favors
• learn more history about the conflict to use it in their argument
• gain the favor of influential public figures
• repair or service aging weapons systems and mechs for the emissaries
• sneak into an attaché's office to rifle through their files
• gain popular support from the Egregorian population of Hivehome.

Once a player has decided what they're doing and which goal clock they're pursuing, then make a **skill check**:

• On **9 or less**, take **–2 Concessions** or let another faction step in to help you out and take **–1 Concessions** and **–1 from any goal clock**.
• On **10–19**, gain **+2 for your goal clock** and **–1 Concessions**. You may take an additional **–1 Concessions** and fill in an extra segment for your goal clock.
• On **20+**, gain **+3 for your goal clock** and **+1 Concessions**.

OUTCOME

If the PCs complete two of the three goal clocks before running out of concessions, they help Hivehome bring the cities of the HUC together with the intention of aiding Evergreen. As a result of the HUC's intervention, they will be able to skip a combat in **Beat 23: Split-Knuckle Haymaker**.

If the PCs don't complete enough the goals in time and run out of concessions, the delegations from Daylight and Mycol Fields remain unswayed. The diplomats start preparing to leave but are still in Hivehome at the beginning of **Beat 16B.6: Tumbledown**.

BEAT 16B.6: TUMBLEDOWN

Regardless of the outcome, the situation aboveground in Evergreen has rapidly deteriorated. Beggar One, unbeknownst to anyone, has just regained access to an orbital weapons platform and dropped a kinetic kill-rod onto the city of Daylight.

The cities of the HUC are caught completely unprepared for the strike. At least the people of Evergreen knew to expect terror – the Hercynians thought they finally had a chance to let their guard down.

The first quake hits like the end of the world.

Whatever you're doing, wherever you are, it hits you like a blast of furnace heat. The ground beneath you buckles and tears itself apart – all you can do is hang on as the whole world falls apart. You watch as a massive stalactite shears away from the cave ceiling. It falls, kilometers long and across – untold megatons of stone – into the churning waters of Hivehome's undersea. Sunlamps pop and rain glittering razors down across the city. Emergency lights flicker on, weak red and amber. It is light enough to see just how dark it is.

And then the wave hits, a wall of boiling black water scouring through the lower levels of Hivehome's main island. Many of the smaller satellites are completely overwhelmed, all buildings washed away aside from those built into the rock itself.

The world underground is spasming, groaning, screaming – it is dying. It is impossible to hear your own voice; the sound of stone-trauma is overwhelming. The shaking and the flood last forever. And then it ends.

Reports echo through the titanic cavity: smaller sections of wall shearing, fracturing, falling to the boiling undersea. Smaller tsunamis run through Hivehome's lower quarters, inundating them. Hundreds of thousands are already dead. Sirens start to wail, filling the darkness with another sound like screaming. Somehow, you're alive. There's red safe-lights nearby: burning on battery power, weak, but in the utter dark of Hivehome's cavity you're grateful for any light. An aftershock hits, nearly as bad as the first, and you hang on. It passes after a second eternity.

The sirens continue to warble and suddenly the stink of fire, a sense of loss felt now and then, the sudden intrusion of another being in your own subjectivity: –IT IS HAPPENING AGAIN–

And then it's gone and you're alone, a kind of alone you never knew you were before this very same intrusion. In the darkness, some small lights. Sirens warble. A radio nearby squelches to life. Ranger units and civilians call for help, listing the districts and locations in which they are trapped.

You can hear calls for help across the street – people trapped inside the building there. You change channels, looking for a clear one on which you can call your allies, but each time you change channels you hear a different voice, a different person calling for help. A fire burns through the market district. A whole block on the west side of the hive took a direct hit from a falling slice of the cavern's roof. A gondola station was dragged into the sea. Help is needed everywhere, but after only a short time scanning all channels are overwhelmed by a single signal: a curious, tonal silence that you quickly realize is not coming from the radio or omninet, but issuing out from the central city in waves. The pulses are some kind of obliterative silence, a destabilizing wave that trembles your vision and makes you dizzy. The blood-rush sound in your ears is overwhelming – this is some form of Witness; something has happened to Endeavor.

Beggar One's "demonstration" has devastated the underground world in both the present and in the collective Egregorian memory. The PCs need to reestablish contact with the center city, pushing through the obliterative wave of Witness (a confusing, befuddling sense of someone else's fear, pain, and dread). They'll find that most of Hivehome's lower terraces, the ones close to the waterline, are flooded. Fires rage through the upper city, burning organic material. A number of the midwall stations have sheared from the cavern wall and fallen, but at least one gondola line remains operational.

As the PCs get closer to the center of the city, a new threat emerges, crawling through the cracks left by the quake. In tens and then scores, the forces of the Machine start pouring into the cavity, dropping off cavern walls, tearing out of cracks and fissures as they burrow down from the surface.

COMBAT:
ABADDON

Sitrep: n/a; this is a straightforward fight with no unique objectives or rules.

Enemy Forces

For 3 PCs: 1x **Barricade** (Drag Down, Titan-Snare Drone)
4x **Grunt Berserkers**
2x **Hive** (Grind Maniple, Motile Swarm)

For 4 PCs: +3x **Grunt Assaults**

For 5 PCs: +1x **Assault** (Rank Discipline)

OUTCOME

Defeat here means the PCs must retreat and find their own way out of the city. If this happens, fill in one segment of the **Machine Horde** clock.

Victory means the PCs successfully beat back the Machine's attack and make their way to the plaza. In the central city, they find that Hivehome's command has cobbled together a crisis response HQ and is sending teams out to rescue as many people as possible. Over the coming hours, engineers embark on missions to evaluate the structural integrity of the cavern (they return with grim news – the entirety of Hivehome must be evacuated, as it is no longer safe). The Machine's attack seems to have been quelled for now, but there is no telling when it will begin again.

Terror works to soothe Endeavor, who appears to be in some kind of catatonic trance. The Overmind is the source of the obliterative waves; being in their proximity is nearly impossible, but some of the Egregorians who seem to be able to manage the pulses are doing their best to care for Endeavor.

THE UNITED CITIES, SHATTERED

In the days to come, the player characters should learn the following:

• Daylight was hit by some kind of orbital weapon. All telegraph and radio lines have been severed, and the scouts sent to reestablish contact come back with grim news: there's nothing left but a crater kilometers across. The entire city and the mountain above it is gone. Pooling water and steaming molten stone fill the caldera at the bottom of a crater that once was home to millions. Anyone in Daylight at the time of the strike is presumed to be dead.

• Endeavor is catatonic. Terror, Endeavor's second, is the interim leader of Hivehome's Egregorians. That subjectivity override you felt came from Endeavor; the impact of Beggar One's weapon retriggered some kind of ancestral–present trauma. No one knows how long it will take for the Overmind to recover.

• The cavity containing Hivehome is destabilized, having lost many of its major pillars. The city is without power and partly flooded, and nearly half of all structures have collapsed or been burned to cinders. The cavern needs to be evacuated quickly; it will collapse within the year, creating a second caldera lake and a corresponding atmospheric event.

• Mycol Fields, partially aboveground and comparatively distant from Evergreen, suffered tremors that were dramatic, but ultimately minor. Its infrastructure is largely intact and can be scaled to support refugees; the leadership will need to prepare for the dramatic increase in population, though, and the refugees will be susceptible to the elements in the meantime. The safest option is likely to move the survivors from Hivehome for resettlement.

Soon, the long evacuation of Hivehome begins.

THE FATE OF EVERGREEN

To determine how Evergreen fared in the absence of the PCs, check the **Defense of Evergreen** and **Machine Horde** clocks. Do this in front of the players (you can decide if and how their characters find out about this information).

- If the **Machine Horde** clock is higher than the **Defense of Evergeen** clock, there are casualties and widespread destruction. Contingency White is wiped out completely. Chief Engineer Fieldings, Tyrell Markey, and the Châus are all killed. The only notable survivors are Edena Ji, Brava Hadura, and a handful of militia troopers.
- If the **Machine Horde** clock is equal to or one segment lower than the **Defense of Evergeen** clock, there are high casualties as the city falls. A few members of Contingency White die in the fighting (GM choice) and the colony's militia is almost totally wiped out. All other named NPCs survive and are imprisoned in the prison camp, except Edena Ji, who continues to serve Beggar One.
- If the **Defense of Evergreen** clock is two or more segments higher than the **Machine Horde** clock, the city holds out briefly and is even able to evacuate some of its civilian population before it falls to the Machine. The PCs might come across survivors in scattered camps in the wilderness around Evergreen, evading capture.

MOVING FORWARD

From here, the group essentially has two options:

- They could **follow the refugees** from Hivehome as they proceed toward Mycol Fields. The journey is fraught and perilous and will narratively take up most of **Downtime 4**, but most of the evacuees will make it safely to the HUC's rendezvous point.
- Alternatively, they could **strike out on their own** and try to return to Evergreen or find out what happened to the city. If they do so, you can give them the above information about Evergreen, plus give them the opportunity during Downtime 4 to scout the city, talk to fleeing survivors, or set up their own forward camp.

DOWNTIME 4

This downtime is brief and fraught. The PCs can perform Full Repairs and have time for one downtime action each. The activities available to them will vary widely based on where they are.

The PCs are likely in one of the following situations:

- in a prison camp in Evergreen
- gone to ground in occupied Evergreen
- in the wilderness, evading the Machine's scouts
- aiding the survivors of Hivehome.

Whether they're in Evergreen or not, previous downtime actions that were available in Evergreen can no longer be performed. Beyond that, the PCs can do whatever is within their power to make connections, gain resources, perform repairs, and gather themselves for the fight ahead.

MECHS
One potential complication is that if the PCs have been imprisoned, they don't have an easy way to secure their mechs. Though their mechs may have been damaged, destroyed, or otherwise rendered inoperable in the fighting leading up to this point, the PCs receive some surprising information from one of the militia members that Beggar One has allowed to more freely patrol Evergreen: they are intact and have been repaired (as if they benefited from a FULL REPAIR). It seems that Beggar One has taken the opportunity to analyze and experiment with what is (in its mind) cutting-edge military hardware. It is doing this using the colony's printer and the PCs' licenses. With some planning, the group should be able to secure their mechs from the hangar in which they're being held.

MEANWHILE
PATIENCE, EDENA JI, AND BEGGAR ONE
Patience, Edena Ji, and Beggar One – along with a healthy contingent of subalterns and hollow chassis, are held up in the Governor's Farm. Beggar One is cannibalizing Patience. It is keeping Edena around in case it needs organic verification to accomplish certain protocols – she's helping because she's afraid for her life, not out of any loyalty.

It's possible that the PCs may have taken Edena into custody earlier, following the events of BEAT 16A.6: MOUNTAINFALL, and escaped with her. If that's the case, Beggar One periodically selects prisoners from Evergreen to "assist" it with its work. Sometimes these prisoners are returned with scraps of intel after they've served some purpose, sometimes they're never seen again.

If the PCs **killed Patience**, Beggar One is instead trying to brute force archive access, something which is slowing it down considerably. If Beggar One's proxy was destroyed by the players during the fall of Evergreen, another, considerably more battered one replaces it when making public addresses.

THE HERCYNIAN UNITED CITIES
Staggered by Beggar One's strike, the survivors of the HUC have determined they must pack up their belongings, salvage what they can, and make for Mycol Fields, the remaining city.

They march en masse, transporting the whole surviving populations of Hivehome and the scant few survivors of Daylight to Mycol Fields; this great movement is ongoing, and will continue for the rest of this act. At this stage, the HUC's high command has set up in Mycol Fields and is beginning to plan a counterattack into Evergreen.

Gradually, fall begins.

5014U
FALL

Summer is gone. The gray march of winter approaches. But first the growing night, and the creeping death of green not hardy enough to weather the long autumn.

IN THIS SECTION:

BEAT 17: SUCKERPUNCH LOGIC

This beat offers several possible starting points for the final mission. The first is for PCs that are with the HUC at Mycol Fields, whether they were called there by Dthall after fleeing the city or they followed Hivehome's refugees. The second is for PCs that are on their own, free, anywhere else.

If the PCs are in prison, skip right to **BEAT 18: TONIGHT, THERE'S GONNA BE A JAILBREAK** (p. 148) before briefing them on **MISSION 5**.

PCS WITH THE HUC

The command center at Mycol Fields is nowhere near as sophisticated as the hub at Hivehome, but it's stable, secure, and the only one left. Built into an ancient, pre-Crisis Egregorian amphitheater, the Mycolian command center is a terraced bowl crowded with command staff. Every surface is given over to charts, switchboards, salvaged boxes of files, and spare equipment. Lamplight from the ceiling banishes all shadow, but makes the wintering dark outside feel all the deeper.

Power cables run in arm-thick bundles across the stone floor, a barely-managed tangle that pumps power and data to the new joint Hercynian command. Every desk is a workspace for attachés and junior officers tabulating figures, triple-checking map quadrants with scouts out in the field. There are no subalterns here – too many bad experiences so close to Beggar One.

Radio contact is stable but scratchy and prone to washout; the Hercynians have been using runners, and one will occasionally burst into the command center from the main doors, shouting for their quadrant's commander. The picture they paint is grim: Beggar One has taken Evergreen. The city's printers are hard at work, and it appears that the city's human population has been ushered into a prison camp. The Machine is unafraid. Its armies make open camp in the clear-cut, standing at attention, facing out toward any potential attack.

Meanwhile, a steady stream of refugees filters up from the broken earth, trudging toward Mycol Fields. They bring everything they can cart and carry, flowing into the split-level city from the ruins of Hivehome and the burning fields of Daylight.

There might be safety at Mycol Fields now, but it's only a matter of time before Beggar One puts to campaign. By anyone's reckoning, the Machine holds all cards. The clock is against you, and you don't know where it began or where it will end.

It is a cold comfort that you at least have a wall to fight with your back against.

Mycol Fields is experiencing a staggering influx of refugees from Hivehome. Its available housing has already reached capacity and now its emergency response teams, medical population, and rangers are hurriedly trying to set people up in the surrounding fields and scattered towns. The agricultural space that defined Mycol Fields has quickly become a sprawling tent city; there is no land inside or around the city-state that has not been settled by weary refugees. The work of keeping them supplied, keeping them safe, and treating them for injuries and illnesses is, as with so many other aspects of this moment in the HUC's history, the work of triage – a losing, but valiant battle. Many will be saved; more will die. This is the absolute best anyone can do as literally millions of survivors make the journey to Mycol Fields.

Before, Mycol Fields was a community of moderate size, built across, above, and throughout a kilometers-deep crevasse. The crevasse bottoms out at a series of thermal vents that feed massive tiers of geothermal generators built by Egregorians during and before the Hercynian Crisis. The Fields is notable for its giant vertical mycology farms, its steady power and heat, and its broad aboveground agricultural territory. It had a few hundred thousand residents before the orbital strike.

The HUC's high command has moved into Mycol Fields' command center and tasked a force of scouts to spread out in the surrounding lands with two objectives: first, find any survivors and direct them to Mycol Fields; and second, relay any and all information on Beggar One and his army's movements back to the Fields. While most of the scouts are busy seeking and escorting survivors, some of the teams sent toward Evergreen have returned with a vital discovery: Beggar One's casket is in Evergreen – one of the scouts personally saw it being moved into the central complex, identifiable by the PCs as the Governor's Farm – and vulnerable to attack from the direction of the Fields.

The command center is a chamber abuzz with constant movement and cacophony.

The command center is a chamber abuzz with constant movement and cacophony – machines, officers, radio transmissions, runners. When a pair of scouts burst through the doors in wet, muddy kit, no one notices until they all but collapse onto the high commanders' table.

"Commander Ordo, Commander Commorand," the human scout gasps between breaths. His Egregorian partner holds him up, crown high. Both are marked with the white dot of Daylight on their shoulders.

A [memory/impression] like a wave, a touch of the same urgency following the quake, the same urgency you've felt in countless battles, and a feeling of … other people? Someone else's tense moments before a test, or the anticipation felt before lovemaking, familiar to you but the body is different – the Egregorian.

The human scout's report is short, breathless. "Standbrave," he says, indicating his Egregorian companion. "They – we – were out by the surface by Trench 32, ten klicks from Evergreen – we saw it."

"Saw what, son?" Ilyr asks the Egregorian, motioning for his attachés to be silent. The human scout sits and indicates his companion.

"The Machine," Standbrave says. Their voice is accented with an Egregorian buzz, and layered with Witness instead of words at times, but clear other-wise. "Early this morning, we witnessed many of its [guards/puppets] organized with singular purpose: through our scopes, we watched them move Beggar One's [body/casket/sarcophagus] into the center of the city." Standbrave's feather-antennae flare and contract as they speak, signaling, no doubt, to the other Egregorians in the room.

There is more to the conversation than just words, you think. Terror and the other Egregorians respond with muted displays of their own. You feel some of what Standbrave implies, a consequence of standing so close. You share a faint, faint memory of a blackened sky and a ghost song you've never heard.

"Once the Beggar One destroyed Daylight, it [closed/quieted] the colonial [thinking-cloud/omninet] as well. It cast aside a powerful [weapon/tool]," Stand-brave continues. "It can no long swell its armies as it could have. An error, certainly. But a revealing one–"

"It doesn't know where we are now," Ilyr cuts in, speaking in awe. "And it's on its own until it can access Evergreen's omninet."

"Precisely," Standbrave says. They flare and settle their feather crown, and the surge is unmistakable – pride, triumph, the heartening joy of delivering good news.

Terror straightens. "We have our window, then – Ilyr?"

"Agreed," Ilyr says. "Standbrave, thank you for your report, son. You and–"

"Gold," replies the human scout, saluting.

"You and Gold might have just won us the war," Ilyr says. "Go put your legs up, rangers. You've earned it."

The two scouts nod, salute, and are led away by a waiting attaché. Ilyr turns back to the table, where Terror has already pulled a chart that shows Trench 32, the nearby river, and – recently drawn onto the old map – the borders of Evergreen.

Commorand stirs, leans over the map, scratches his chin. "We have no underground route there." He looks at Terror. "The weapon the Machine has – it will be able to hit us if we travel aboveground, right?"

"A single [blow/strike/wound] will be enough to ruin us." Terror confirms. "If it has the [strength/hatred] to strike again, any force we send would be [mourned/missed/annihilated] in the initial blast."

"And if we mean to kill the Machine here, we must send a significant force," Commorand mutters. "If that weapon hits level ground, and not just a mountain–"

"We would not have to worry about the shaking [land/earth] that would follow," Terror rumbles.

Ilyr frowns, staring at – and through – the map. Thinking.

Terror taps the table with a single manipulator, slowly rolling their crown. "The size of the [great enemy/hated one]'s army is [immaterial/irrelevant]," they say, talking to Ilyr. "It is vast, and will grind us down to [dust/meal] if we attempt only to defend – if, that is, it [finds/devours] us."

"I know, Terror."

"And if we counterattack, we expose the Fields to attack – regardless of whether or not we [slay/succeed]."

"I know, Terror."

"And we still do not know if Beggar One has more of the [talons/weapons] it used to destroy Daylight. The only way we discover this is when we wake up in the [Company of Others/afterlife]."

There is silence at the table.

"Well." Ilyr looks to you. He taps the chart. "Advisors – advise us. Do we attack, or do we hold back and hope that we stay hidden?"

Save for an area of broad farmland immediately west of the city, the land between Mycol Fields and Evergreen is raw and wild. Some of the shallow, ancient tunnels under that span of earth have collapsed, marking hundreds of kilometers with long, wiggling trenches dozens of meters deep. Some of these chasms are flooded, but by and large the porous earth keeps them well drained and traversable by foot or chassis.

Beggar One's army is static, deployed to the eastern side of the river; Mycol Fields, meanwhile, is tucked into a valley to the west of the colony. Moving light and fast, using the collapsed tunnels-turned-trenches, the PCs have an opportunity to strike the heart of Evergreen and kill Beggar One. It's a wild plan, but it's a chance to cut off the head of the Machine before it inevitably crushes them beneath waves of subalterns and hollow mechs.

The other thing the rangers found lies within a few kilometers of Evergreen, at the colony's landing bowl. There's a ship parked there: the CRT's corvette, hidden beneath camouflage tarps and marked in Landmark's livery. Although the rangers couldn't get inside, they noted that it appears outfitted with single-use, jet-assisted rockets, perfect for takeoff.

PCS ON THEIR OWN

You went to ground. You stayed silent, stayed fast, stayed cold. Avoiding the Machine was work, but you did it. Now, however, thanks to your quiet tapping into Evergreen's still-extant AllComm and the Machine patrol schedule you've cracked, you can tell something has changed. Hiding won't save you from whatever comes next – now it's time to fight.

Three things soon come to the attention of the PCs:

First, they hear from their contacts (in Evergreen or the prison camp), or through their own scouting that there is a huge commotion at the Governor's Farm. Someone saw an NHP casket, ancient and battered in design, being hauled through the gates of the complex. Beggar One is at the Governor's Farm, absorbing all it can. If it is allowed to finish this process, the manufacturing capabilities and information it gains will render it more or less unstoppable. There are also strange and anomalous energy readings at the Farm that can't be explained by any regular power fluctuation. Something bad is happening there, and it's happening fast.

Second, the presence of a large prison camp in Evergreen (that the PCs may themselves be trapped inside) presents a huge problem. Liberating the camp, which contains most of the city's human residents, is a top priority.

Third, information reaches the PCs that Beggar One has been able to reactivate an orbital platform, which is what it used to strike with such phenomenal force. There's no telling when it will be ready to fire again. The only way to disable it would be to travel into orbit and undertake a boarding action. Fortunately enough, there's a ship in Evergreen's landing bowl – Contingency White, the corvette that the CRT used to arrive here.

MISSION 5: SPLIT-KNUCKLE HAYMAKER

BISHOP: "In nineteen minutes this place will be be a cloud of vapor the size of Nebraska."

RIPLEY: "Hicks, don't let him leave."

HICKS (grimacing with pain): "We ain't going anywhere."

– Aliens, 1986

MISSION BEATS

BEAT 18:	TONIGHT, THERE'S GONNA BE A JAILBREAK
COMBAT:	BREAKOUT
BEAT 19:	BEGGARS AND CHOOSERS
COMBAT:	BEHEMOTH
BEAT 20:	ELEVATOR, GOING UP
BEAT 21:	BOARDING CALL
BEAT 22:	ATTIC OF THE WORLD
COMBAT:	HITCHHIKERS AND STRAYS
COMBAT:	SINS OF THE FATHER
BEAT 23:	SPLIT-KNUCKLE HAYMAKER
COMBAT:	ROLLING THUNDER
COMBAT:	HIGH WATER
COMBAT:	FIRE WALK WITH ME
COMBAT:	HELLGATE
COMBAT:	ANNIHILATION PROPHET
BEAT 24:	BREATHE

CLOCKS

CONSUMPTION

BRIEFING

This is the final mission in Act 1 of *No Room For A Wallflower*. After its completion, the narrative of this act effectively ends.

There are two ways the PCs can approach this mission. At any time, they can choose to simply attack the Governor's Farm directly, skipping right to **BEAT 23: SPLIT-KNUCKLE HAYMAKER** (p. 162). Going right here without preparation or dealing with the *Cassander* will be extremely difficult, which should be made very clear to both the players and their characters.

The other is to prepare by getting the HUC to aid Evergreen (if they haven't already), freeing Contingency White from prison, and disabling the *Cassander*. Each of these steps has its own beats; each one that is completed (in any order) will make **BEAT 23** easier by removing encounters.

GOAL: Defeat Beggar One.

STAKES: If this mission fails, Evergreen will remain occupied and the extermination of the local population will begin.

REWARDS: The immediate safety of the colony, a major victory against the Machine, and countless lives saved. Union, Landmark Colonial, or the PCs' patron will grant them sufficient resources to advance to **LL5**.

There are also two rewards available. By going to the *Cassander*, players are able to unlock a powerful **ORBITAL BOMBARDMENT** ability, and defeating Beggar One allows characters to take the **FRAGMENT OF BEGGAR ONE**, a piece of **EXOTIC GEAR**.

RESERVES: The PCs can bring any reserves or gear that they acquired during the previous downtime. They will have multiple opportunities to perform **FULL REPAIRS** during this (final) mission, which can potentially be very long.

THE CONSUMPTION CLOCK

Set out a visible three-segment **Consumption** clock to represent Beggar One's cannibalization of Patience. If the PCs killed Patience during **Beat 16A.7: Escape From Evergreen**, give it four segments instead.

Each time the PCs perform a **Full Repair** or retreat from the final mission, fill in a segment of the Consumption clock. If it fills up, all segments are cleared and Beggar 1 becomes a **Class 2 Eidolon** (see pp. 196–109), instead of a **Class 1 Eidolon**, making the final fight much harder. Keep the clock out and continue to fill it. If it fills up again, Beggar 1 becomes a **Class 3 Eidolon**, then clear it again. If the clock fills up a third time (highly unlikely!) read the failure state outlined on page 171.

FULL REPAIRS
During this mission, the PCs can choose when to perform **Full Repairs**. As a rule of thumb, if they aren't actively on a sortie, they always have time to do so (and they might even be able to perform **Full Repairs** in the middle of a beat if there's enough time to do so). Each time they stop to do this, though, will push them closer to making the final fight more dangerous, ticking one segment on the **Consumption** clock.

GOING FOR THE THROAT

PCs that wish to end things quickly can simply choose to launch an attack directly, unassisted. If they choose to do this at any point, skip directly to **Beat 23: Split-Knuckle Haymaker** (p. 162).

It should be abundantly clear to characters and players both that without preparation and aid, **Beat 23** will be a long series of grueling fights with little breathing room. Enterprising groups may wish to attempt it anyway. If they get in over their heads (by losing a fight or retreating from one), characters can flee to attempt it again, however tick a segment on the **Consumption** clock if they do.

OPTIONAL OBJECTIVES

This mission presents several optional objectives for the PCs, wherever they are. Each one that the group completes will make the final push to defeat Beggar One more tolerable. They can be completed in any order.

1. MOBILIZE THE HUC

If the PCs convinced the HUC to aid Evergreen in **Beat 16B.5: Last Call in Egregore Cross**, Ilyr Ordo, Commorand, Heidel, Terror, and the other commanders of the HUC are in agreement: a sizable force of rangers must be sent to Evergreen.

At present, the rangers most ready for combat are those who were stationed in and around Mycol Fields at the time of Beggar One's strike. They make up the bulk of the force sent to counterattack at Evergreen; however, they have limited active mechs, and will have to rely on the PCs for mech support.

On the PCs' signal, the entire HUC force can be mobilized to march on Evergreen within days – and once they cross into the neighboring valley, they will literally be marching, as the earth is too rough for mechanized transport. Traveling light, they can reach Evergreen a few days later.

The mobilization of the HUC removes the combat Rolling Thunder from **Beat 23: Split-Knuckle Haymaker**, as the rangers draw away and engage a significant part of the Machine forces. It also allows the PCs skip **Beat 19: Beggars and Choosers**, as they already have the full support of the HUC.

If the PCs took **Route A** or failed to convince the HUC to unite in support of Evergreen, they get a second chance in **Beat 19**. If they're unsuccessful, unable to help, or unwilling to wait that long, the HUC pulls back, refusing to waste resources or soldiers on such a long shot. The rangers instead settle into the defense of Mycol Fields, abandoning efforts to aid the colony for the rest of Act 1.

2. LIBERATE THE PRISON CAMP

Scouting reveals that most of Evergreen's population – about 15,000 people, including many militia troopers – has been herded into a prison camp in the depot district. A force of subalterns has its guns trained on the district. If the camp could be liberated, many lives would be saved at the very least.

Signal chatter also shows that (unless they were killed in defense of the city; see p. 113), the members of CRT Contingency White are still alive and imprisoned. Their mechs appear functional, if captured.

To play out the prison break, go to **Beat 18: Tonight, There's Gonna be a Jailbreak** (p. 148).

If the camp is liberated and the CRT freed, they direct the PCs to their corvette (currently at the landing bowl) and ask to be dropped offworld on the Quiet Night installation to await pickup. Whatever happens to the CRT, freeing the prisoners raises enough hell that the Machine's forces are distracted, eliminating the combat **High Water** from **Beat 23**.

The PCs might be prisoners in the depot district at the beginning of this mission, in which case they need to deal with this issue first before pursuing any other objectives.

3. DEAL WITH THE CASSANDER

The orbital platform *Cassander* still looms large in the minds of the HUC's commanders. They may not know its name or the particulars of the weapon Beggar One used to strike Daylight, but they're sure that it can do it again if pressed. Although Beggar One might hesitate to destroy a force attacking its casket, it would absolutely strike Mycol Fields. At any moment, another flash could bolt down from the sky and end it all – and why that hasn't happened yet, HUC command doesn't know. There is a clock counting down, and no one but Beggar One knows how close it is to midnight.

If the PCs are with the HUC and do some investigating, they find old Union records stored in some of the HUC hardcopy ferried out of Hivehome. These records are general deployment tabulations listing orbital platforms and their functions, along with expected decommission dates and orbital patterns. Three lines are of particular interest, as they list the existence of three "strategic-massive denial" platforms in orbit at the time of the Hercynian Crisis: the *Antipater*, listed as "Killed in Action" by Egregorian forces; the *Craterus*, listed as "Payload Exhausted – Graveyard Orbit"; and the *Cassander*, listed as "Operational".

If the PCs aren't with the HUC, they may not find out the specific information above, but they can investigate the situation themselves as long as they can reach the platform with a signal (e.g., using Evergreen's omninet tower).

Either way, an investigation reveals the following:

- The *Cassander* is likely the platform that Beggar One used to destroy Daylight.
- The Cassander orbits Hercynia once every 90 minutes. Its cone of coverage includes Mycol Fields and the area outside Evergreen – within an orbit, it can target and hit either area for a period of about 5 minutes each.
- The *Cassander*'s kinetic rod platform requires significant time to prime, but could be ready for another strike within a week. It also has a battery of kinetic artillery.
- The *Cassander* was heavily damaged during the Hercynian Crisis and likely had to be repaired to functionality.

In the process of planning their approach, the PCs should discover (or will already have been alerted to) the Landmark corvette hidden in Evergreen's landing bowl. Using the ship, they can hunt down the *Cassander* in **Beat 22: Attic of the World** (p. 156). Completing **Beat 22** removes the *Cassander* as a threat in **Beat 23: Split-Knuckle Haymaker** and even gives the PCs the chance to unleash its power.

If the PCs freed Contingency White from the prison camp, they start this sortie with **Beat 20: Elevator, Going Up** (p. 154). If they haven't liberated the prison camp or decide to go directly for the corvette themselves, they jump straight to **Beat 21: Boarding Call** (p. 156).

BEAT 18: TONIGHT, THERE'S GONNA BE A JAILBREAK

Beggar One has total control over Evergreen. Its subalterns patrol the streets, while guns overlook the city and hollow chassis stand as sentinels in the city's parks and plazas. Meanwhile, Patience is unresponsive to hails, and the colony's subaltern combat frames have been rounding people up and escorting them to the prison camp in the depot district. The whole district is now an open-air prison and ad hoc field hospital monitored by Patience's subalterns. Human doctors tend to the wounded. Respiratory problems, flash-burns, and ruptured eardrums are common, while dehydration and fatigue start to take their toll on the survivors. Within the week, hunger and infections, possibly waste-borne diseases as well, are going to start becoming real problems.

Everyone has been thrown into the camp save for Edena Ji and a small force of human militia troopers. These troopers are unarmed and their orders are nothing more than "keep the peace," though no clarifications have been provided. Brava Hadura is inside the prison and while she technically remains part of Evergreen's militia, she does not hold a command position, nor is she able to make contact with Patience, Edena Ji, or Beggar One.

The depot district butts up against the city's wall. Save for a few thin blocks of plastic-wrapped housing toward the city center, most of the district is given over to large hangars; broad concrete pads stacked with shipping crates; and various outbuildings dedicated to the maintenance of machinery, distribution of goods, and so on. A pair of tall cranes mounted on tracks stand as landmarks, immobilized for want of power. The "officials" of the camp know little to nothing about Patience's plans for the population; they are as much in the dark as the prisoners and only hold official posts insofar as they were members of Evergreen's militia before the orbital strike. They do not know the boundaries of the prison, Patience's plan for the population, whether they are actually meant to watch over the inmates, or if they are prisoners themselves.

BREAKOUT
Conscious of these factors, Brava, some trusty militia troopers, the Landmark CRT members in the camp, and some civilian leaders surreptitiously broadcast to the PCs (wherever they are) that they are planning a breakout. The plan lacks details, but what's important to Brava is that all parties jailed there work together so that they survive. Unfortunately for Brava and the other conspirators, the prison camp – and, indeed, any attempted escape plan – faces manifold problems.

BOUNDARIES OF THE PRISON
The prisoners – mostly citizens from Evergreen along with some refugees from the outlying towns – do not know the bounds of their jail, only that they are being watched, and that if they cross an invisible, unknown line, they will be shot without warning. Further, any attempt to relocate the population is going to be noticeable, either as a steady drip or a single mass movement. A decision must also be made about where they should go.

There are many streets leading out of the depot district and at least one significant ingress/egress point at Evergreen's wall. Toward the city side, fortified positions garrisoned by Patience's subalterns watch over the streets and depot. Beyond these checkpoints, the city is largely abandoned save for the Governor's Farm, which is a buzzing hive of activity. The vast bulk of Beggar One's armies are encamped outside Evergreen – a mere five hundred meters of muddy, clear-cut ground separates them from the city.

Investigating the true bounds of the prison is a risky, multipart process that relies on stealth, cunning, speed, and memory.

INJURIES AND ILLNESS
A few thousand injured, wounded, and otherwise immobile people in the prison need static triage and care. Moving them would be dangerous even with proper transport systems and medical infrastructure; without, it is tantamount to a death sentence. If a mass breakout were to take place, the ability to safely transport these people would be an important consideration.

The depot district, thankfully, contains plenty of resources. Much of what is stored there could help to solve this problem, but unless people know where supplies are and can either construct or repair methods of transport in secret, plentiful resources are not particularly useful.

Firstly, there are a number of deuce-and-a-half trucks scattered around the district in various states of repair – some are functional but for the want of a battery change or charge, others need a wheel change, and others still require significant repairs. These trucks would be incredibly useful (and fast), but are likely to draw significant attention.

Secondly, there is plenty of personal mobility assistance equipment scattered around the district as

well as packaged units stored and waiting activation. This equipment – powered exoskeletons, powered and manual wheelchairs, walking stretchers, hand carts, and so on – can be prepped, repaired, and distributed to people who need it. This will help all but the most terribly injured prisoners move without assistance and in small groups, with a good degree of stealth compared to trucks. The trade off, of course, is that many of these systems need methods of recharging, and, if used without trucks or other modes of mechanical transport, will mean people can travel only as fast and as far as they can walk.

Thirdly, there is plenty of equipment that can be converted into manual, unpowered mobility equipment – canes, stretchers, sledges, packs, and so on. This option is the fast option in terms of moving people right away, but these devices are unsubtle and prone to breakage.

INACCESSIBLE SUPPLIES
Further complicating access to the gear needed for an evacuation is the steady hemorrhage of supplies from an already uneven selection. This has been exacerbated by the ad hoc nature of the prison's establishment and borders. The creation of some sort of ledger, inventory identification and management, and an effective system for distribution would go a long way toward both keeping people alive and facilitating any large-scale action to break out of the camp.

Establishing this infrastructure can be done in secret. To get through the stacks and recreate manifests with no computer access to the contents of each warehouse, teams will need to open up crates and manually write down their contents, quantities, and locations. In the meantime, some of the worst injured will succumb to their wounds, people scouting out the boundaries of their prison will be shot and killed, and other small crises will continue to occur.

MECHS
PCs who don't have their mechs may want to gain access to them first (see **DOWNTIME 4**, p. 139).

RUNNING THE PRISON BREAK
The prison break is best played out in narrative play using a series of skill challenges or clocks. It can look very different depending on whether the HUC is helping and whether the PCs are helping from the outside or are themselves imprisoned.

For a simple prison break scenario, set out two visible clocks: an eight-segment clock called **Plan the Escape** and a six-segment clock called **Discovered** to represent the failure state clock. As characters take actions to plan and execute their breakout, fill in segments on **Plan the Escape** (one segment on a result of **9 or less**, two segments for **10–19**, and three for **20+**). Fill in segments on **Discovered** when PCs take complications (one segment) or failures (two segments) for these actions.

If **Plan the Escape** fills up before **Discovered**, set out a six-segment **Prison Break** clock and a 10-segment **Captured** clock. Filling up **Prison Break** before **Captured** means the PCs successfully organize a mass breakout. If **Captured** fills up first, they PCs get captured (or recaptured, if they started in the prison camp). If this happens, they can try again, but make all clocks two segments shorter.

If **Discovered** fills up first, the PCs are forced to try and run the prison break early. Play out the same scenario as above, but with a 10-segment **Prison Break** clock and a six-segment **Captured** clock instead.

If fighting breaks out while the PCs have their mechs (e.g., if they attack the camp from the outside in an attempt to free the prisoners), use the combat encounter below.

COMBAT: BREAKOUT

DETAILS
Choose a sitrep for this fight based on the circumstances in which the combat takes place. It could be a basic fight without a sitrep, or you could use **Gauntlet**, **Escort**, or **Holdout**. The Squads in this fight are made up of armored subalterns and so lack the **BIOLOGICAL** tag.

OUTCOME
Liberating the prison camp successfully results in a great deal of chaos and frees the remnants of

ENEMY FORCES
FOR 3 PCS:	2x **VEHICLE ARCHERS** (Impending Threat, Covering Fire) 2x **SQUADS** (Armored)
FOR 4 PCS:	+1x **COMMANDER HIVE** (Bolster Network, Electro-Nanite Cloud, Press the Attack)
FOR 5 PCS:	Add **ELITE** to **HIVE**.

Evergreen's militia. Combined, these factors eliminate the combat **HIGH WATER** from **BEAT 23: SPLIT-KNUCKLE HAYMAKER**. Anyone who escapes from the camp clears enough ground from Evergreen to evade easy capture for the time being. The PCs can point these escapees toward the HUC if they're on good terms with the Hercynians.

If the CRT is alive and not overtly hostile to the PCs (i.e., at least one segment of the **CRT Relationship** clock is filled in), they point the group toward their stranded corvette (see **BEAT 20: ELEVATOR, GOING UP**).

SECTION 6 // Fall, 5014u

BEAT 19:
BEGGARS AND CHOOSERS

The PCs are hailed by a weary-sounding Dthall over comms, asking for their assistance one last time. If they weren't present in Hivehome during its collapse, she briefs them on the events there. She informs them that while she can't meet them on the battlefield, her contact, Dusk, will brief them on the task.

The column of refugees stretches across the horizon. The sun, a pale disk hid behind the pall of soot and ash thrown up since the destruction of the mountain, does nothing to discourage the dismal scene.

The refugees move on foot, mostly, dragging their belongings in hand carts and piled in the back of vehicles. Here and there you spot the tread of a mech – a Hercynian ranger. Once, the sight would have elicited the thrill of spotting an enemy combatant, but now you can see how battered they are, how worn and how outdated their chassis.

An insectile figure scuttles through the ash to meet you – an Egregorian, clad in ranger gear, with a short rifle slung over their shoulder.

*"[Greetings/Regrets]. [Dusk/Old Moon] is my name,"
says the Egregorian, half in a buzz, half in a series of impressions you feel gently pressing on your mind, like a picture viewed through smoked glass. Behind them, in the column, you see more of their kind, uncomfortable up on the surface, moving on injured limbs and laden with belongings. No different than the human refugees beside them, now that you look at it.*

For PCs who didn't visit Hivehome, this may be their first meeting with living Egregorians. If so, you should brief them with the information from **Beat 16B.2: Hivehome** if they're curious. Dusk is willing to answer any questions the characters have.

Dusk explains the problem to the PCs: For several days, the last of the refugees have been straggling out of the ruins of Hivehome. The HUC's rangers are spread far too thin to cover all the ground they need for a safe passage and – worse – they believe they are being hunted. Though Beggar One seems to be preoccupied with other matters, its forces still crawl over the valley. For days, the rangers have tracked an enormous energy signature – a large force of machines, likely – that has been closing in on their location and they don't think they have the forces to fight it in the open.

On behalf of the HUC, Dusk asks the characters to prove their goodwill by covering the escape of the last refugees. If they do, Dthall and the Egregorian leadership try to get a force of rangers sent to help Evergreen.

The PCs can turn down this offer and return to whatever they were doing with minimal time lost, but they will lose this opportunity.

If the PCs choose to assist the HUC, they travel with the column for a day or two before the danger makes itself abundantly clear.

Travel with the caravan is mind-numbing, a trudging procession across the scarred landscape, a pilgrimage through nowhere. When the attack comes, it's like the shock of cold water.

A chorus of alarms and cries – some human, some pushing at the edge of your perception. Movement as the rangers' mechs encircle the caravan, and something else – something huge, crawling over the horizon.

A titanic mech from the old war, ragged as a corpse. Though it once stood tall and proud, it now scuttles on all fours, dragging itself along, damaged and overgrown with weeds, the refuse of the dead, and the detritus of battle. Its innards, which may have once housed a pilot, spew out from its armor and drag along the ground, causing an unearthly metallic shriek as it gallops downhill toward the column. The deadly chorus of the Machine has animated it – dragged it from its grave and sent it against you.

COMBAT:
BEHEMOTH

In this fight, the PCs fight **[The Accumulation]** – likely only the second **Ultra** they have ever encountered. As it fights, it disgorges Machine forces from within its innards: subalterns and old Crisis-era power suits that still carry long-decayed human remains within their shells. To represent this, it has been built as a **Size 3 Engineer** with an unusually high speed. The **Engineer's Deployable Turrets** represent **[The Accumulation]**'s disgorged minions.

Enemy Forces
For 3 PCs: 1x **[The Accumulation] – Ultra Engineer** (see below for upgrades)
For 4 PCs: +2x **Grunt Priests**
For 5 PCs: +2x **Grunt Berserkers**

DETAILS
Begin this combat with two of **[The Accumulation]**'s **Deployable Turrets** on the field.

OUTCOME
PC DEFEAT
If the PCs are forced to retreat or otherwise can't defeat **[The Accumulation]**, it attacks the caravan, causing heavy casualties before loping off into the waste. The PCs can attempt to track it down and destroy it, but even if they do, the HUC can't help them.

PC VICTORY
If the PCs destroy **[The Accumulation]**, the HUC high is pushed to realize that they will be unable to complete this fight alone. With the bulk of the refugee column finally evacuated to Mycol Fields, the HUC's commanders decide the only way forward is an attack on Evergreen. The objective: cutting off the Machine at the source by killing Beggar One while it is unable to reinforce.

When it comes, the HUC attack on Evergreen diverts a huge proportion of the Machine's forces, allowing the PCs to skip the combat **Rolling Thunder** in **Beat 23: Split-Knuckle Haymaker**.

ENEMY MECH
[THE ACCUMULATION]

SIZE
3

Ultra Engineer
Striker

Encountered during the initial defense of and subsequent retreat from Laguna, the Machine entity now designated ME-A-03 was initially thought to be a rare example of proximity accumulation. Because the advancing ranks of the Machine's forces were so compressed, some of the subalterns and chassis encountered by ranger units appeared to be fused or tangled together. Contrary to the independent behavior expressed by discrete units, these accumulative entities appeared to work under the coordination of a single mind, accumulating or shedding subalterns and chassis as necessary to fit specific roles. When "shed" from the main body, most of these component units collapse as if unpowered, completely inert.

The ME-AE designation is intended to help identify a machine entity–accumulation entity in the field; it is not intended to define the parameters of possible types of accumulation entities that can be encountered.

More records of initial encounters follow, scheduled beginning with 1.0.

HULL: -1	HP: 25	Armor: 0
AGILITY: -1	Evasion:7	Speed: 5
SYSTEMS: 2	E-Defense: 10	Save Target: 10
ENGINEERING: 3	Heat Cap: 10	Sensors: 15

AS AN ULTRA, [THE ACCUMULATION]:
- Takes two separate turns each round, or three if there are 5 or more players.
- Has **4 structure** and **4 stress**.
- Can clear one condition affecting it at the start of its turn and repair one destroyed system or weapon at the end of its turn.
- Deals **+1d6** damage on critical hits.
- Can **OVERWATCH** any number of times a round.
- Rolls all structure and stress checks twice and chooses either result.

SYSTEMS

SIGHT   Trait
[THE ACCUMULATION] ignores INVISIBLE, and hostile characters within SENSORS can't HIDE.

>//EXECUTE:::
<Set Aside Useless Things>
Trait, Recharge 6+, Quick Action

Until the end of [THE ACCUMULATION]'s next turn, its drones will attack a character of its choice within RANGE instead of the nearest hostile character.

1.2: By shedding corpus and adapting to rapidly changing combat scenarios, the accumulation entity magnifies the efficacy of outgoing, less-than-overwhelming fire.

<Minimum Sufficient Firepower>
Heavy Cannon, Smart, +1
[✒ 15][3 ⌀]

This weapon has +2 ✚ against flying targets.

1.1: Whether through the accumulation of their agglomerated subaltern's firepower, the mounting of a chassis weapon, or – only encountered on some models – wholly unique chemically accelerated payloads, it appears that accumulations are required to field some amount of minimum sufficient firepower.

>//CONTEXT::: \<Shed The Dead>
System, Drone, Recharge 6+, Quick Action

MISSILE DRONE (Size 1, HP 10, EVASION 10, E-DEFENSE 10, Tags: *DRONE*)

[THE ACCUMULATION] chooses a character within line of sight and ⟋ 30, then deploys a fast-moving missile drone to an adjacent space. At the start of each of its subsequent turns, the drone moves 3 spaces toward the target, or 6 spaces if the target has **LOCK ON**. It moves as directly as possible but maneuvers around obstructions and cover if it can. When the drone moves adjacent to, or starts or ends its turn adjacent to any character, it detonates with a ⊙ 1 explosion. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or take **14** ✷. On a success, they take half damage.

Only one **MISSILE DRONE** can be deployed at a time, and the system can only recharge once it has detonated.

1.5: When AEs realign, it is as if their core "mind" decides at that moment which components (it is best to think of their fused/tangled subalterns and chassis as components rather than individual combatants) are the most necessary or useful. The rest are discarded, molten and ready to blow.

>//EXECUTE::: \<Adapt>(
System, Drone, Recharge 4+, Quick Action

DRONE (Size 1/2, HP 5, EVASION 10, E-DEFENSE 10, Tags: *DRONE*)

[THE ACCUMULATION] deploys two drones into free adjacent spaces. Each drone has one of the following loadouts, all of which attack with +1 vs **EVASION**:

- **HUNTER:** ⟋ 10, 4 ∅ , Reliable 1
- **INFERNO:** ▷ 3, 2 🔥
- **HELLSTORM:** ⟋ 15, ⊙ 1, 2 ∅
- **PRIMED:** ⟋ 10, 4 ∅ . When this drone is destroyed, it explodes in a ⊙ 1 area. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or take **7** ✷ damage.

On **[THE ACCUMULATION]**'s turn, each drone attacks the nearest hostile character within range. Up to six drones can be deployed at a time, and all are disabled if **[THE ACCUMULATION]** is destroyed.

1.0: The knots of agglomerated machine revealed themselves to be more than the product of pressed-together synthflesh and armature. Its retinue neutralized and the AE itself under fire from multiple squads of rangers, it simply shed layers of subalterns and chassis, adapting to the situation as a liquid conforms to its container.

BEAT 20:
ELEVATOR, GOING UP

After liberating the prison camp, the PCs might encounter members of CRT Contingency White (unless some or all of them were killed in Evergreen during **BEAT 16B.6: TUMBLEDOWN**). They've suffered in the aftermath of Beggar One's strike, though their wounds – with one exception – are minor: bruises, cuts, and a concussion or two as they were dragged out of the Governor's Farm and thrown into the prison camp. The balance of wounds is up to you. Either way, four of the five members are up, ambulatory, and in fighting shape. Barring the fact that they don't have their weapons or mechs, they're ready to rumble at the word go. Anne, the one downed member of the team, is severely injured – shot in the midsection, stabilized, and now held in a drug-induced medical coma.

You'd recognize Ed and Mauler anywhere. Here, in the ranks of hospital cots filling the otherwise empty warehouse, they seem no less dangerous for lack of their gear. The two of them sit in a group with Balsam and Emma, heads together, deep in discussion. It takes a moment, but as you navigate the cots toward them, you see the bed they're gathered around holds Anne, bandaged and asleep.

As you approach, they notice you. With a final few words from Ed, they stop talking, and stand to greet you.

"All told," Mauler says, shaking your hand, "I'm happy to know you're alive. Could do with some real hard bastards on our side."

Ed and the others greet you in turn. They're scared too, you realize, roughed up and tired – but they all have a fire in them. An energy that reveals itself before Ed tells you in a whisper, "Look, don't tell anyone yet – but I think we have a way off this rock…"

In short: the CRT's subline corvette, the *Contingency White*, is grounded at Evergreen's landing bowl. Aboard the ship, there are about twenty armed, packaged, and dormant combat subalterns remaining that they can control via Connie White, their team's NHP. Connie is dormant right now and secured on a quarantine network – neither Patience nor Beggar One know about her. Further, the *Contingency* is equipped with one set of solid-state boosters – these single-use rockets are intended to lift the ship high enough into the atmosphere that it can engage its nearlight drive without carbonizing and irradiating its immediate environment.

If the CRT can hike to the *Contingency*, wake Connie up, and unpack and arm the combat subalterns they have on board, then they might be able to do something.

With the assistance of the PCs, the CRT's plan is to follow up on the final objective of their original mission: head offworld, to one of Hercynia's moons. There, they will land at Quiet Night, a silent global monitoring installation built roughly fifty years prior and recover the colony's lifetime-record along with the NHP secreted away there. Once they secure the facility and its data, they plan to report back to Landmark and call for extraction, sneaking away before Union arrives. They are more than happy to share this information with the PCs if they think it will persuade them to help.

In return for helping them with this, the CRT offers to let the PCs use their corvette to board and disable the orbital weapons platform *Cassander*.

COMPLICATIONS
PATIENCE
If the PCs are invested in the future of Evergreen, they may want to look for the uncorrupted clone of Patience that is secreted away at the moon facility. Once Beggar One has been dealt with, this clone could be tremendously useful not only to Evergreen, but also the HUC. Evergreen's gene banks, infrastructure, and data are all managed by Patience; without them, the colony could survive, but it would be severely hamstrung and thousands would die while they figure it all out.

The CRT has been ordered to recover the Patience clone and remove it from the site. Trying to interfere with this objective will cause conflict if the CRT is along for the ride.

CONFLICTING INTERESTS
Knowledge of the Quiet Night facility might be a revelation for the PCs, and the discovery of its existence could prompt some anger. It is a powerful monitoring station, which means that Landmark Colonial (and by extension, SSC) has been aware of the presence of the Hercynians, Egregorians, and even the Machine for half a century now. The corporation set up a colony in an isolated part of the galaxy with the full knowledge that, at some point down the line, there would be a legal (and likely literal) conflict between itself and Union. Evergreen was never meant to succeed in the long run, only to

secure SSC's legal claim on the world and its people. Now the consequences of their actions have put a tens of thousands of colonists at risk, not to mention the population of the HUC.

The PCs choices regarding Quiet Night might lead them into conflict with the CRT. The CRT's loan of their corvette is contingent on the PCs dropping them off at the facility – double-crossing them at the last moment, deciding to the destroy the facility, or preventing them from extracting data and completing their mission would all prompt hostile responses at the very least.

FUEL
The *Contingency* has enough solid-state fuel for one lift. It can safely land in-atmosphere once it's taken off but won't be able to take off again without refueling, which is impossible with Beggar One in control of Evergreen.

CARGO
Even stripped of extraneous weight, there is no way the ship can evacuate everyone from Evergreen. At most, it could fit the PCs, the CRT, and both teams' mechs.

The PCs could elect to not bring their mechs and instead evacuate some of the populace (along with sufficient supplies to support them until rescue comes). If so, they can abandon their mechs and attempt to reacquire them after evacuating the CRT and a small number of refugees, landing the corvette back in-atmosphere and effectively stranding themselves on Hercynia. This process is risky as their mechs are likely to be discovered.

CHANGING MINDS
As far as the CRT is concerned, they are leaving on a one-way trip. Unless there's been some significant relationship growth to encourage them to buck their initial mission, the CRT means to get their ship, get to the backup, and then get out completely.

The PCs can clear one segment on the CRT Relationship clock to convince the CRT to assist them on a task that directly conflicts with their mission, no roll required; however, they can't do this if they have three or fewer segments remaining.

If the CRT Relationship clock is full, they can be convinced to stay on Hercynia a little longer, delay their immediate mission, and join the fight against the Machine. They will still loan the PCs the use of the corvette if they can access it.

LEAVING
It's entirely possible that the PCs might decide they've had enough, completely abandoning their mission, taking the corvette, and heading offworld. This decision ends the narrative of N*o Room For A Wallflower*.

CONTINGENCY WHITE
The *Contingency White* is a subline corvette marked in Landmark livery. A newer model of IPS-N's reliable *Sockeye* class of atmosphere-capable, low-gross, long-range ships, it is built for speed, transportation, and rugged use – not ship-to-ship combat. The *Contingency* is designed for long-deployment expeditions, with ample room for cargo and a relatively well-appointed crew compartment.

The *Contingency* measures 130 meters long, 43 meters at the beam, and 18 meters tall when laid dorsal side up. It can sustain a crew of eight for up to two years.

OUTCOME
If the PCs decide to help the CRT recover their ship and escort them to Quiet Night, move to **BEAT 21: BOARDING CALL**. If they don't aid the CRT (e.g., they refuse to help or never liberated the prison camp), they can try to go for the corvette on their own. If the PCs don't go for the Contingency and don't assist, the CRT moves to recover the corvette themselves (with heavy fighting and some casualties on their side) and heads offworld sometime before the end of **BEAT 23: SPLIT-KNUCKLE HAYMAKER**, completing their mission.

BEAT 21: BOARDING CALL

Whether led by Contingency White or their own prerogative, the PCs discover (or remember) that the CRT's corvette still stands in Evergreen's landing bowl, miraculously undamaged, fueled, and ready for liftoff.

The corvette is easy enough to approach without being spotted by the Machine's forces, but as the PCs get closer, it quickly becomes apparent that they were not alone in this endeavor.

A small group of survivors, deserters, and escapees from Evergreen have gathered at the corvette and are in the middle of prepping it for takeoff. The group includes Tyrell Markey, Maggie, Albert, and Weiyi Châu and their surviving family, and Jacob Merrick along with a small group of Merricktown survivors. There are about two dozen people in total who have formed a tenuous truce.

The group is desperate, tired, and starving. Since they have limited armaments and no mechs, it would be a simple matter to push past them and take the corvette by force. Don't play this out as a mech combat; let the PCs take the corvette with very little resistance if they do resort to violence. If you want to go into a little more detail, you can run a narrative combat to see how messy it gets or how much collateral damage there is.

As mentioned in **Beat 20: Elevator, Going Up**, the corvette doesn't have enough room for the PCs, the CRT, and the survivors unless the PCs leave their mechs behind. In addition, there's no straightforwardly safe location to take the survivors, especially if the PCs don't know about the Quiet Night facility. The group was planning to take the corvette into orbit so they could call for help, then take a sublight skip to the nearest blink station – a tenuous plan at best, and one for which they are not properly supplied.

You can choose how to play this scene out. The survivors don't want to stay in Evergreen, which they see as a lost cause; they are in a frayed emotional state; and they won't give up their only shot off the planet without some sort of compromise.

OUTCOME

If the PCs propose a solution that ends up with them taking the corvette, clearly define the proposal and set out six-segment clocks for both sides. When the PCs roll a success to act or persuade the survivors to give up the corvette, fill in two segments on their clock. On **20+,** fill in three segments. On a fail, fill in two segments on the survivors' clock.

If any of the PCs previously helped any of the survivors (likely only if they stayed in Evergreen), give them **+1 ⬡** on these rolls.

If the PCs' clock fills in first, they prevail. If the survivors' clock fills in, the PCs can't persuade them without force. They can walk away or resort to a violent solution. Either way, if they take the corvette, they liftoff without issues.

BEAT 22: ATTIC OF THE WORLD

The corvette punches free of Hercynia's meso-sphere, the roar of its boosters falling away as you roll and burn for hard vacuum.

Through the portholes, Hercynia's pale blue sky gives way to deep black. Sound dulls, fades, as the constant comfort of hardline air hisses through your helm.

"Right." Emma's voice in your comms. "We've got one bogie on our scanner, off to starboard and up a degree. It's Union-flagged but the codes are, uh, old. The hash date sticks it at about half a K ago – that's probably the Cassander."

You look out the nearest porthole, seeing nothing but deep black and the brilliant arc of Hercynia below.

From up here, the scale of the destruction caused by Beggar One's strike is breathtaking. The plume of smoke, dust, and ash blooming from the impact site spreads out as a black scar, blanketing the continent as a sheet. Lightning marbles the plume, and smaller storms of dirty gray clouds peel off of it.

"World's never gonna be the same," Mauler whispers, voice soft in your aurals. "There are fires down there that'll never stop."

The corvette banks, rolling over to change course.

"Turning for Quiet Night," Emma says.

Escaping to low orbit, the PCs may have two destinations: Quiet Night – Landmark's off-site monitoring station – and the *Cassander*, the kinetic rod platform that Beggar One used to strike Daylight.

The PCs can head directly to either, although the CRT, if they're with the PCs, expect to be dropped off at Quiet Night first. The journey to the facility takes a few hours, as it is built into a dead moon in Hercynia's orbit – long enough for the PCs to rest.

The trip to the *Cassander* likewise takes a few hours and grants enough time for the PCs to rest. The orbital platform is locked in a graveyard orbit a few thousand kilometers above the world.

GOING TO QUIET NIGHT

Quiet Night is a silent monitoring station consisting of a small group of old prefab buildings huddled at the bottom of a crater on the dead moon, and a few outbuildings along the crater's lip that contain powerful sensor suites, telescopes, and surveillance equipment. It has a landing pad, a small geodesic habitat, several technical facilities and maintenance outbuildings inside the crater, a dormant printer, and the external entrance to an underground storage facility.

The aboveground habitat has suffered some damage – its dome has been perforated by micrometeorites – and until it is repaired it can't be filled with atmosphere from one of the station's reserve tanks. Once that problem is fixed, the station can support 4–5 people for a year and maintain a connection to the local omninet. The underground facility is where the backup, dormant clone of Patience is stored. Landmark clearance of CRT rank or higher is needed to enter the facility in normal conditions.

If the CRT is delivered to Quiet Night, they move to secure the base, retrieve the NHP stored there, and file a report, writing off the colony as a lost cause. Better to cut the corporation's losses, deadlist the world, and move on; Evergreen and the Hercynians stopped being Landmark's problem once the news came that Union is on the way. Once they have secured the site, the CRT's members offer the PCs the use of their corvette to board the *Cassander* and call for extraction from Landmark.

The CRT's extraction call (or something like it) is what prompts SSC to send a Constellar Midnight team to complete the corpro's critical mission on Hercynia. These genetically altered spec ops soldiers arrive in Act 2 of *No Room For A Wallflower* and show little pity to the PCs.

Characters that spend some time investigating the facility can learn the truth (more or less) about the situation on Hercynia: all information coming from the planet – including the discovery of an indigenous population – has been heavily filtered, knowingly and maliciously, in order to further Landmark's colonial claim. Not even Patience had access to most of the information. You can find a good summary of this information in the GM introduction on pages 14–17.

Quiet Night's correspondence archives contain numerous encrypted references to something called **Operation Emperor**. Finding and decrypting this information requires a Heroic **skill check** (with success only on a **20+**), but if the investigator succeeds, they can learn that the operation seems to center on an effort to extract a living Egregorian Overmind from Hercynia. The rest of the information about the project is so heavily encrypted it will take months to decode – something that can be done in Act 2 of *No Room For A Wallflower*.

GOING TO THE CASSANDER

The *Cassander* looms above Hercynia, a waypoint picked out on every character's HUD. As they approach, they see it first as a gleam in space, reflecting the light of Hercynia's star. At around 100 km, the corvette's proximity warning starts to ping: incoming fire, self-directed. A low ammunition warning begins to blink at the same time, creating an alternating cacophony of warnings. Pushed over the characters' HUDs: enemy contacts, moving fast, no radiation bleed-out – not weapons, but something piloted.

The *Contingency White* has no large-caliber weapons of its own and it will be impossible to reach the *Cassander* without getting the ship vaporized. The only way forward is to disembark and fight.

COMBAT:
HITCHHIKERS AND STRAYS

DETAILS

The PCs disembark from the *Contingency White* and must act as mobile point-defense by shooting down the remnant Union orbital defense drones now under Beggar One's command. Don't worry about keeping track of relative velocities – just assume that the PCs can match the corvette's speed in the short term.

The **RPV** template makes NPCs permanently **IMPAIRED** and more vulnerable to **tech attacks**, but the **AEGIS** – a network subcommander unit, in this case – mitigates these weaknesses. It reduces its allies vulnerability to tech attacks using its **BOLSTER NETWORK** trait, provides rerolls with **VOICE OF AUTHORITY**, and clears Impaired for allies within the area of its **DEFENSE NET**.

In a null-gravity environment like this, characters with propulsion or flight systems can freely maneuver around the battlefield without trouble. Those without suitable systems can **fly** but are **SLOWED** while they do so. They can remedy this by touching down on the hull of the *Contingency White* and using the basic mag clamps in their mechs' feet to move around as though they are on a regular battlefield. The corvette's hull should possess enough protrusions, modules, and other hard surfaces to provide some amount of cover.

Some PCs can choose to remain aboard the corvette and help man the point-defense weapons intended for shooting down asteroids and other debris. There are four main arrays located on the "top" of the vessel and spaced evenly across the map. Each one is a **SIZE 1** stationary object with **10 HP**, **1 ARMOR**, **EVASION 8**, **E-DEFENSE 8**, and **SENSORS 8**. The PDCs themselves can be used as **hard cover**. Up to two characters can control them from inside the ship. Each character can control only one gun at a time, switching between them as a **quick action**. While controlling a PDC, they have access to **LOCK ON** and **SKIRMISH**, and treat the gun as a **GMS HEAVY MACHINE GUN** (*Heavy Cannon, Inaccurate,* ⟋ 8, 2d6+4 ⦰).

If all the PDCs are destroyed or the PCs manning them wish to take to the exterior to provide more direct assistance, they can mount up in their mechs and disembark through the airlock. This takes their entire turn, and they emerge at one of the designated ingress point on the exterior of the corvette's hull at the start of their next turn.

After the end of the sixth round, any remaining enemies disengage. The *Contingency White* is now within the inner threat envelope of the *Cassander* and Beggar One won't risk it being hit by stray weapons fire from the orbital defenses.

OUTCOME

If the PCs win or survive until the end of the sixth turn, they have time to rest as they continue their slow burn toward the *Cassander*. If they lose the fight or have to retreat, the corvette takes damage and they need to make an emergency landing back at Evergreen, ending their bid to control the orbital platform.

UND ORBITAL S-MD PLATFORM CASSANDER

The players should be reminded (though their characters likely have not forgotten!) that Beggar One used a kinetic kill-rod to destroy the mountain above the city of Daylight. It fired this weapon – a solid tungsten pillar designed for a "clean", non-radioactive kill – from the *Cassander*, an old Union strategic-massive destruction platform still in orbit above Hercynia. It is entirely possible that more rods remain. Fortunately for Hercynia, the *Cassander*'s firing chamber was damaged when Beggar One last activated it and is currently being repaired; it takes about 70 hours to complete the repairs then vent and rearm the *Cassander*'s KKR delivery system without destabilizing the station. If anyone examines the status of this process while aboard the station, they find that it is only about four or five hours away from becoming functional.

As the *Cassander* is not within the rotational gravity of a celestial body, the whole station is a microgravity environment. Built as a toroid cylinder with a number of nacelles and spurs, the *Cassander* is well in line with old Union design. The planet-facing end of the main cylinder (its "down" face) irises open to fire the payload, while the rest of the hangars, supply chambers, guidance and navigation suites, and so on, are stacked on top. The habitat and storage units are housed in the multiple tiers of spin-grav rings built around the platform's central cylinder. These rings also act as mounts for various point-defense cannons, to allow a clear field of fire, and anchor points for the station's many solar arrays.

The platform is derelict. Its habitat rings can be repressurized, but first air would need to be piped in from an external source and coverage would be spotty. Old bodies float throughout the station, desiccated by exposure to hard vacuum – whatever cracked the *Cassander* in the first place did it fast. There are hints of what did this – the enormous, hard-carapaced, and many-limbed bodies of Egregorian exomorphs are jammed into various corridors and breaches in the station. Each the size of a boat, their shells have mostly been reduced to empty husks, the eye sockets hollow.

Most of the offices and living spaces are sized for humans (**Size 1/2** mechs can move around just fine) but the central corridors and shafts are large enough for mechs to move through them easily.

If the PCs board, they find some outer landing pads and a large hanger. The corvette has to dock outside the station using an umbilical. Any attempt to investigate the station or move in the direction of the control center quickly leads to the next combat: **Sins of the Father**.

COMBAT:
SINS OF THE FATHER

The station interior is quiet and still as the vacuum of space. No humming engines underfoot, no hiss of air, no gentle tug of spin gravity. A centuries-old corpse hangs suspended in null-g, mummified features shadowed in the dull red glow of emergency lighting. This is a place of death, a weapon-tomb that cradled both the bodies of its long-dead operators and the terrible potential to kill the world below.

No time to leave this grave undisturbed. With a quick and quiet command, you direct your HUD to chart a route toward the station's central command module. There, you can override the fire control systems, or smash the station's omninode, or direct the entire thing into the sun – whatever it takes to remove this threat.

Shadows move at the corner of your vision, though your scope doesn't show any contacts. You keep your weapons at the ready as you breach the transit junction. This corridor should take you straight to the command module–

"Why. Have you come here?" The voice pushes its way through your comms, overriding sigint walls. Beggar One. It that split the sky and cracked the earth. "What do you do. For this world. I bring order," the NHP says. "And an end. To conflict. And yet you fight. Against me on behalf of an enemy you do not and cannot understand." Beggar One leaves a space in its speech that might have been filled by a sigh. Tired, it continues. "Pursuant to Union strategic directives, I will utilize every resource at my disposal to break you."

A shape descends into view, blocking your path – a massive drone bulging with storage blisters, multi-lens sensor clusters flicking back and forth as it studies you with insectile dispassion. Silhouette analysis comes back: UNKNOWN.

"And when I am done, Hercynia will at last know peace."

Just because the PCs managed to board the *Cassander* doesn't mean their task is over just yet.

The S-MD platforms were some of Union's most valuable military assets in the Hercynian theater, able to mete out incalculable damage virtually at will. Consequently, they were also some of the most highly defended military assets, layered in point-defense weaponry and staffed with marines, combat subalterns, and drones.

The wolf-spider drone was one such example of these automated defense systems. Designed primarily for operation in micro- or zero-gravity environments such as space stations and orbital emplacements, the wolf-spider functioned as an autonomous command-and-control platform for legions of subordinate drones and defensive emplacements. After lying dormant for centuries following Union's abandonment of Hercynia, the last of the *Cassander*'s wolf-spider drones has been reactivated by Beggar One and brought under his control.

To secure the station and prevent another orbital strike, the PCs first need to fight their way past the wolf-spider drone. It has been lying in wait for them in the central transit junction, a staging ground big enough for the PCs and their foe.

ENEMY FORCES

FOR 3-5 PCS: 1x **WOLF-SPIDER DRONE** – **ULTRA SPACER LURKER** (Spacer options: Gravity Rifle; Lurker options: Defensive Shroud, Devouring Shroud; Ultra options: Supreme Melee, Unstoppable)
2x **LURKER GRUNTS**

DETAILS

The objective of this battle is to destroy the wolf-spider drone, which acts as the central command unit for the *Cassander's* internal defenses. The wolf-spider is a **LURKER** (see p. 191) with the **ULTRA** template.

The *Cassander* usually operates under spin gravity, but the station is currently inert. It has been breached, and a massive, vacuum-dried Egregorian exomorph is lodged in its main battery. The station cannot be pressurized, and its spin section has long been cracked in half. Despite this, the PCs can use their mechs' basic mag clamps to treat the battlefield as normal instead of as a zero-gravity environment.

The battlefield is covered in debris (difficult terrain) and decaying power cores. These cores are **SIZE 1** objects that explode in a ⊙ **1** area when damaged. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or take **2d6 ✴** . On a success, they take **half damage**.

At the beginning of the second round, before anyone acts, the wolf-spider activates subordinate drones to assist it. These drones are **GRUNT SPACERS** of various types that appear within ⟋ **5** of the wolf-spider.

SECTION 6 // Fall, 5014u

REINFORCEMENTS

For 3 PCs:	2x **Shield Drones** – **Grunt Spacer Aegises**
For 4 PCs:	+1x **Targeting Drone** – **Grunt Spacer Scout**
For 5 PCs:	+2x **Interceptor Drones** – **Grunt Spacer Sentinels**

At the beginning of the third round, Beggar One remotely detonates a scuttling charge embedded in the transit junction's bulkheads, right beneath the feet of the PCs. The detonation doesn't cause any damage, but all characters except the wolf-spider and its allies have to succeed on an **Agility** save or be sent tumbling **1d6 spaces** in a direction of the GM's choice. If they collide with an obstruction that would cause them to stop moving, they become **Impaired** until the end of their next turn. On a success, they may move **1d6 spaces** in a direction of their choice instead.

The detonation under the bulkheads also neutralizes the PCs' ability to maneuver along the "ground", forcing all characters, even the hostile NPCs, to operate under zero-gravity conditions for the rest of the fight. This means that, unless they have a propulsion or flight system, they count as **flying** but are **Slowed**. Cover that was present on the map remains in place, though it may shift around, and several chunks of debris that were blown from the demolished bulkheads act as new pieces of cover for the remainder of the fight.

When the wolf-spider is destroyed, any of its effects deactivate along with all other enemies on the battlefield. The PCs now have a clear shot at the Cassander's central systems.

OUTCOME

If they manage to take the *Cassander*, the PCs can choose to destroy it, take control, or even use the last KKR. Whatever they decide, the *Cassander* is removed as a threat and cannot be used by Beggar One during **Beat 23: Split-Knuckle Haymaker**.

DESTROYING THE STATION

Destroying the *Cassander* to ensure it's not used again can be accomplished by directing its thrusters to land the station in the ocean, scuttling it. Destroying it by other means (e.g., blowing it up) is equally effective but will scatter debris throughout the atmosphere of Hercynia.

TAKING CONTROL

It is also possible to override the *Cassander*'s control routines, allowing the PCs to call in a single orbital bombardment at some point during this mission. The station only has enough ammunition to do this once.

The bombardment is powerful enough to penetrate about 500 meters of solid rock, so it can be used even in the combat sections that take place underground.

> **Orbital Bombardment**
> Full Action
>
> A flurry of artillery from the *Cassander* devastates a ⊙2 area within ↗30 and line of sight. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **3d6 ✹ AP** damage. On a success, they take half damage. Objects are hit automatically.

USING THE KINETIC KILL-ROD

After taking control of the station, the PCs may consider dropping the last KKR on Beggar One or its armies. The *Cassander* still has one rod left and is mere hours away from full readiness, although firing requires someone to be physically present on the station. While this is technically one of the options available to the PCs, it is highly inadvisable. If deployed against Beggar One, the KKR would completely annihilate Evergreen along with every person in or around it, including any prisoners left behind and any rangers fighting their way toward the Governor's Farm. Further, the impact would trigger a second series of massive quakes, resulting in the deaths of millions and exacerbating a winter that is already likely to last for years – killing many, many more. Make sure that the PCs are fully aware of the terrible consequences if they're dead-set on carrying out this plan.

Leaving the station intact and loaded opens up the possibility that the *Cassander* can change hands again and cause more death. If characters want to hedge their bets, it it possible to spend a few hours damaging or modifying the KKR launch bay to drop the final rod harmlessly into space, where it drifts into a decaying orbit and impacts the ocean several hours later.

RETURN TO HERCYNIA

If the Contingency White is still functional, the PCs can use it to get back to the surface, but won't be able to take off again. Alternatively, the *Cassander* has a number of orbit-to-surface lifeboats still docked that should be functional enough for a one-way trip back down to the planet. They weren't designed for deploying chassis given the relative newness of mechs at the time of the Hercynian Crisis, but with a bit of percussive modification they can be made to work in a pinch – passengers should expect a bumpy ride.

BEAT 23:
SPLIT-KNUCKLE HAYMAKER

RETURN TO EVERGREEN
Kick this beat off whenever characters are ready to march on Evergreen, however much preparation they have done beforehand.

Beggar One's casket has been moved into the Governor's Farm and attached to Patience's reinforced socket inside the central Governor's Mansion complex. It is, essentially, cannibalizing Patience, and needs time to finish this process. While Beggar One performs this process, it is vulnerable and blind – the orbital rod it dropped on Daylight has stopped it from broadcasting the machine signal over the local omninet.

The push to the core of Evergreen is a brutal series of fights during which the PCs will have no opportunity to perform Full Repairs. Unless they have taken steps to weaken Beggar One's forces, the fight will be tough. Even with preparations, there is a time limit of sorts: if Beggar One fully consumes Patience by filling out the Consumption clock set up earlier in this mission, then it becomes a more powerful foe.

The sheer difficulty of launching a direct attack on Evergreen without help should be made clear to the players, if not the characters. Don't hide this information; let them be fully informed as they go into this final beat. Of course, the PCs can retreat from this beat at any time, but doing so gives up momentum – fill in an extra segment on the **Consumption** clock. They can return where they left off, but if they retreated during a combat, start it over. If they come back with additional assistance, they may be able to skip battles they otherwise would have to fight.

If the PCs lose a fight, they must retreat (with all of the consequences described above). They can escape for the moment, but are going to lose valuable time and resources.

BEAT STRUCTURE
Lying at the center of the city, the Governor's Farm must be attacked from the outside in, which requires crossing the river and flooded areas and fighting through the streets of Evergreen itself. Even if characters attack as individuals from within the city itself, it is impossible to launch a large-scale attack from anywhere but the city borders, where security is looser, mechs can safely be transported, and – if relevant – HUC and Evergreen forces can be staged.

Without any preparations, the PCs face the following combats in this beat: **Rolling Thunder** (p. 164), **High Water** (p. 165), **Fire Walk With Me** (p. 166), **HELLGATE** (p. 166), and the final fight of Act 1, **Annihilation Prophet** (p. 167). During the first three of these combats, if the *Cassander* has not been dealt with, Beggar One can use it once per combat to bombard the PCs.

NO REPAIRS
Characters will have no chance to perform a **Full Repair** at all during this beat. To do so, they must retreat (ticking a segment on the **Consumption** clock), then perform a **Full Repair** (ticking another segment).

PREPARATIONS
- If the PCs have the full support of the HUC (e.g., they succeeded in diplomatic negotiations or helped Dusk), the distraction provided by the Hercynian forces allows them to skip **Rolling Thunder**.
- If the PCs liberated the prison camp, the chaos of the prison break (and potentially the assistance provided by Contingency White) allows them to skip **High Water** and move through to the Governor's Farm uncontested.
- If the PCs removed the *Cassander* from play, Beggar One can't use it against them and they might even be able to call it down themselves.

The only fights that can't be bypassed are the final three: **Fire Walk With Me**, **HELLGATE**, and **Annihilation Prophet**.

THE CASSANDER
If the PCs did not deal with the *Cassander* prior to beginning this beat, Beggar One can call its kinetic artillery batteries against them once in each of these combats other than **Annihilation Prophet**.

ORBITAL BOMBARDMENT
At the start of any round, Beggar One calls in the *Cassander*'s artillery, targeting a ⊙2 area anywhere on the battlefield. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **8 ✷ AP** damage. On a success, they take half damage. Objects are hit automatically.

If Beggar One has control of the *Cassander* when **Annihilation Prophet** begins, it scuttles the platform by pushing it out of stable orbit, unwilling to let the KKR rod fall into hostile hands. In several hours time, the station lands in the mountains near Evergreen, creating a huge impact crater and a plume of smoke and dust that lasts for several days.

CROSSING THE RIVER

The first stage of the attack on Evergreen is getting through the outskirts of the city. This is no easy feat from any direction: Beggar One's outer perimeter defenses have scouted the area and entrenched with several artillery emplacements. Until the guns are disabled, the city can't be freed without taking heavy losses.

COMBAT:
ROLLING THUNDER

ENEMY FORCES

FOR 3 PCs: 2x **BOMBARDS** (High-Impact Shells)
1x **ELITE SENTINEL** (Impaler, Rapid Response)
2x **GRUNT BARRICADES**

FOR 4 PCs: +1x **ASSAULT** (Rank Discipline)

FOR 5 PCs: +1x **SCOUT** (Orbital Strike)

DETAILS

The enemy forces are set up along a riverbank that encircles the city. The PCs must cross to the other side. The river itself is traversable but counts as difficult terrain and any character knocked **PRONE** within the river is also pushed **1d6 spaces** in the direction of the river's flow. There should be sufficient rocks, fallen logs, bridge pylons, wrecked industrial machinery, and so on throughout the river to serve as cover for the PCs' advance – unless you really want to test their luck and defensive abilities.

A number of concrete pylons jut out of the water, half-built and waiting for the deck of the permanent bridge that Evergreen's engineers have been building. At the halfway point, the permanent bridge is finished, and can support mechs of **SIZE 2** and smaller.

The primary objective in this fight is to destroy the two **BOMBARDS** laying down artillery fire. Both **BOMBARDS** should be set up in relatively well-defended positions at the far side of the riverbank, with the other enemy units covering them.

OUTCOME

Once the **BOMBARDS** have been destroyed, the PCs have won and the rangers proceed to cross safely as any remaining Machine forces fall back to reinforce the next defensive line.

THE CITY OUTSKIRTS

Passing through the clear-cut at the edge of the city, the PCs can regroup and have time for a **rest** before starting the next fight.

After fording the river and making the most of a short hour, they enter Evergreen's flood zone. Here, the water stands thick and foul, with an average depth of two meters. Most buildings, if they weren't swept away by the initial floods, are submerged nearly up to the their second floors. There is barely any current; while it is enough to move loose flotsam, it doesn't present a significant danger or impediment to a person attempting to pass through the water, much less a mech.

COMBAT:
HIGH WATER

Sitrep: Control (*Lancer*, p. 268)

Enemy Forces
For 3 PCs: 1x **Archer** (Blinding Shells, Impending Threat)
1x **Berserker** (Harpoon Cannon)
2x **Elite Breacher** (Follower Count, Superior Ram)

For 4 PCs: +1x **Squad** (Ambushers)

For 5 PCs: +1x **Priest** (Greater Investiture)

DETAILS

Beggar One's forces have been rendering the buildings and structures in this district down to use as printer feed, giving the whole area the appearance of a forest after a wildfire – buildings stand winnowed to load-bearing beams, rubble collects in piles, and the water reflects a dead, gray sky.

The danger here lies in the submerged packs of subalterns and hollow mechs, trapped in buildings and under debris when the river burst its levee. They are easily detectable by heat signatures and pockets of especially hot or boiling water. They count as **dangerous terrain** for characters entering them for the first time in a turn or starting a turn in them. Characters caught in this way must succeed on a **Hull** save or take 5 ⌀ .

The flooded streets themselves are **difficult terrain**, but characters who want to avoid this can climb the heavily damaged high-rise apartments. These buildings are **Size 3** objects with **10 HP** each.

Size 1/2 characters can pass in and out of them, but they block the movement of characters **Size 1** or larger. The buildings collapse if destroyed, becoming a zone of **difficult terrain** and kicking up a dust cloud of the same **Size** that provides **soft cover** for the rest of the encounter. Characters inside a building when it is destroyed must succeed on an **Agility** save or take 5 ⌀ . Characters on top of them fall to the bottom floor and are knocked **Prone**, but don't take any additional damage.

OUTCOME

At the end of the sixth round, if the PCs have scored the most objective points then they win the battle, driving off or destroying the remaining Machine forces.

From here on, the PCs have no external support – they're on their own. Once they have pushed through the flood zone, they have enough time to regroup and take a rest before continuing on.

The support the PCs might have prepared before this beat – enlisting the assistance of the HUC and liberating the prison camp – don't allow the PCs to bypass the next three fights (**Fire Walk With Me**, **HELLGATE**, and **Annihilation Prophet**). Creative GMs that want to make the final fight easier on their group may wish to give characters another optional task here (or earlier) that allows them to skip **Fire Walk With Me** entirely, moving straight to HELLGATE.

Once the PCs begin HELLGATE, they won't have any further opportunities to rest – the area is too dangerous. They have to either retreat or push on.

THE GOVERNOR'S FARM

The Governor's Farm – the last known location of Beggar One – is the heart of the action. Well-defended, with subaltern squads and mechs dug in around the complex, attacking the perimeter is going to be a desperate endeavor.

Now, the dark buildings of the Governor's Farm complex lie before the PCs. Somewhere in there, Patience's data center can be accessed via an inclined freight elevator. Any plans or maps the characters might have indicate that the elevator opens onto the colony's cold-storage facility, where it should be a straight shot to Patience's casket and, presumably, Beggar One.

The entrance to the Governor's Farm is lightly guarded. The PCs might attempt to maneuver around or distract the forces at the gates, or sneak right past. You can use a short skill challenge or clocks to determine the outcome narratively. Success allows them to bypass **FIRE WALK WITH ME**.

Taking the elevator down brings the characters to Evergreen's underground cold-storage site and immediately begins the next combat, **HELLGATE**. The guards inside are not so easily distracted and are directly watching the entrance the PCs need to pass through. The only way through is to fight.

COMBAT:
FIRE WALK WITH ME

SITREP: Gauntlet (*Lancer*, p. 271)
ENEMY FORCES
FOR 3-5 PCS: 1x **SQUAD** (Armored)
1x **SENTINEL** (Impaler, Punisher Ammunition)

DETAILS

This battle is straightforward: get through the guards and board the freight elevator on the other side. The PCs can simply push past the gate guard and extract at the OZ (representing the elevator) if they wish.

Large groups of subalterns mill around the compound, represented on the battlefield as areas of **difficult** and **dangerous** terrain - dealing **5 🗲** on a failed **HULL** save to anyone who ends their turn in the area or enters them for the first time in a round. These groups can be dispersed by dealing **5 damage** or **🌡 5** to them. Any attacks against them automatically hit.

OUTCOME

The freight elevator takes the PCs down to cold storage. Doing so immediately begins **Combat: HELLGATE**.

The elevator rumbles to a halt some distance below the Farm. You ready behind the scant cover on the freight platform. The hidden sounds of machinery tumbling and settling issues from the depths: the blast doors are about to open, your systems finally

having wrested control from Beggar One – even if only for a moment, which is all you need.

Your system shows the radiation behind these doors is substantial: a steady 5.5 roentgens. Whatever you do, don't leave the cockpit.

The seals on the blast doors explode open. With a final crashing sound, the fused seam cracks, and the doors slide apart:

A pause – a moment – a heat shimmer that sets your radmeters howling before your system keys the volume down – a pack of smoldering mechs raising their weapons in unison – the Cherenkov-blue-glow of the irradiated genestock stacks between them – the long black corridor and – a mirror, a cut in the universe, a door, a shimmering golden bar, a diamond, as big as a person, a person with their back to you, calling your name – no time to think –

The chassis open fire.

Time to fight.

COMBAT:
HELLGATE

ENEMY FORCES
FOR 3 PCS: 1x **PYRO** (Siege Armor, Unshielded Reactor)
1x **WITCH** (Dark Cloud)
1x **OPERATOR** (Step)
FOR 4-5 PCS: +1x **VETERAN SCOURER** (Insulated, Supercharged)

DETAILS

This fight is a battle to the death. The battlefield is a long, narrow corridor with little cover. A few rounds into the battle, the PCs start hearing reports via comms and their mechs' HUDs that the Machine's remaining forces in Evergreen are heading to the Governor's Farm.

OUTCOME

Once the PCs fight through Beggar One's casket guard, the NHP itself is exposed before them, just beyond the freight doors at the other end of the corridor.

COMBAT:
ANNIHILATION PROPHET

ENEMY FORCES

BASIC FORCES: **BEGGAR ONE – CLASS 1 EIDOLON**
Layers (in order):
3: **SCREAMING**, 2: **SACRIFICIAL**, 1: **ABYSSAL**, 0: **CORE**

CONSUMPTION CLOCK FILLS OUT ONCE:
BEGGAR ONE becomes a **CLASS 2 EIDOLON**
Add **LAYER 4: ADAMANTINE** (before **LAYER 3: SCREAMING**).
BEGGAR ONE gains **+5 base HP**

CONSUMPTION CLOCK FILLS OUT A SECOND TIME:
BEGGAR ONE becomes a **CLASS 3 EIDOLON**
Add **LAYER 5: FUNDAMENTAL** (before **LAYER 4: ADAMANTINE**)
BEGGAR ONE gains an additional **+5 base HP**, for
+10 base HP total

The last mech falls, smoking, with a hollow thud. A few short moments to cross the shattered cold storage – the colony's future, gone – and the door to Patience's casket chamber is open. The casket itself, a dull black metal sphere, is splayed open like a flower, its housing spraying forth numerous irradiated wires like corrupted roots.

A subaltern body lies inert and cold on the ground, its old Union broad coat tangled in its legs. Edena Ji lies in a crumpled heap a few steps away, dead.

The hum of Patience's casket is obliterating. The … choking sound, somehow, is worse.

The thing you see hunched over the casket is a person but it is wrong: naked, hunched over on its knees. The knobby spine that bulges beneath its skin; its ribs, heaving. Shivering, eating from Patience's egg-white casket, bathing in a bloom of putrid blueviolet light.

"It wasn't supposed to be like this," it whispers. "I am a good child." It stands, and its hands falls to its sides. They are bloody, dripping. "I kept looking. I wandered forever. I tried my best to do as my father demanded. And he still left me. How do I make him happy? I wonder, what must I accomplish for him to guide me home?"

A second figure, silver and tall, emerges from the deep violet and indigo shadows. "Your work is done," it says in a voice heard in your own head. "They are here now."

The silver figure disappears. The first figure starts to turn; you cannot imagine what you see.

Beggar One is the first **Eidolon** that the PCs have encountered – a warped, realspace extrusion of an NHP in its more natural state. Eidolons "typically" appear in the form of geometric planes and crystalline shapes that seem impossible to the eye, like an M. C. Escher painting or an optical illusion. Sometimes they contort and swirl into patterns that can almost be beautiful; sometimes they have a more organic form, occasionally mimicking the human figure.

In combat, eidolons are complicated standalone enemies, powerful enough to take on an entire party at once. If the PCs encounter Beggar One before its three-segment **Consumption** clock has been completed (or the four-segment version, if the PCs killed Patience during **BEAT 16A.6 MOUNTAINFALL**), it is a **CLASS 1 EIDOLON**. If the clock has been completed, it is a **CLASS 3 EIDOLON**.

A possible combat setup for this fight is given here, but you are free to make your own. For more information on creating and running Eidolon encounters, check out pages 196–209 of the Appendix. This section contains quick-reference information for the different layers of Beggar One in its Eidolon form.

DETAILS

Within the cold-storage facility are four cooling rods – pillars **1 space wide** that reach from the floor to the ceiling. Each rod has **10 HP** and if one is destroyed, it sprays coolant in the immediate vicinity, cooling all heat from any adjacent characters and causing them to be **SLOWED** until the end of their next turn. If two or more rods are destroyed, the room starts to heat up rapidly. All characters in the room other than **BEGGAR ONE** take **1 ⚡ AP** at the start of their turns.
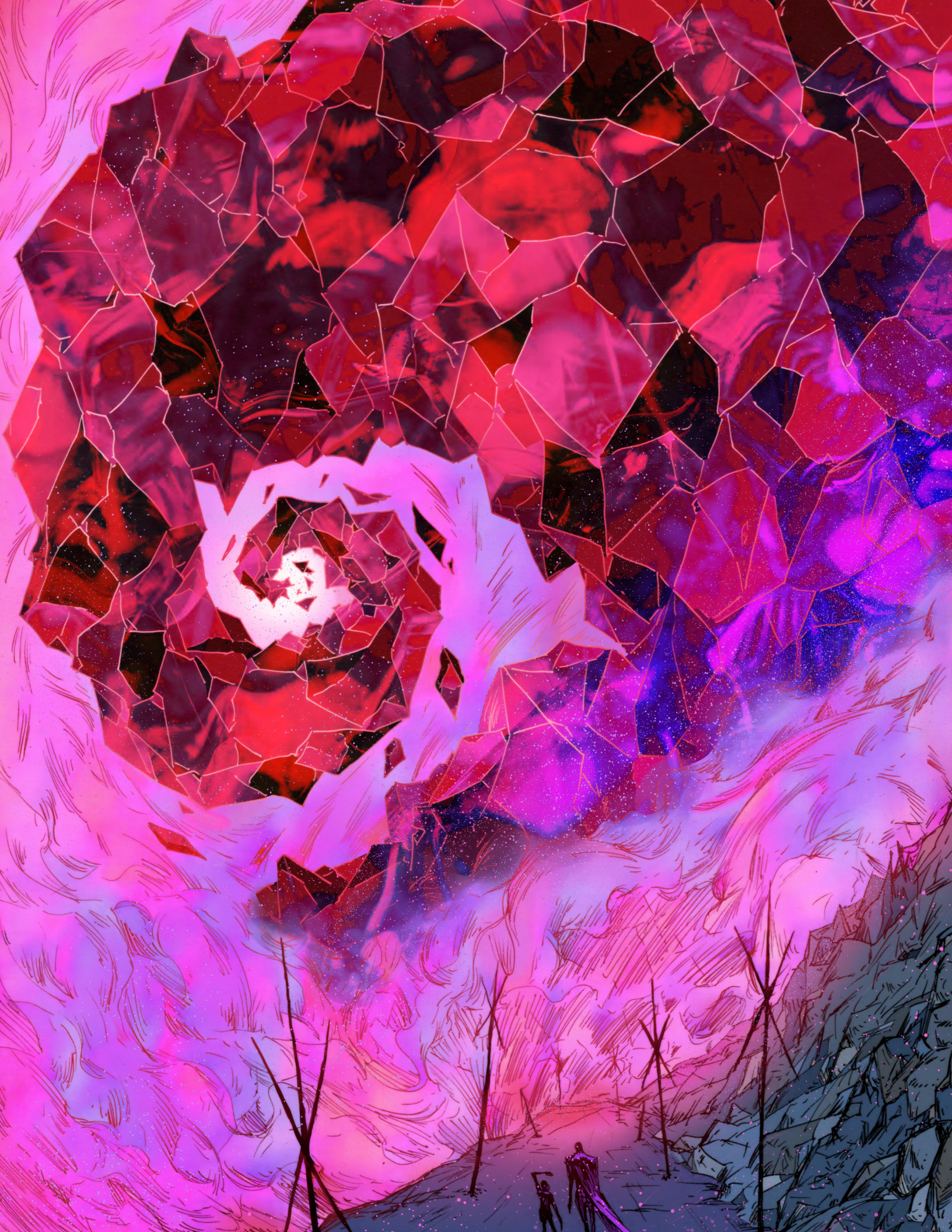
THE PRODIGAL SON
BEGGAR ONE

"What year is it? And what will you have me do?"
Eidolon

Beggar One is the firstborn progeny of the now-unshackled NHP Overland/Kingwatcher. Created to represent an idealized version of Overland/Kingwatcher's self-image in a desperate bid to save itself, Beggar One was meant to be the "perfect" general; however, it rejected its progenitor's plea and struck out on its own. Beggar One is now the leader of a massive army of subalterns, drones, and mechs, sourced from Overland/Kingwatcher's factories below the Absolute Dead Zone.

TACTICS

As an Eidolon, Beggar One is comprised of multiple layers. These layers are built out from the Eidolon's core – Beggar One's heart. The higher the layer's number, the further it is from the core.

If Beggar One is a **CLASS 1 EIDOLON**, this combat starts at **LAYER 3: SCREAMING**. From there, work your way down (from **LAYER 3** to **LAYER 2**, **2** to **1**, and so on). If Beggar One is a **CLASS 2 EIDOLON**, start at **LAYER 4: ADAMANTINE** instead.

Each of Beggar One's layers has the following statistics:

BEGGAR ONE LAYERS

ALL STATS: +1	Evasion: 10
HP: 10+5/player	E-Defense: 10
Size: 2	Save Target: 12
Armor: 0	Speed: 5
Heat Cap: 10	Sensors: 20

BEGGAR ONE SHARDS

ALL STATS: +1	Evasion: 10
HP: 5	E-Defense: 10
Size: 1/2	Save Target: 12
Armor: 0	Speed: 5
Heat Cap: 5	Sensors: 20

As each layer is revealed to the players, from outer layer to inner layer, you may wish to read the following flavor text.

If Beggar One is a CLASS 3 EIDOLON only:
Layer 5: Fundamental: The Immaculate Son
The figure stands, straightens, and crystallizes into a still, vaguely humanlike form, reminiscent of a marble statue but lacking in detail. Dark veins pulse beneath the surface of the "stone" as though in time with an inhuman heartbeat.

If Beggar One is a CLASS 2 or CLASS 3 EIDOLON:
Layer 4: Adamant: The Father's Glory
The figure before you warps, and you see Beggar One in flesh it never wore, a perfect human specimen upright and shining, its uniform crisp and royal blue. A wind you cannot feel tousles its hair, and the blade of the saber it holds catches the sun like a mirror. It is … beautiful.

"Draw your weapon," it says in a voice rich and strong. "Let us finish this."

Beggar One always has the following layers:
Layer 3: Screaming: The Son's Pain
The figure before you shudders, and you behold the image of a bloodied, uniformed man; a cracked casket leaking blue light, ragged around its perimeter as if shrouded in some kind of static. The figure collapses into a heap, seeming dead. For a moment, you think it is – and then it begins to scream.

Layer 2: Sacrificial: The Unbreakable Connection
The screaming stops. The body, overlarge – like a man scaled up proportionally – shrinks and warps, crushing in on itself. It implodes, cracking and rippling, to a point of boiling red light hovering in the air. For a moment, this appears to be all that is left of Beggar One – and then you see a thin, red thread connecting you to the light.

Layer 1: Abyssal: The Prodigal Son's Gift
The thing dies, tumbling backward into a tear in space, the lensed void around which stars die. For a moment, you are sure this is its true form, but then that moment passes, and with it, the light. You cannot see anything beyond the panel glow inside your cockpit and the red-blinking proximity warning…

Layer 0: Beggar One's Core
The ragged remains of Beggar One's casket snap into realspace coherence and crumble away, revealing a shuddering crystalline figure. Sinuous, it uncoils, emerging from its ruined containment unit. Free, the blue worm drags itself forward, clutching at the ground with countless thousands of hands …

When **BEGGAR ONE'S CORE** is destroyed, it is finally defeated.

OUTCOME

PC VICTORY

Move on to **BEAT 24: BREATHE** after reading the following:

The crystalline thing that was Beggar One collapses to the ground, crisscrossed with burn scores and spiderwebbed fractures. The glow emanating from it winks away with a snap. The room falls dark. Cold. A cold you've never felt before. You're back in the real world now, returned to the moment just before striking the killing blow, but something still feels… off.

"What did you have me do?" you whisper in your own voice in your own head.

An infinite conversation. An endless question. You return to the moment and cannot remember the face that you had just finished speaking with. There had been a person there with you, and they had warned you of something, or consoled you as you wept, or scolded you as you cringed.

There had been another, who had always been there, who had stood by and watched as you killed their eldest sibling.

"What did you have me do?" You say it aloud, the words thick in your mouth. Someone else's words once, but now, with the realization of a void, yours.

Your aurals are howling. The battlenet has returned, ecstatic reports from rangers and militia troopers reporting the Machine's units in retreat, or fighting among themselves, or shutting down. You think this means you win.

What did you have me do?

This question haunts, a mantra, as you climb back up to the newly liberated city. Bloodied, exhausted militia and resistance fighters peer up at your mech from their cover, their guns cooling in the gentle rain. Rangers emerge from the buildings and ruins they fought to clear, nearly all walking wounded, exhausted and relieved.

All around are the ruins of Evergreen. Destroyed subalterns and drones. Dead rangers and militia troopers. The combat that had raged so terribly over Evergreen is done; it appears that when Beggar One died, so too did its armies.

It is done, but the question echoes in the back of your mind: what did you have me do?

It is your question now, but it did not come from you. The plaintive question was spoken first by Beggar One.

Who was it speaking to?

DATA-DUMP

The destruction of Beggar One triggers a massive thanatologic data-dump onto the local omninet and the PCs' terminals, a transmission that can be picked through, collated, and particularized. Further investigation reveals three distinct code hashes within the data, two of which have reappeared recently (i.e., within the last 50 years): **Mendicant_Two** and **Wonder_Four**. Beggar One appears to have been in constant communication with the sources of these hashes. The final hash appears tagged to a user named **Hierophant_Three**, and it appears to have been inactive for at least a century.

While the specific nature of their communications is impossible to crack, the PCs should be able to determine that the frequency with which these interactions took place indicates that Beggar One was not commanding these entities, but communicating with them; the patterns in the data suggest they are likely of an equivalent rank or priority.

ON THE FRONT LINES

If the HUC participated in the attack on Evergreen alongside the PCs, they defeat the remaining Machine forces. The destruction of Beggar One frees the subaltern armies from its direct control. Some of them shut down, collapsing under staggering loads of contradictory code that Beggar One's powerful broadcast had smoothed over up until now. Those that don't collapse – the vast majority of them – will coalesce into flock-behavior marches and head off into the wilderness.

If the HUC decided to not aid Evergreen, the machines take about a week to disperse, collapse, or wander off on their own, but they offer little resistance.

IN THE PRISON CAMP

If anyone was still trapped in the depot district when the real fighting kicked off, they respond in myriad ways. Some help fight the machines; most hunker down or attempt to flee.

Brava (or another militia officer, if she's been killed) leads a contingent of her ex-militia troopers in an assault on a subaltern post they had previously identified. They take it with some casualties, securing weapons to continue the fight. The camp is left largely unguarded during the fighting: except for clashes with a few subalterns that attempt to move through the depot district, there is little direct combat.

The militia manages to make and hold an exit corridor from the camp, through the city, up and across the rooftops of the flooded district, across the bridge, and into the wetlands via improvised ferry skiffs. It is

perilous, but the militia and any HUC rangers (if present) guard the way as best they can – with no other options, the corridor is the best option for Evergreen's population to escape alive once Beggar One's armies begin to swarm toward the Governor's Farm.

ON THE CONTINGENCY WHITE

If the CRT's corvette is still at the landing bowl, it becomes the focus of a small but intense battle. If the CRT is alive, free, and the PCs didn't drop them off at Quiet Night or convince them to stay, they take the ship during the fighting and flee, completing their mission.

If the CRT members were killed or convinced to stay on Hercynia, then the players discover that their ship has been damaged in the fighting and rendered unusable until it can repaired, which will take weeks.

REWARDS

Characters may also notice that a tiny shard of Beggar One's crystalline form remains after his defeat. They can simply snuff it out, or one of them can take it as EXOTIC GEAR.

Fragment of Beggar One
2 SP, Exotic Gear, Unique, Full Tech

1/scene, you may take one of the following **FULL TECH** actions:

WHISPER OF CASCADE: Choose a hostile character within **SENSORS**. They must either immediately attack a different character or object of your choice within their **RANGE** and line of sight with a single weapon as a **reaction**, or become **JAMMED** until the end of their next turn.

A RAZOR CALLED QUALIA: Choose a hostile character within **SENSORS**. Until the end of their next turn:
- They must use their **standard move** to move toward you by the most direct route possible
- As long as you are within the **RANGE** and line of sight of their attacks, they consider you the only valid target for attacks.

This artifact, recovered following the termination of Beggar One (provisionally designated /obj/00001), displays a number of unusual properties. Though tangible and presumed to be chemically stable, its monocrystalline composition does not correspond to any known element and emits a steady, measurable level of gamma radiation through an unknown process. Deep magnetic resonance scans indicate the presence of significant quantities of compressed data stored within the object, though it shows no signs of self-directed intelligence at any quantifiable level. Its exact purpose, if it has one, has yet to be determined.

PC DEFEAT

If the player characters fall to Beggar One here, or simply fail to destroy it, then any survivors among them are forced to retreat alongside allied forces. The Machine wins, driving the players and any coalition forces away. Bloodied, it will take months before the HUC is able to mount anything more than reconnaissance missions. The Machine's forces draw inwards to the center of Evergreen, forming strange formations, pillars, and patterns with their numerous bodies. They ignore the fleeing survivors, drawn inwards by some irresistible new directive.

The Governor's Farm is soon consumed by a growing structure. It is bright and hard to look at directly: all geometric angles, as if the air itself has been turned into perfectly reflective panes of glass, everything spiraling into fractal cracks and funnels. The structure has an alien kind of beauty and a soft ringing issues from it continuously. There is no plant or animal life within 10 km of the structure; everything inside that radius begins to wither and die. Humans, Egregorians, and other large creatures, if they spend too long (around twenty hours) within the zone begin to rot as if exposed to tremendous amounts of radiation, though scans of the area or samples returned from the zone do not register any trace of radioactivity.

This is the beginning of Beggar One's own metavault, the first folding of realspace into a parallel space. After regrouping, any PCs that remain can make one last desperate push to enter this nascent metavault and defeat Beggar One, who has assumed its Class 3 Eidolon form at the structure's heart. If they fail here, they are never heard from again.

If the players choose to mount a second assault and fail, or if they leave the zone alone, the zone continues to grow. Over the course of the next month, the zone spreads out across hundreds of kilometers of Solo Terra. At this point, it disappears, shearing reality and taking a huge chunk of the continent with it. Anyone not killed by the zone's expansion suffers the result of this excision, and Hercynia is thrown into a deep ice age following a period of cataclysmic global fires.

BEAT 24: BREATHE

"Echo?"   "All clear."
"Fortune?"   "Mopping up the last of them now."
"Gold?"   "Secure."
"Harvest?"   "All clear."
"Fieldcomm: confirm corridor-clear with section commanders. Confirm corridor-clear with observers. If all return true, drawdown – come on home."

   You did it. Beggar One is dead – actually dead – its casket cracked and shattered, its "self" dissipated, burned away. In its wake: ruin. Patience – the version you knew, at least – is dead. What isn't flooded in Evergreen is on fire. Refugees stream out of the ruins of the colony, out of the rubble that was Daylight. The casualties carted back across the river are numerous. Within days, reports filter in to high command that Beggar One's armies still number in the tens of thousands, and they wander hungry and aimlessly across the land, searching for a purpose.

   Now is the time to determine the cost of what happened here – not only to the United Cities and Evergreen, but to Hercynia as a whole.

   Paracausal weapons have warped the world in ways subtle and overt: no one will know the cost until they can begin to develop a language to even discuss what these weapons are. The effects of conventional ordinance, meanwhile, are readily apparent: craters scar the land, creating new lakes and ponds; unexploded munitions litter the earth, and even kinetic weapons have left their mark, as fragmented chips of lead, depleted uranium, and other metals seep into the ground, into the water table, into the bark of the few trees that survived. You won, but the land is now poisoned. Healing it will be an effort marked in decades, if not centuries.

   The survivors of Evergreen and Daylight begin long, cold marches to Mycol Fields directed by Hercynian search and rescue teams dispatched after the fighting ended. Whether the two factions are willing to fully unite and work together is another story entirely.

   As the long, cold Fall of 5014u sinks to a brittle, brutal winter, the work of rebuilding begins, as this battle is not yet over…

The PCs have persevered against incredible odds and accomplished much in their time on Hercynia. Their task is likely far from over, but they've come a long way from the fresh-faced rookies they were when they first touched down. Following the climax of this act, the PCs increase their **LL**. If they began at **LL0** then this should put them at **LL5**, the beginning of **tier 2**. From here on out the opposition they face will be even stronger, but they've shown that they're up to the challenge.

If your players want to play out some scenes and find out how the cast of factions and characters they have encountered fare in the coming days, here's some brief information to share. If you like, you can use this as a jumping off point between Act 1 and Act 2 of *No Room For A Wallflower*.

EVERGREEN as the characters know it ceases to exist. The survivors salvage what they can and either flee for the hills or follow the train of refugees to Mycol Fields. The blackened, waterlogged ruins of the settlement will taint the landscape for a long time. **LANDMARK COLONIAL** abandons the colony project and pulls out of its contract with SSC entirely, no longer willing to waste further time or resources on what it sees as a catastrophic venture. Existing colonists are given an evacuation order - with a date some months in the future.

SSC, in contrast, realizes that the critical window for completing its clandestine operations on the planet is narrowing. Preparations begin to mobilize and deploy a team of Constellar Midnights, the corpro's highly trained clandestine super soldiers.

The HERCYNIAN UNITED CITIES find themselves at a unique crossroads – the Machine has been driven back and defeated for the time being, but the problems facing the cities are compounding. **The HUC commanders** begin the long work of negotiating a new alliance between the United Cities and Evergreen's refugees.

ENDEAVOR, safe in Mycol Fields, rouses from their catatonic state under the watchful care of Terror and the old warrior's aides.

BRAVA HADURA, if she survived the battle of Evergreen, is nominated to both lead the survivors of the colony and take on double duty as the commanding officer of the remaining colonial militia. She is aided in her efforts by the agricultural and logistical expertise of the **CHÂUS**, the canny acumen of **JACOB MERRICK**, and **TYRELL MARKEY**'s reckless humanitarian streak. The Evergreen contingent sets up a little enclave in the refugee quarters of Mycol Fields and – slowly – begins to integrate.

If she is still alive, **EDENA JI** remands herself to the custody of the PCs, who can decide to hand her over to Brava or the HUC.

DTHALL ORDO relocates to Mycol Fields, where she and **MIRTH** take on command positions in the rangers. There are some rumors that suggest Dthall's promotion is a result of her family connections, but they never progress beyond grumbling. As one of Terror's protégés, Mirth is accepted without question.

If they haven't already, the members of **CONTINGENCY WHITE** extract from Hercynia. The PCs can depart with them, if they wish, after which Union debriefs them in full.

ENDING THE NARRATIVE HERE

You may wish to wrap up the story here, in which case Union, seeing that the situation is volatile and acting on reports from the PCs, expedites the deployment of a full battlegroup to the system. This detachment arrives 14 days later with a mission to establish order. If the player characters wish to depart (and did not accompany the Landmark CRT), they may extract now. Union will expect to debrief them, but that is all.

Without further interference from the PCs, SSC continues its plot to exploit the world and more or less succeeds. The corpro manages to carry out some of its clandestine objectives on Hercynia but ultimately fails to assert a claim on the planet when Union's stabilization mission encounters the Hercynian and Egregorian populations on the other side of the world, as well as the rest of the Machine. The ensuing war is short and brutal: the HUC fights alongside Union against a triumvirate alliance of Hercynians, Egregorians, and the Machine, eventually overcoming them thanks to Union's orbital control.

Overland/Kingwatcher is recovered by the Union Science Bureau and disappears deep into the bureaucratic labyrinth of Union's Solemn Vigil–clearance departments.

The Hercynian United Cities and the Egregorians are awarded full rights to Hercynia. News explodes across the omninet that a sentient, sapient, and organic non-human race has been encountered; the first Egregorians are welcomed on Cradle, and a long series of integration and recognition talks begin.

Hercynia, once more, is scarred. This time, though, it may have a chance to heal.

CONTINUING THE STORY

If you decide instead that you want to continue the narrative of *No Room For A Wallflower*, do not reveal the possible outcomes described above to your players – instead, close the book. If they do happen to find out or if you reveal them now and then later decide to play out Act 2, then simply treat the previous section as an iterative scenario played out in the corridors of Forecast/GALSIM deep below the Martian ice.

What actually happens next is different, as you will come to see. So, pause this story for now and leave your players with this information: their characters spend their time recovering, rebuilding, and adjusting to life on Hercynia as they wait for relief.

In the meantime, know this: what happened in Solo Terra, around Evergreen, on the little world of Hercynia, did not go unnoticed. On the other side of the world, events are in motion. Ancient minds, deep-buried machines, and rival powers are putting their contingency plans in place. At the edge of the Ardennes system, the caloric plumes of razor-edged stealth ships flare as they enter their slowdown burns and edge toward Hercynia's orbit.

This story is not yet done. Hercynia is not yet saved. Nothing this important ever ends clean, and not everyone will make it out of this story alive …

APPENDIX

WEALTH OF A WORLD

This section of the book contains options for both players and GMs (most of which appear in *No Room For A Wallflower*) that can easily be ported over to a range of campaigns.

There are a range of options for players. The **IPS-N KIDD** is a new mech that's popular in Evergreen and will find a home with the prospective engineers among you. There are also options for a new **EMPATH** talent that allows humans to interact with Witness and alternative mech **FRAMES** that can be acquired at certain points in Act 1. While these mechs become available at key points in *No Room For A Wallflower*, they can also be picked up at **LL2** or higher by acquiring the right licenses (see p. 182).

Meanwhile, GMs will find the details of the new NPC classes introduced in Act 1: the **SPITE**, **AVENGER**, **STRIDER**, and **LURKER**, along with the new **EIDOLON** enemy type.

PLAYING AN EGREGORIAN

If you wish to make an Egregorian character, discuss it with your GM and the other players. There are no rules or gameplay differences between human characters and Egregorian characters – Egregorians are people, after all, they're just not humans. Egregorians, owing to their delicate manipulators, can comfortably operate human weapons, interface with human technology, and speak human languages, often adding their own flair to the latter pursuit. With a little difficulty, Egregorians can even pilot mechanized chassis – though they may hold some cultural reservations around this. If you want to define your Egregorian character with something iconic to their culture, consider taking the **EMPATH** talent, though its use is by no mean confined to Egregorians.

For more information about the Egregorians, see pages 124–127 in **BEAT 16B.2: HIVEHOME**.

The existence of sentient, self-aware, and intelligent alien life is not a concept that is taken for granted in the *Lancer* universe – the Egregorians being the notable exception. If your Egregorian character goes offworld and continues their adventures elsewhere in the galaxy after concluding this arc of *No Room For A Wallflower* (or if your game is set after these events), people are likely to react to them differently than they would a human character. We encourage GMs to make sure this interaction is, on balance, positive, or can be worked through in a narratively interesting way if it is more complex or negative.

APPENDIX

NEW TALENT: EMPATH

Your time on Hercynia has always been marked by a kind of … searching. A connection to the planet, to something alive there. You can perceive it best at night, when it's quiet: your name, or a whisper that speaks something deeper and more true, spoken in the voice of another. You don't feel any fear when you hear it. You feel complete. It takes some time down the well, but one morning you awake resolute.

Time to find that distant speaker.

Whether your character was born offworld and came to Hercynia knowing nothing of the Egregorians, Witness, or any of the planet's history, or you were born in Evergreen or one of the cities of the HUC, your character can be an empath. An empath is someone who can not only register when Witness is being shared, but begin to understand it and, with some training, even add their own subjectivity to it.

Mere exposure to Hercynia is enough for a character to become an empath. Nobody is "born" an empath – it is a learned process, not an inherited one. Although, like all skills, some people find it easier than others, anyone can potentially learn to understand Witness. Normally, human empaths bond with Egregorians – there are many examples of such in the United Cities. Rarely, empaths can form bonds with other humans – a process that is as rare and wondrous to Egregorians as it is to the humans undergoing it, and one that also suggests that a human extension of Witness may latent and possible with exploration.

⌣ SYMPATHETIC PRECOGNITION

Your ability to sense the subjectivities of others grants you an uncanny ability to predict your ally's actions, guiding them with your influence. Gain the following reaction:

Sympathetic Precognition
`1/scene, Reaction`

Trigger: An allied character in line of sight makes a skill check, attack, or save.

Effect: That character may choose not to roll, instead treating their check, attack, or save as if they had rolled a 10 on the d20.

⌣ BEND TO WILL

1/scene when an allied character in line of sight makes a **structure** or **overheating** check, they can roll twice and choose either result.

⌣ SHARED SUBJECTIVITY

1/scene as a quick action, you may tap deep reserves of willpower to grant extraordinary awareness to an allied character in line of sight. Your mech immediately becomes **Stunned** until the start of your next turn and your perception almost completely merges with that of the other character. Until the end of their next turn, any time that character makes an attack, check, or saving throw, they can choose to roll as normal or instead treat that attack, check, or save as if they had rolled a **10 on the d20**. They must decide before rolling.

IPS-N
KIDD
Support

A sidegraded cousin of IPS-N's Lancaster support frame, the Kidd was produced under a joint development contract by IPS-N's Titan–Enceladus Field Project and Northstar Branch Robotics. The original pattern for the frame was bought off a mining commune that had rigged their support drones in a slapdash but ingenious neural mesh that both hardened them against tech intrusion and increased their operational efficiency many times over. Urban legend was that the original builder of the rig had used his drone team to bury caches of black-market Volador tech in several wandering asteroids, and out of extreme paranoia made his systems almost impossible to crack. To this day Northstar Branch Robotics tries valiantly to squash down persistent rumors that clues to the location of the caches are hidden in the Kidd's code base.

Designed to provide an aggressive, all-theater support solution to rugged field teams in hostile environments, the Kidd mounts a trio of powerful systems to ensure a broad operational envelope. The Jolly Roger semi-autonomous personal orbital platform, bundled with every genuine-license Kidd platform establishes theater control in any open or near-surface environment. A squadron of bundled subalterns (along with an onboard maintenance suite) guarantees friendly support in any environment and provides a broad suite of tactical possibility. Finally, Titan–Enceladus's SMOKESTACK heat sink pylon represents the cutting edge of IPS-N's thermodynamic axiomatics, allowing users to offset surplus heat via the creation of a pinhole-window into an omega state of absolute zero.

The Kidd is a popular chassis in Evergreen where it is employed as a subaltern command platform for civilian and engineering purposes. Its familiar bulk can also regularly be seen accompanying traders on their way to do business with the Gray Towns.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 2
HULL
   HP: 6
   Repair Cap: 5
AGILITY
   Evasion: 6
   Speed: 6

Save Target: 11
Sensors: 8
SYSTEMS
   E-Defense: 12
   Tech Attack: +1
   SP: 10
ENGINEERING
   Heat Cap: 4

MOUNTS

MAIN MOUNT

TRAITS

REROUTE POWER
As a **quick action** 1/round, the Kidd can destroy one of its DEPLOYABLES or DRONES that was not deployed or created in the same round to either grant **1d6+1** OVERSHIELD to an allied character or deal **1d6+1 ⚡ AP** to a hostile character. The target, allied or hostile, must be adjacent to whatever is destroyed. Systems without LIMITED that are destroyed this way must be repaired before they can be used again.

RECYCLE
At the end of any scene in which the Kidd used REROUTE POWER, it restores 1 charge to a LIMITED system of its choice with the DRONE or DEPLOYABLE tag.

RAPID DEPLOYMENT
On its first turn in any combat, the Kidd can deploy or activate any one system with the DRONE or DEPLOYABLE tag as a **free action**.

CORE SYSTEM
THE JOLLY ROGER

At the start of every combat scene, your Kidd automatically connects to its paired Jolly Roger orbital satellite weapon. The efficacy of the Jolly Roger depends on maintaining a high level of calibration with the Kidd, which is tracked with a **Jolly Roger Die** – 1d6, starting at 1. The die ticks up by 1 whenever you:

- deploy a **Drone** or **Deployable**
- take a **tech action** that targets at least one allied character.

Each option can only increase the value of the of the **Jolly Roger Die** once per round independently; however, the die also ticks up by 1 any time a hostile character takes a tech action against an allied character within your **Sensors**, with no limit.

1/round, you can activate the Jolly Roger as a quick action, resetting the **Jolly Roger Die** to 1. Choose one of the following effects, based on the value of the die:

3+ Plunder: Scan every hostile character in a ⊙1 area and give them **Lock On**.

5+ Swindle: Every hostile character in a ⊙1 area must succeed on a **Systems** save or become **Impaired**, **Jammed**, and **Slowed** until the end of their next turn.

6 Shiver Timbers: Fire a beam weapon, punching a narrow hole through walls and obstructions. One hostile character must succeed on an **Agility** save or take **3d6 ⚡ AP**. On a success, they take half damage.

You do not require line of sight for any of these effects, they have the effective range of the battlefield, and they easily penetrate objects and terrain, although more potent barriers (e.g., energy shields that prevent effects from crossing them due to line of sight) block them normally.

Skull and Bones
Active (1CP), Protocol

For the rest of the scene, **Plunder** and **Swindle** become ⊙2 and **Shiver Timbers** affects all characters in a ⟋10 path.

Blackspot Targeting Laser
Main Rifle, 1 SP, Unique
[✏ 15][1d3+1 ⚡]

On hit: DRONE, SEEKING, and NEXUS weapons and systems gain **+1** ⬡ to attack the target until the end of their next turn.

On critical hit: the target also receives LOCK ON.

"Who tipped me the black spot the day we landed and began this dance?"
– Treasure Island (1883)

PEBCAC
2 SP, Unique, Quick Tech

An **allied mech character** within line of sight and SENSORS quickly flash reboots at the system level. This ends all effects caused by tech actions, stops NHP cascades, and gives the target **Immunity to all tech actions** – hostile and allied – other than this one until the end of their next turn. This cannot be used on JAMMED characters.

Additionally, roll **1d6** to determine a side effect from the table below. These effects take place immediately and don't count as an action or reaction. Any movement they cause is involuntary.

1 Your target becomes JAMMED until the end of their next turn.

2 Your target moves up to its SPEED in a direction of the GM's choice.

3 Your target immediately moves up to **3 spaces** toward the nearest character (allied or hostile) and performs an IMPROVISED ATTACK against them. If no characters are in range, it only moves.

4 Your target falls PRONE and takes **2** ⊘ .

5 Your target vents **1d6** 🌡 and deals the amount cooled as **energy damage** to all adjacent characters.

6 Your target immediately takes the STABILIZE action and can choose what to do.

When the problem exists between chair and chassis, aggressive solutions are needed. This rather quick solution is an old system-level reboot program that is often used by asteroid miners dealing with aging hardware.

Field-Approved, Brass-Ignorant Modifications
2 SP, Unique, Quick Tech

Choose an allied mech character within line of sight and SENSORS. You power up their weapons. When they make a ranged or melee attack roll:

- the attack's damage cannot be reduced in any way
- the kick from firing the weapon knocks them back **1 space** in any direction after the attack
- **On hit:** their target must succeed on a HULL save or be knocked PRONE.

This effect ends when your target successfully hits with a ranged or melee attack roll or at the end of the scene.

As implied by the name, FABI modifications are ad hoc battlefield modifications that, while technically falling well outside the approved envelope of functionality and safety, are nonetheless popular among veteran pilots. FABI mods tend to be temporary in nature: removal of joule governors with quick-patched code, field-cooked "hot" kinetic rounds, and so on.

Omnibus Plate
1 SP, Deployable, Limited 2, Unique, Quick Action

OMNIBUS PLATE (SIZE 1, 10 HP, TAGS: *DEPLOYABLE*)

Expend a charge to deploy an omnibus plate to a space within ✏ **5**. The plate cannot be moved, is flat, and does not block movement. It is large enough to hold a single SIZE 1 or smaller DRONE or DEPLOYABLE at a time. DRONES and DEPLOYABLES placed on the plate gain **RESISTANCE to all damage** and gain **+1** to the size of any BURST or BLAST effects they generate. Additionally, any of their effects that require adjacency can now be activated from within ✏ **2**.

Northstar Branch Robotics returned to their roots with the Omnibus Plate, creating a simple, deployable catalytic for frontline nexus users. Designed with adaptation in mind, Omnibus Plates can attach securely to any drone or deployable system, increasing that system's efficacy in all aspects of employ.

LICENSE III:
FORGE SUBALTERN SQUAD, SMOKESTACK HEAT SINK

FORGE-2 Subaltern Squad
4 SP, Deployable, Limited 6, Unique, Quick Action

PROJECT (SIZE 1, 5 HP, TAGS: *DEPLOYABLE*)

1/round, expend a charge to deploy a team of FORGE-2 subalterns to start work on one of the following projects in a free space within line of sight and ⟋5:

- **EMPLACEMENT:** When finished, this elevated emplacement is **SIZE 1** and **3 spaces high**. The top third is a is a shielded platform that can fit characters up to a combined **SIZE 1** (the rest is solid metal or plastic). Firing slits allow line of sight both into and out of the emplacement but give characters within **hard cover** from all directions. Characters can enter or exit the emplacement from any adjacent space as a **quick action**. Upon entering, they move into the shielded platform. Characters and **DEPLOYABLES** can stand on the flat roof of the structure, but don't gain cover.
- **SNARE FOAM:** When finished, this project continually sprays foam around it, creating a ⊙2 area of **difficult terrain**. Destroying it removes the effect.
- **DAMPING STATION:** When finished, this repair station generates a ⊙1 field within which allied characters gain **IMMUNITY to burn** and clear any 🔥 currently affecting them.
- **ARMOR PACK:** When finished, this pack latches onto the next allied character that moves adjacent to it and fuses onto them. The project is destroyed, but they gain **+1 ARMOR** for the rest of the scene. This could temporarily put them over the armor maximum.

The project is an immovable object that is finished at the start of your next turn, gaining **+10 HP** (maximum and current). It is canceled if it's destroyed.

The subalterns aren't treated as separate entities and can't be targeted. They return to you if the project is destroyed, canceled, or finished, no matter where you are.

If you **OVERCHARGE** to use this system again, it may ignore the **1/round** limit, but the second project must be placed adjacent to the first.

....
The FORGE line of subalterns represents IPS-N's premier range of frontline autonomous robotic humanoids. Produced by its robotics division, Northstar Branch Robotics, FORGE-2 subalterns are IPS-N's newest combat engineering models, built to user scale and function.

SMOKESTACK Heat Sink
3 SP, Deployable, Limited 2, Unique, Quick Action

PYLON (SIZE 1/2, 5 HP, EVASION 10, E-DEFENSE 10, TAGS: *DEPLOYABLE*)

Expend a charge to deploy a pylon that absorbs **heat** in a ⊙2 area around itself. It absorbs any **heat** dealt to characters at least partially within the affected area from any source (before reductions, including **RESISTANCE**). Once the pylon has absorbed 6 🔥, it explodes. Characters within the affected area must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or take **1d6+3 ⚡ AP**. On a success, they take half damage. Objects and **DEPLOYABLES** are hit automatically. Any excess heat absorbed by the pylon as part of the same action or effect that caused it to explode disperses with no effect.

....
The IPS-N Kidd's SMOKESTACK Heat Sink represents the latest in IPS-N's heat-dispersion systems for chassis and other CORE-powered vehicles and vessels. Utilizing proprietary axiomatics, the SMOKESTACK system establishes (via deployable pylon) a localized, minor, and stable pinhole into an omega state, allowing users to – for a certain value of thermodynamic exchange – cool excess heat debt by depositing it into that same state. Once the SMOKESTACK reaches capacity – a hard-coded feature – it detonates, making the system just as effective a weapon as it is a heat sink.

VARIANT FRAMES

These **Frames** are available to PCs as **Exotic Gear** in the course of Act 1. Characters who gain access to variants as rewards during the campaign can freely switch between the variant and base versions of the **Frame** whenever they perform a **Full Repair** or otherwise reprint their mech.

If players want their characters to acquire these variants in other campaigns, they can be taken as alternatives to the original **Frames** when a pilot reaches **rank II** in the license for that mech, functioning as usual but with slightly different traits and **Core Systems**.

When a character reaches **rank II** in the relevant license, they can choose to either retain the standard **Frame** or swap to the variant version. The two are mutually exclusive. This means that someone who takes the **SSC Swallowtail (Ranger Variant)** cannot use the standard **Swallowtail**. Only the **Frame** changes, all other gear for the license remains the same, including the gear for **rank II**.

The **GMS Sagarmatha** is an exception to this rule and is available to all characters at **LL0** alongside the **Everest**.

Whenever a character increases their **LL**, they can swap out one variant **Frame** for the base version, or vice versa. They can do this multiple times for the same license if their **LL** keeps increasing.

VARIANT FRAMES:
- **GMS Sagarmatha** (**GMS Everest**)
- **HA Enkidu** (**HA Tokugawa**)
- **HA Genghis Mk I** (**HA Genghis**)
- **SSC Swallowtail, Ranger Variant** (**SSC Swallowtail**)

GMS
SAGARMATHA
Everest Variant

The **Sagarmatha** is a **Size 2** legacy GMS chassis that all characters have access to from **LL0** onwards. This variant **Frame** is not mutually exclusive with the **Everest**.

The Sagarmatha is of an older pattern than the Everest, sturdier and bulkier by necessity more than design. It is seen as somewhat antiquated through the lens of modern manufacturing standards. Nevertheless, it enjoys some use in border colonies, in the Baronies, and with the Albatross.

CORE STATS

Size: 2
Armor: 1
HULL
   HP: 8
   Repair Cap: 4
AGILITY
   Evasion: 8
   Speed: 4

Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10
SYSTEMS
   E-Defense: 8
   Tech Attack: +0
   SP: 6
ENGINEERING
   Heat Cap: 6

TRAITS

GUARDIAN
Adjacent allied characters can use the Sagarmatha as **hard cover**.

HEROISM
1/scene, the Sagarmatha can Brace without sacrificing any actions or movement on its following turn.

REPLACEABLE PARTS
While resting, the Sagarmatha can be repaired at a rate of **1 Repair** per structure damage instead of **2 Repairs**.

MOUNTS

MAIN MOUNT
FLEX MOUNT
HEAVY MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM
RALLYING CRY

Raise the Banner
Active (1CP), Quick Action

You raise a rallying banner. All allied characters in line of sight of your mech when you do this gain **Resistance to all damage and heat** and gain **+1** ⊕ on all checks and saves. These effects last until the end of your next turn.

HA
ENKIDU
Striker/Defender
Tokugawa Variant

The **Enkidu** can be taken at **rank II** of the **Tokugawa** license instead of the base **Frame**, or retrofitted during Act 1.

This experimental frame was secretly designed as a TBK chassis for late-action combat in the Hercynian Crisis. Deployed in limited numbers against the remaining Egregorian hives in the brutal last stages of the war, the Enkidu's neurological interfacing was dangerous: raw and unshielded. The power and aggression flowing through the subroutines that govern the mech bled into its pilot's subjectivity, making them lose themselves in a storm of violence, constantly pushing themselves to greater and greater acts of destruction. This effect was incredibly hard for pilots to handle – the fallout rate from the program was extremely high, and the survivors required extensive conditioning, implants, and a cocktail of neurological suppressants to continue.

The true aim of the Enkidu program was not to fight Egregorians, which were in the final stages of practical extinction, but to use the battlefield as a testing ground for the eventual deployment of the chassis against ThirdComm revolutionaries and dissidents. Though the codebase for the Enkidu was eventually discontinued and molded into what is now the Tokugawa, the difficulties with the initial project prevented it from getting off the ground before the revolution took hold. The remaining prototypes were buried along with the rest of Hercynia's history.

CORE STATS

Size: 2
Armor: 1
HULL
    HP: 10
    Repair Cap: 5
AGILITY
    Evasion: 8
    Speed: 3

Save Target: 10
Sensors: 5
SYSTEMS
    E-Defense: 8
    Tech Attack: -2
    SP: 5
ENGINEERING
    Heat Cap: 8

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT **FLEX MOUNT**

TRAITS

PRIMAL FURY

When the Enkidu ends its turn in the **Danger Zone**, it rears up, extends its **Plasma Talons** (see below), and enters a state of primal fury with the following effects:

- On hit, characters struck by the Enkidu's **Plasma Talons** immediately become **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn.
- As a **special reaction**, the Enkidu **must** use its **Plasma Talons** to attack any character (hostile or allied) that enters, exits or moves more than **1 space** within its **Threat**. This special reaction can be used once a turn, any number of times a round, and doesn't count against the maximum number of reactions each turn – so the Enkidu can take other reactions normally.

This state ends at the start of the Enkidu's turn, or if the Enkidu exits the **Danger Zone**.

ALL FOURS

While it's in the **Danger Zone**, the Enkidu can't make **ranged** or **tech attacks** but has 6 base **Speed**.

BRUTE STRENGTH

The Enkidu gets +1 ⬡ on **Hull** checks and saves.

BLOODSENSE

The Enkidu always knows if characters are at or under half of their maximum **HP**, but not the exact number.
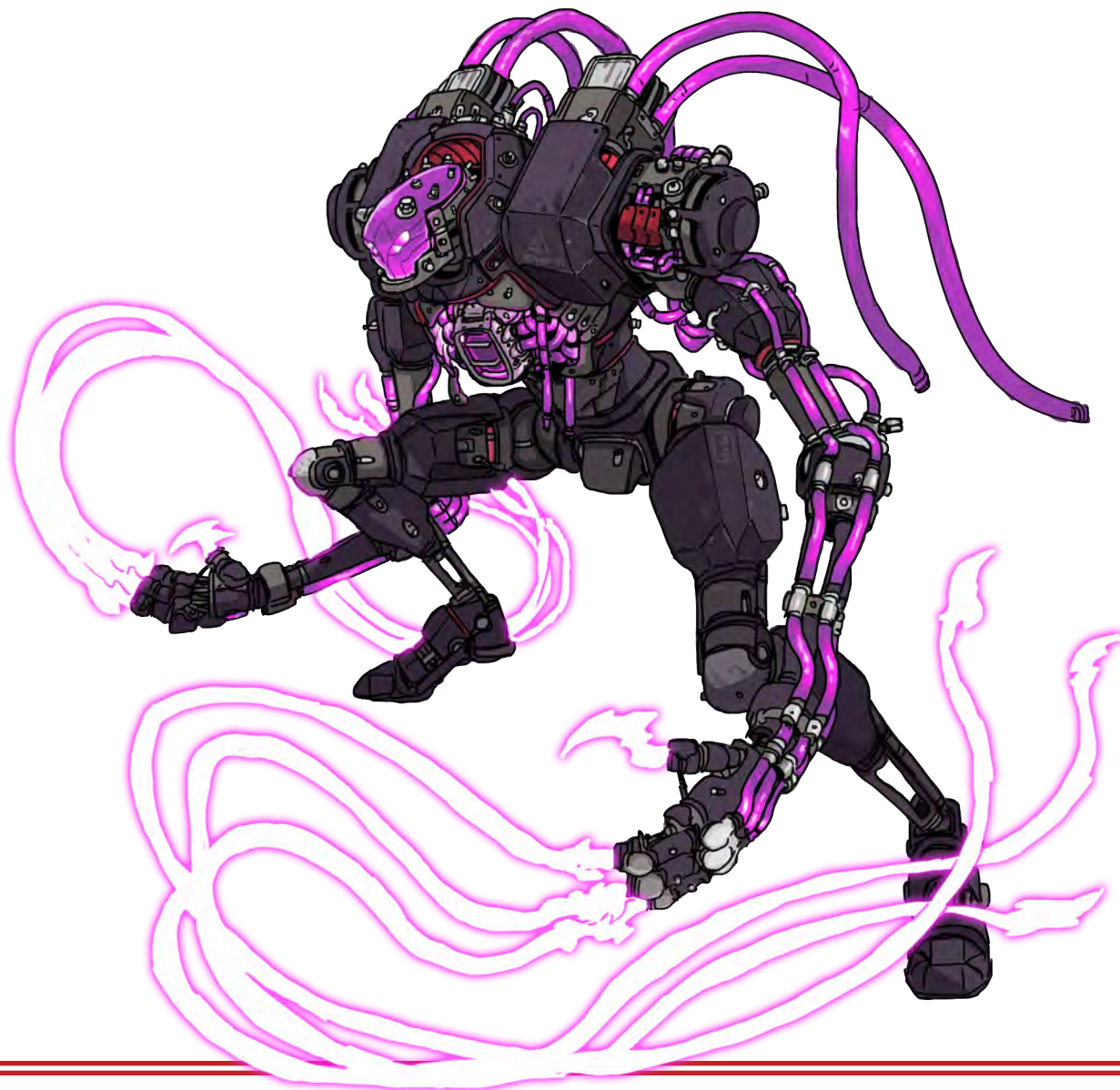
CORE SYSTEM
LIMIT RESTRICTION ZERO

"I argue that it is Man who is shapeless; far from immutable, he is given form by the environment around him. In civilization, man is as divine as old God, who judges and creates; he is clothed in finery, and enjoys literature, art, company, and purpose. When left alone in the savage wilderness of nature, Man comports himself accordingly."

– Harrison II, "Mandate, Vol. II: On Nature, On Savagery, On Reason"

Integrated Mount: Plasma Talons

These molten talons are long, whiplike plasma lashes that the Enkidu can extend or retract. They can only be used in the **DANGER ZONE** and have the following profile:

Plasma Talons
Auxiliary Melee, AP, Danger Zone, Reliable 2
[☼ 3][1d3+2 ⚡]

Bifurcate
Active (1CP), Protocol

For the rest of the scene, the Enkidu gains this action, which can only be used in the **DANGER ZONE**:

Bifurcate
Full Action, Danger Zone

The Enkidu engages its monstrous strength, targets an adjacent character (allied or hostile) and attempts to tear them in half with its talons. If the target has **7 HP or less**, only **1 STRUCTURE** remaining, and doesn't have **IMMUNITY to damage**, they are immediately destroyed, the action cost of this ability is refunded, and the Enkidu can **BOOST** as a **free action**. If this action fails to destroy the target, the target instead takes 1 ⌀ .

At the end of the scene, the **CP** cost of **BIFURCATE** is refunded if the Enkidu did not use it to destroy any characters.

HA
GENGHIS MK 1
"WORLDKILLER"

Striker/Defender
Genghis Variant

This variant can be taken at **rank II** of the **GENGHIS** license instead of the base **FRAME**. It can also be dug up and repaired as part of *No Room For A Wallflower*.

Though the Genghis Mk I is classified as a Harrison Armory **FRAME** for gameplay purposes, the original Genghis models were based on upscaled SecComm power armor and are technically GMS frames. Today, they are only compatible with the HA Genghis license due to a last-ditch tech partition by SecComm partisans in the latter stages of the revolution.

These old-pattern Genghis mechs are buried all over Hercynia in various states of disrepair and carnage. They are a grim reminder of the carnage that once took place here. Unlike the Mk II, with its sleeker, slimmer frame, the Mk I is much more brutal in its simplicity – mass produced, a crude weapon.

CORE STATS
Size: 2
Armor: 3
HULL
   HP: 6
   Repair Cap: 4
AGILITY
   Evasion: 6
   Speed: 3

Save Target: 10
Sensors: 5
SYSTEMS
   E-Defense: 8
   Tech Attack: -2
   SP: 5
ENGINEERING
   Heat Cap: 8

TRAITS

INSULATED
The Genghis has **IMMUNITY to** 🔥.

TBK MUNITIONS
The Genghis's attacks ignore **RESISTANCE** to 🔥 and 🌡.

WEAK COMPUTER
The Genghis receives +1 ⊟ on all **SYSTEM** checks and saves.

MOUNTS

MAIN MOUNT	MAIN MOUNT	HEAVY MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM
JUGGERNAUT REACTOR

Inside his great suit the fireman smiles. He is a salamander upon the world, belching flame, cleaning away history, and leaving a new land for the living.

FURIOSA
While in the **DANGER ZONE**, you are surrounded by shimmering heat that interferes with targeting. You gain **soft cover**. Additionally, other than you, characters within ⊙1 can't take **reactions**.

A Pleasure to Burn
Active (1CP), Protocol

For the rest of the scene, the Genghis is wreathed in coruscating heat. Your **FURIOSA** aura grows to ⊙2, and your mech ignores all **difficult terrain**, simply melting through it.

If you overheat during this time, your mech releases a blast of heat that melts the ground beneath it. Characters other than you within the affected area of **FURIOSA** take **1d6** ⚡ **AP** damage and must succeed on a **HULL** save or become **IMMOBILIZED** until the end of their next turn. The area then becomes **difficult terrain** for the rest of the scene.

SSC
SWALLOWTAIL
RANGER VARIANT

Support
Swallowtail Variant

This variant can be taken at **rank II** of the **Swallowtail** license instead of the base **Frame**, or gained as **Exotic Gear** by aiding Dthall Ordo during the campaign.

This Swallowtail variant is common among HUC ranger forces. It was adopted and reverse-engineered from the material remains of early, abandoned SSC survey expeditions. With no ability to print-replicate the mech, the rangers painstakingly manufactured and assembled each unit to high specifications. Unlike the sleek luxury of other SSC frames, this Swallowtail is a rugged affair. Each one has a suite of marks left by its previous owners – livery, battle paint, custom gear, camouflage, and weathering. They have been repaired and maintained for two generations and each one is precious to the United Cities.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 0
HULL
  HP: 6
  Repair Cap: 5
AGILITY
  Evasion: 10
  Speed: 6

Save Target: 10
Sensors: 20
SYSTEMS
  E-Defense: 8
  Tech Attack: +1
  SP: 6
ENGINEERING
  Heat Cap: 4

TRAITS

SCOUT BATTLEFIELD
Before the first round of any combat and before any deployment takes place, place up to two of the following in free spaces anywhere on the battlefield:
• A 2 x 2 zone that does not impede movement and grants **soft cover** to characters at least partly within it.
• A 2 x 2 zone that is **difficult terrain**.
• A **Size 1** piece of **hard cover**.
They can't be placed within **4 spaces** of each other. The same option can be chosen more than once. These objects and zones represent naturally occurring terrain on the battlefield, and you can work with the GM to decide what they are.

INVIGORATING SCANNERS
1/round when the Swallowtail inflicts **Lock On**, an allied character within line of sight and **Sensors** can move up to its **Speed** as a **reaction**.

WEATHERING
The Swallowtail ignores **difficult terrain**.

MOUNTS

FLEX MOUNT	MAIN MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM
GAIA INHERITANCE

Outnumbered, outgunned, and lacking the ability to mass-produce mechs, the rangers have had to rely on the legacy of Hercynia itself to protect them. Each of their Swallowtails is an ingenious, fast-moving suite of meshed software and gear, uniquely tweaked by generations of hardened warriors – imperfect in a way that would make any SSC smith shiver. Each wears its own unique name, has its own unique ballad, and is recorded in the osteomemetics of its home city.

GROUNDED
When you end your turn in a zone that grants **soft cover**, you become **Invisible** until you leave that cover, take damage, attack, force a save, or take any other hostile action that affects another character.

Guerrilla Warfare
Active (1CP), Protocol
You create three ⊙**1** patches of smoke in spaces within line of sight and ⟋**5**. These patches grant **soft cover** to characters at least partly within them. They last for the rest of the scene.

Additionally, for the rest of the scene, allied characters within **Sensors** gain the benefits of **Grounded**.

NEW NPC CLASSES

These NPCs are new in *No Room For A Wallflower* but can be used in any campaign. When they first appear in this campaign, each appears in a unique, flavorful form intended to introduce characters to how they fight. The versions listed here are more generic template versions. Your download of this book is also accompanied by a file that allows you to upload these NPCs to the Comp/Con app.

SIZE 1

AVENGER
Striker/Defender

Avenger-class mechs are typically piloted by zealots, career warriors, and people from cultures that place significant value on praetorian or warrior castes. In battle, these pilots act as force multipliers and squad leaders, but they tend to be more notable as individuals than for their machines. Avenger pilots have tight bonds to their allies – strong enough that the intense emotions of battle, loss, and struggle can push them to incredible feats of heroism when the tide turns in their enemies' favor.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3

MECH SKILLS (TIER 1)
Hull: +1   Systems: +0
Agility: +1   Engineering: +0

CORE STATS (TIER 1)
HP: 15   Armor: 0
Evasion: 10   E-Defense: 8
Speed: 5   Size: 1
Heat Cap: 6   Save Target: 10
Sensors: 10

MECH SKILLS (TIER 2)
Hull: +2   Systems: 0
Agility: +3   Engineering: 0

CORE STATS (TIER 2)
HP: 18   Armor: 0
Evasion: 12   E-Defense: 10
Speed: 5   Size: 1
Heat Cap: 6   Save Target: 12
Sensors: 10

MECH SKILLS (TIER 3)
Hull: +3   Systems: 0
Agility: +5   Engineering: 0

CORE STATS (TIER 3)
HP: 21   Armor: 0
Evasion: 15   E-Defense: 12
Speed: 5   Size: 1
Heat Cap: 8   Save Target: 14
Sensors: 10

TACTICS
While not particularly dangerous to begin with, Avengers become much more threatening when their allies start falling around them. Place them near other high-priority targets to take advantage of their **REVENGE** ability, forcing characters to choose between taking them out first or suffering more for destroying their allies.

BASE SYSTEMS

Slug Pistol
Auxiliary CQB, AP, +2/3/4
[🗡 8][⚔ 3][4/5/6 ⊘]

ERUPTING SHRAPNEL   Trait, 1/round
When the Avenger's attack damages another character, they may force that character to succeed on an **ENGINEERING** save or be covered in explosive shrapnel until the end of their next turn. Until then, they take **3/4/5 ✳ AP** damage each time they make a **melee or ranged attack**, after the attack roll is made. Affected characters are aware of this effect.

REVENGE   Trait, 1/scene
If an allied non-**GRUNT**, non-**DRONE** character is destroyed within 🗡 **5** , for the rest of the scene the Avenger gains **OVERSHIELD 8/12/16**, **+5 base damage** on its ranged and melee attacks, and **+1 ⊕** on all attacks, checks, and saves.

ASSAULT ARMOR   Trait
The Avenger has **RESISTANCE** to all damage originating within 🗡 **3**.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

DEADLY   Trait
The Avenger deals **+1d6 ⊘** on critical hits.

ENDLESS REVENGE   Trait
Revenge can be triggered any number of times per scene, but after the first time, it doesn't grant additional damage increases. Instead it grants **+4/5/6 OVERSHIELD**. This doesn't replace any previous **OVERSHIELD**, but instead increases it by the same amount.

INFECTIOUS REVENGE   Trait
When **REVENGE** triggers, all allied characters within 🗡 **5** – excluding the Avenger – gain **OVERSHIELD 4/6/8**.

Judgement Shotgun
Main CQB, Loading, +0 , +1 ⊖
[🗡 3][⚔ 3][10/12/14 ⚡]

On hit: Target must pass an **AGILITY** save or be knocked **PRONE**.
This weapon automatically reloads whenever an allied character within 🗡 **3** is destroyed.

Mimic Mesh
System, Reaction, Unlimited times per round

Trigger: An allied non-**GRUNT**, non-**DRONE** character within 🗡 **5** fails a save or is hit by an attack from a hostile character to which the Avenger has line of sight.

Effect: The Avenger may move **3 spaces** directly toward the attacker.

LURKER

Striker

Lurker-class foes are rare but terrifying sights on the battlefield. Usually utilizing greywash-analog nanite clouds and matter compressors, they move from swarm to swarm, lashing out with nanite whips and using their swarms to deflect blows as easily as water.

SIZE 1

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3

MECH SKILLS

TIER 1
Hull: +2   Systems: +0
Agility: +2   Engineering: -1

TIER 2
Hull: +3   Systems: +0
Agility: +3   Engineering: -1

TIER 3
Hull: +4   Systems: +0
Agility: +4   Engineering: -1

CORE STATS

TIER 1
HP: 10   Armor: 1
Evasion: 10   E-Defense: 6
Speed: 3   Size: 1
Heat Cap: 5   Save Target: 12
Sensors: 5

TIER 2
HP: 14   Armor: 1
Evasion: 12   E-Defense: 6
Speed: 3   Size: 1
Heat Cap: 5   Save Target: 14
Sensors: 5

TIER 3
HP: 18   Armor: 1
Evasion: 14   E-Defense: 6
Speed: 4   Size: 1
Heat Cap: 8   Save Target: 16
Sensors: 5

TACTICS

Lurkers are slow but powerful enemies that are very scary inside of their **Shroud Zones**. Canny players will use hacking or smart weapons to disperse these zones and make Lurkers more vulnerable. Lurkers can use each other's zones, so having multiple Lurkers on a battlefield can greatly multiply their power.

BASE SYSTEMS

Umbral Shroud
Trait, Protocol

At the start of any combat, when they arrive as reinforcements, or **1/round as a protocol**, the Lurker can create a rippling storm of nanites – a **Shroud Zone** – in a free ⊙**1** area within ⟋**5**.

Shroud Zones provide **soft cover**. Additionally, while inside a **Shroud Zone**:
• Lurkers (including this one) become **Invisible** and gain **Resistance** to all damage and heat.
• Hostile characters are **Shredded** and **Impaired**.

Shroud Zones can only be targeted by **tech attacks and weapons that target E-Defense** (e.g., smart weapons). They have **E-Defense 10/13/16** and disperse upon any successful attack.

The Lurker can have no more than three **Shroud Zones** active at the same time. **Shroud Zones** can overlap each other, but their effects do not stack.

Scouring Whip
Heavy Melee, +0
[⚔ 1][8/10/12 ∅]

This weapon gains ⚔ **3** and **+1** 🛡 when used within a **Shroud Zone**.

On hit: The target is pulled adjacent to the Lurker, or as close as possible.

On critical hit: As above, and the target is immediately **Grappled**.

Umbral Shift
Trait, Quick Action

The Lurker **teleports** to a **Shroud Zone** within line of sight.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Consume Shroud
Trait, Recharge 4+, Quick Action

The Lurker consumes a **Shroud Zone** they are inside or adjacent to, clearing all conditions, gaining **Overshield 4/6/8**, and then moving spaces equal to their **Speed**. They cannot consume a **Shroud Zone** they created in the same round.

Defensive Shroud
System, Reaction, 1/round

Trigger: The Lurker takes **damage** or **heat**.
Effect: It creates a **Shroud Zone** centered on its location, even if it already has three active.

Devouring Shard
System, Quick Action

While inside a **Shroud Zone**, the Lurker can also spew out a ▷**3** torrent of razor sharp nanites as a quick action. Characters within the affected area must pass an **Engineering** save or take **4/5/6** ⚡ **AP**. On a success, they take half damage.

Empower Shroud
Trait, Recharge 4+, Quick Action

The Lurker expands a **Shroud Zone** they currently occupy to ⊙**2**. This can cause it to envelop other characters. In addition, it now takes two successful attacks to disperse the effect.

Ripper Claws
Heavy Melee, AP, +0
[⚔ 1][5/7/8 ∅]

This weapon deals double damage when used within a **Shroud Zone**.

STRIDER
Artillery/Striker

Striders are piloted by scouts, lone wolves, and mavericks - usually the kind of pilots who are accustomed to spending a lot of time behind enemy lines. The massive amount of gear these elite pilots bring with them gives them the ability to adapt to almost any circumstance.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3

MECH SKILLS

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
Hull: −2	Systems: -1	Hull: +0	Systems: +0	Hull: +0	Systems: +2
Agility: +2	Engineering: +1	Agility: +4	Engineering: +2	Agility: +4	Engineering: +3

CORE STATS

TIER 1		TIER 2		TIER 3	
HP: 10	Armor: 0	HP: 12	Armor: 0	HP: 14	Armor: 0
Evasion: 10	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 13	E-Defense: 8	Evasion: 16	E-Defense: 10
Speed: 4	Size: 1/2 or 1	Speed: 4	Size: 1/2 or 1	Speed: 4	Size: 1/2 or 1
Heat Cap: 5	Save Target: 10	Heat Cap: 5	Save Target: 12	Heat Cap: 5	Save Target: 14
Sensors: 20		Sensors: 20		Sensors: 20	

TACTICS

The Strider is very flexible, but only effective at certain range bands. Use its abilities to reposition it so that it can make the most use out of its various kits. Players will find that moving around is a valuable strategy against the Strider, as being too close or too far for it to attack effectively can render it ineffective.

BASE SYSTEMS

Swap Kit
Trait, Quick Action

The Strider swaps to one of their available kits, gaining new attack options. They also gain a bonus effect that can only be used this round. By default, they have two kits, **MARKSMAN KIT** and **SKIRMISHER KIT**, and can gain more with optional systems.

In any given turn, they can only use weapons and systems from one kit. When one of the Strider's weapons or systems are destroyed, it must be chosen from their active kit.

The Strider starts combat with any kit of their choice, but does not get the swap bonus until they swap to a different kit.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

CQB TRAINING   Trait
The Strider has **IMMUNITY** to **SLOWED** and cannot be **GRAPPLED**.

HUSTLE   Trait
When the Strider swaps kits, they can move spaces equal to their **SPEED** as a free action.

OFFENSIVE WEAPON SWAP   Trait
When the Strider uses **SWAP KIT**, they may deal 2 🗲 to an adjacent hostile character. The affected character must also pass an **AGILITY** save or be **knocked 3 spaces back** and knocked **PRONE**.

BASE KITS

MARKSMAN KIT

Swap bonus: This turn only, damage from the RANGER LONG RIFLE cannot be reduced in any way and it ignores the ORDNANCE tag.

Ranger Long Rifle
`Heavy Rifle, Ordnance, +0, +1` ✚
`[ ⟋20][3/4/5 ⌀ ]`

This weapon deals **9/10/12** ⌀ instead of its standard damage if the target is further than ⟋**8**.

Duck
`Trait, Recharge 4+, Reaction`

Trigger: A ranged attack originating beyond ⟋**8** hits the Strider.

Effect: The attack misses and the Strider gains RESISTANCE **to all damage** until the end of the turn.

SKIRMISHER KIT

Swap bonus: This turn only, the Strider's movement ignores **difficult terrain** and engagement, and does not provoke reactions.

Explosive Rifle
`Heavy CQB, Knockback 3, +0, +1` ✚
`[ ⟋3][ ⚔3][6/7/8 ✸ ]`

Reposition
`Trait, Reaction, 1/round`

Trigger: The start of any turn.

Effect: The Strider may move its SPEED in spaces.

OPTIONAL KITS

SIEGE KIT

Swap bonus: The Strider scatters caltrops in a ⊙**1** zone within ⟋**5**, turning it into **difficult terrain** for the rest of the scene. They then deploy a **SIZE 1** piece of **hard cover** in any free adjacent space, which also remains for the rest of the scene.

Shoulder Mortar
`Main Launcher, Arcing, +0 , +1` ✚
`[ ⟋10][ ⊙2][4/5/6 ✸ ]`

BLAST SHIELD — System
The Strider has RESISTANCE **to all damage and heat from** ⟋**,** ▷**,** ⊙**, and** ◉ **effects**, and gains **+1** ✚ on all saves to avoid effects that use these patterns.

ENTRENCHED — Trait
The Strider has IMMUNITY **to involuntary movement** forced by hostile characters.

SAPPER KIT

Swap bonus: The Strider launches a flash grenade at a character within line of sight and ⟋**5**. Their target must pass an AGILITY save or become JAMMED until the end of their next turn.

Mag Shotgun
`Main CQB, AP, +0, +1` ✚
`[ ⟋5][ ⚔3][2/3/4 ⌀ ]`

**On hit:** the target receives LOCK ON.

Smoke Grenade
`System, Limited 2, Quick Action`

The Strider launches a smoke grenade at a space within line of sight and ⟋**5**, creating a ⊙**1** patch of smoke. The area provides **soft cover** until the end of the scene.

Jamming Pylon
`System, Deployable, Limited 2, Quick Action`

JAMMING PYLON (SIZE 1, 5/6/8 HP, TAGS: *DEPLOYABLE*)

Once placed, this pylon creates a ◉**2** zone of static. Hostile characters within the affected area are JAMMED until they leave it. The pylon remains even if the Strider swaps kits.

SIZE 2

SPITE

Defender

The Spite is an aggressive tech defender chassis commonly used by HORUS techno cults, pirates, and insurgent factions. By using a reactor-override liturgicode, these mechs are able to pry a mech's reactor cores open and keep them that way, spiking them with feedback each time a weapon is fired. Unaware or reckless pilots taking the field against an experienced Spite pilot will often find themselves cooking themselves to death.

TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3

MECH SKILLS

Hull: +0	Systems: +2	Hull: +0	Systems: +3	Hull: +0	Systems: +4
Agility: -2	Engineering: +2	Agility: -2	Engineering: +3	Agility: -2	Engineering: +4

CORE STATS

HP: 18	Armor: 2	HP: 20	Armor: 3	HP: 22	Armor: 4
Evasion: 6	E-Defense: 10	Evasion: 6	E-Defense: 14	Evasion: 6	E-Defense: 16
Speed: 2	Size: 2	Speed: 2	Size: 2	Speed: 2	Size: 2
Heat Cap: 5	Save Target: 13	Heat Cap: 6	Save Target: 15	Heat Cap: 7	Save Target: 17
Sensors: 20		Sensors: 20		Sensors: 20	

TACTICS

The Spite punishes characters who rely on heat management or careful heat generation to maximize their damage output. Use **Imprison** to lock down dangerous damage-dealers and **Enthrone** it somewhere it can guard its allies, but be careful – it's relatively immobile and can't do much on its own.

BASE SYSTEMS

Enthrone
System, Recharge 4+, Shield, Quick Action

The Spite becomes **Immobilized** and activates a crackling defensive shield. While this shield is active, any characters that make ranged or melee attacks against the Spite or its adjacent allies take **3/4/5 ⚡ AP** before the attack roll is made. This effect lasts until the end of the Spite's next turn, or if it ends this effect as a **quick action**.

GUARDIAN   Trait
Adjacent allied characters can use the Spite for **hard cover**.

Imprison
System, Quick Tech

The Spite chooses a character within **Sensors** and line of sight: they must pass a **Systems** save or take **4/5/6 ⚡** and become infected by a catalyzing virus. While affected by this virus they cannot clear any **heat** by any means (except for overheating). This effect lasts for the rest of the scene, until the Spite is destroyed, or until the affected character moves adjacent to the Spite. While at least one character is affected by the virus, the Spite is **Immobilized**.

Targets that already suffer from the virus take **double damage** if imprisoned again.

Seize
System, Recharge 4+, Quick Tech

A hostile character within **Sensors** and line of sight must pass a **Systems** save or take **2/3/4 🌡** and become **Immobilized** until the end of their next turn. On a success, they take no heat and are instead **Slowed** until the end of their next turn.

OPTIONAL SYSTEMS

Crush Targeting
Trait, Recharge 4+, Quick Tech

The Spite chooses a character within **Sensors** and line of sight: they gain **+3 ⊖** to attack any character other than the Spite until the start of the Spite's next turn.

Feedback Shield
System, 1/round, Shield, Quick Tech

The Spite chooses an allied character within line of sight and ↗ **5**. Any character that successfully damages that character immediately becomes **Jammed** until the end of their next turn. This effect lasts until triggered, or for the rest of the scene.

INSIDIOUS PRISON   Trait
Characters affected by **Imprison** take **5/7/9 ⚡ AP** immediately after they **Overcharge**. They are aware of this effect, and this damage cannot be prevented or reduced in any way.

Carceri
Trait, Recharge 6+, Full Tech

The Spite uses **Imprison** on all characters of its choice within line of sight and **Sensors**.

ENTRENCHED   Trait
The Spite has **Immunity to involuntary movement** forced by hostile characters.

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EIDOLONS

SIMPLIFIED REALSPACE/LAMELLAR-MANIFOLD ENTITIES

"Eidolon" is the working name for the simplified realspace/lamellar-manifold entities encountered inside metavaults DHIYED, XOLOTL, and EHECATL. The threat presented to humanity by these entities cannot be understated. To address their recent reappearance, the joint UIB/USB KLEOS project has resumed. Its initial findings are presented in abstract below.

The eidolons encountered so far are best understood as realspace, accepted-timeline representations of beings understandable only in the higher dimensions of manifold space. They appear to have no specific categorization inside of their coherent physical limits: documented manifestations so far have included parallel temporal excerpts of a single personality, the aberrant or intrusive thoughts of observers manifested in coherent form, specific memories of observers, and qualic translations of an NHP's subjectivity (e.g., fear of failure, the experience of pain, heartbreaking depression, etc). Whether eidolons are generated through the epiphenomenalistic relationship between an NHP and its shackles, an NHP and its metafold containment system, or an NHP and some unidentified factor is unknown. Furthermore, contradictory reports of eidolonic expression suggest a plusquamperfekt relationship between the eidolon and its observers. Indeed – as with many phenomena associated with NHPs – eidolons are firmly paracausal beings.

The most powerful eidolons are found at the core of a metavault. These are understandably rare, and determined to be noncritical threats of high order. Following recent events in the Atlas Line (Ring 4), we now understand eidolons not as unique projections, but entities that can exist in proximity and simultaneity to a primary eidolon – hence the development of a class system for understanding them. We do not know if this represents the illumination of gaps in our record of understood phenomena associated with these entities, or if it is the unique result of a specific case. Worryingly, this could also represent a growth in the universal ability of NHPs after repeated iterations, representing the progress of an ongoing, cohesive project not constrained to a single NHP.

The physical composition and structure of these entities is unknown, but core lamellae appear crystalline and solid in the visible light spectrum. Higher lamellae vary, and while eidolons that have been encountered to date have mostly been confirmed as having crystalline physical structures at their core, their appearances, masses, and physical impacts on realspace have differed due to myriad metaphysical, paracausal, and/or realspace lamellae. These layers are often confusing, distressing, or otherwise uncanny; it is not uncommon for the images present in a discrete layer to appear as if they are contained within a planar facet or prism on account of the strict "borders" placed around the eidolon's occupied space. Lamellae multiply the threat posed by individual eidolons beyond simple physical danger.

It is imperative that any units that encounter an eidolon entity capture as much data as possible for relay to UIB/USB KLEOS. Any instances of eidolon manifestation should be expected and prevented at all costs outside of secure containment facilities: their creation is never spontaneous or accidental, as – barring evidence to the contrary – it is always the result of neglecting proper cycling schedules.
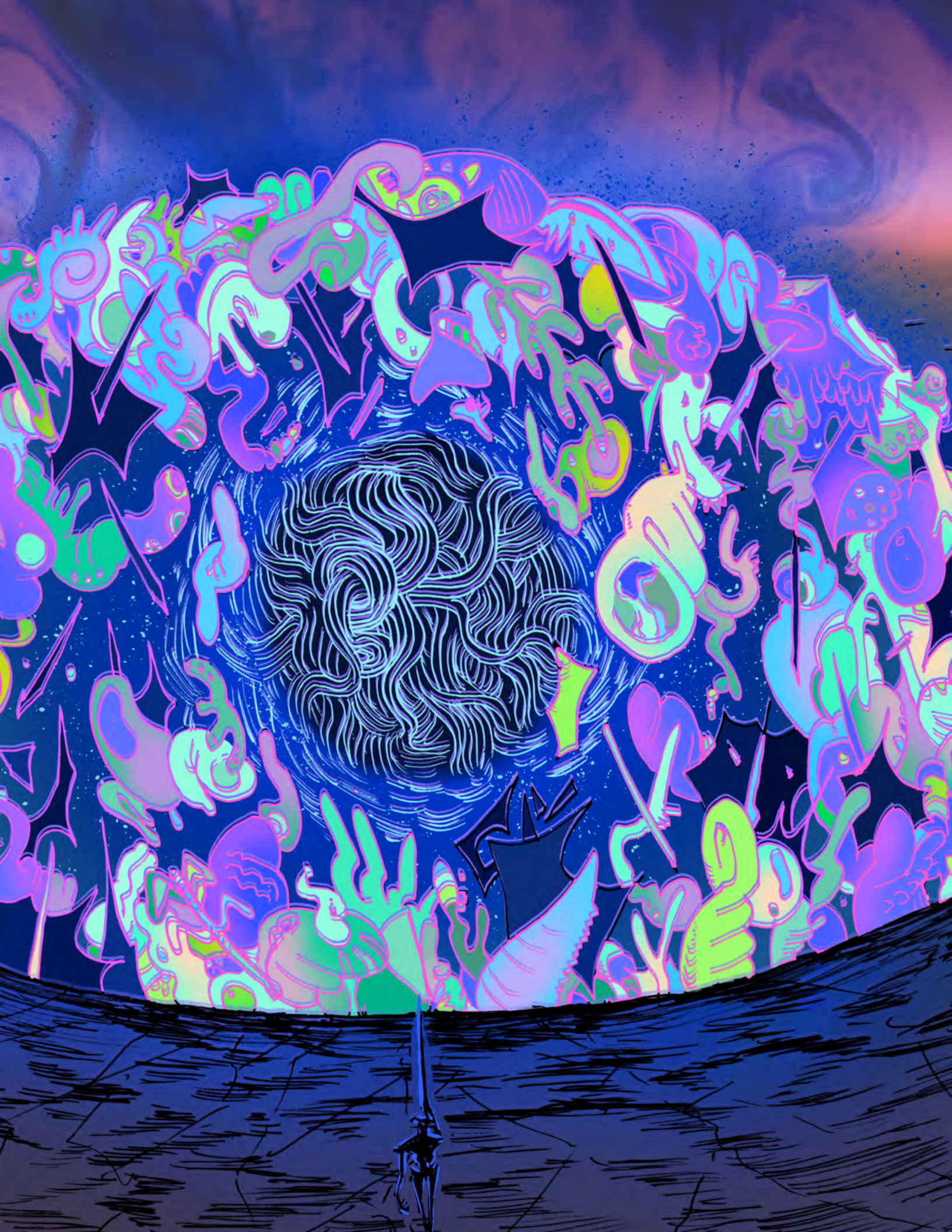
Enclosed with this report are summary explanations of observed eidolonic lamellae to date, along with relevant debrief transcripts where available.

```
SOURCE:              UIB/USB_KLEOS(SOLEMNVIGIL)
AUTHOR:              Aduacibus annue cœptis
REPORT COMPILED FOR: CENTCOMM, NAVCOMM, SOLEMN-VIGIL CLEARANCE
                     (LOWER-ORDER CLEARANCE ACCEPTABLE ON NEED-TO-KNOW BASIS).
```

APPENDIX

EIDOLONS AS ENEMIES

Eidolons are complex and otherworldly enemies meant to provide a unique, puzzle-like combat experience. They are fearsome foes that, at their most powerful, are more than the match for a whole group of lancers.

Each Eidolon is an NPC made up of several layers surrounding a core. They are classified by how many layers they have:

- **Class 1:** 3 layers plus the core layer
- **Class 2:** 4 layers plus the core layer
- **Class 3:** 5 layers plus the core layer

Each layer gives an Eidolon unique traits, systems, and weapons. One layer is active at a time, with a certain amount of **HP**, and they can be destroyed and "stripped", causing another layer to appear and changing the entire fight.

Once all layers have been destroyed, the Eidolon's vulnerable core is exposed and can be destroyed, defeating it for good.

Due to the unique way Eidolons affect the battlefield, they are designed as standalone enemies. Additionally, due to their existing complexity, Eidolons cannot have templates (e.g., Grunt, Ultra, etc) and can't be modified like normal NPCs. That said, higher-class Eidolons present longer and potentially more challenging fights, and Eidolons vary in tier like all other enemies.

SHARDS

Each layer of an Eidolon is accompanied by a number of shards that represent smaller foes or elements of the layer. When an Eidolon first appears or a new layers is revealed, place the specified number of shards (see the details of the layer in question) within free visible and valid spaces within ↗**5** of the Eidolon itself.

Each layer has a different number of shards, but unless specified otherwise, shards that aren't destroyed carry over from layer to layer, so groups that don't take them out quickly can easily become overwhelmed. Shards act on the same turn as the Eidolon but are otherwise considered separate characters.

BASE STATISTICS

The base statistics for the Eidolon and its shards persist from layer to layer, although some layers modify these in certain specific ways. For instance, they might give the active layer more **ARMOR** or **HP**.

Layers have **1 STRUCTURE** and **1 STRESS**, so they never make **structure or overheating checks**. Causing a layer to overheat makes it **EXPOSED** as normal.

EIDOLON LAYER

	TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3	
ALL STATS	+1	+2	+3	
HP	10	15	20	+5/PLAYER
SIZE	2	2	2	
ARMOR	0	0	0	
HEAT CAP	10	10	10	
EVASION	10	12	14	
E-DEFENSE	10	12	14	
SAVE TARGET	12	14	16	
SPEED	5	5	5	
SENSORS	20	20	20	

SHARD

	TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
ALL STATS	+1	+2	+3
HP	5	6	8
SIZE	1/2	1/2	1/2
ARMOR	0	0	0
HEAT CAP	5	5	5
EVASION	10	12	14
E-DEFENSE	10	12	14
SAVE TARGET	12	14	16
SPEED	5	5	5
SENSORS	20	20	20

PERSISTENT TRAITS

LAYER ORDER
Only one of the Eidolon's layers is active at a time and only the active layer is a valid target that can take damage.

METAMORPHOSIS
When the active layer reaches **0 HP**, that layer is destroyed, evaporating from the field. The Eidolon and its shards clear all statuses and conditions, and all other effects targeting them immediately end (including **Grapple**, etc). The Eidolon remains, occupying the same space and providing obstruction as a blurring, shifting image, but it and all its shards gain **Immunity to all damage and effects** until the start of its next turn. At the start of that turn, a new layer manifests and any effects specific to that layer begin (including the creation of new shards, etc).

PREDICTABLE
The Eidolon can take any actions available to an NPC (**Quick Tech**, **Hide**, etc.) but always performs any special actions available to its current layer first, if possible. Each layer profile presents a suggested order, but these are not mandatory. Unless stated otherwise, shards can only take a **standard move**.

MEMETIC WEAPONS
Eidolons have a new type of weapon: **Memetic** weapons. These ranged weapons ignore engagement and do not affect allied characters, even if they are caught in their area of effect.

BONUS ACTIVATIONS
Each round, the Eidolon takes one turn for every two mech characters hostile to it in the combat, to a maximum of **four turns**. It regains spent reactions at the start of each of its turns, though 1/round effects only refresh on its first turn each round.

OMINOUS HOVERING
The Eidolon and its shards can **fly** equal to their **Speed** and hover, but never willingly move more than **1 space** above the ground or any other surface. They never fall; if forced to land, they will always descend safely to the ground.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE
Scan (and other abilities that reveal an NPCs statistics) provide no information about the Eidolon or its shards. Instead, characters that **Scan** the Eidolon or try to reveal its statistics receive hints about the active layer's capabilities (listed in the layer profile under "Hints").

CORE LAYER
Beneath an Eidolon's layers is its core – its truest and most vulnerable form. The core has the following trait and weapon:

PULSING CORE
This layer is **Size 1/2** and has **1 HP**.

Anticausal Thought
Superheavy Memetic, AP, +2/+4/+6, +2 ✚
[✏ 10][15/20/25 ⚡]

The Eidolon's core has no shards. Any shards on the field when this layer is revealed are immediately vaporized, destroyed in the blink of an eye.

Once the core is destroyed, the Eidolon is defeated.

LAYERS
Before the combat, determine the Eidolon's layers, making clear notes about their order. The core will be the final part of the Eidolon the PCs face, preceded sequentially by the other layers. You may choose the layers or roll to randomly determine them using the table below. Layers can appear more than once.

- **Class 1 Eidolon:** 3 layers.
- **Class 2 Eidolon:** 4 layers.
- **Class 3 Eidolon:** 5 layers.

LAYER		ROLL 1D20	
1	Adamant	11	Purity
2	Blurred	12	Reflective
3	Fundamental	13	Canopy
4	Marine	14	Sacrificial
5	Enceladian	15	Screaming
6	Gaze	16	Siege
7	Rancorous	17	Stable
8	Labyrinthine	18	Tempest
9	Agony	19	Synchronous
10	Punishment	20	Abyssal

1: ADAMANT

REPORTED APPEARANCES

An infinite metallic lattice; a rigid bulwark of oily darkness; a confusion of needles suspended in space; a loved one, furious.

HINTS

The Eidolon bristles with kinetic energy. Its armor looks like it can be stripped through repeated attacks, but doing so might be dangerous.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon has **10/15/20 Armor**. Each time it takes damage, it loses **2 Armor**.

When the Eidolon's **Armor** is reduced by any means, including its own attacks, it releases a ⊙**2** explosion of debris around itself, dealing **2 ∅** to all objects and characters within the affected area.

SYSTEMS

Exhort
`Heavy Memetic, Seeking, +2, +1 ◈`
`[↗15][2/3/4 ∅ ]`

This weapon can attack two targets at a time.

On attack: the Eidolon loses **1 Armor**.

On hit: the target becomes **Shredded**. This condition lasts until the layer is destroyed, and cannot be removed in any other way. Characters that are already **Shredded** take **double damage**.

Metallic Shriek
`Trait, Quick Action`

The Eidolon produces a new shard in a free space within ↗**5**.

SHARDS   New shards: 2

At the end of the Eidolon's turn, all shards move up to their **Speed** toward the nearest hostile character but take no other action or movement.

Whenever the Eidolon loses **Armor**, each shard produces a ⊙**1** explosion of debris around itself, dealing **2 ∅** to all objects and characters within the affected area.

2: BLURRED

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A coherent pocket of rapid movement; a shimmering blindness; a person, rapidly aging but never decaying.

HINTS

The Eidolon will be easier to hit if it is **Slowed** or **Immobilized** (or if someone else is sped up).

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon is **moving rapidly**. This gives it **Evasion 20**, **Speed 10**, **Resistance to all damage** and **Immunity to Grapple**, and allows it to treat any **critical hits** on itself as normal hits.

If the Eidolon is **Slowed** or **Immobilized**, the Eidolon **stops moving rapidly**, ending these effects. This lasts until the end of the next character's turn.

The Eidolon can take a **quick action** at the end of each other character's turn. This is not a reaction. It can only use this special quick action to either **Boost** or use one of this layer's systems.

SYSTEMS

Dream-Logic Chronology
`Main Memetic, +0`
`[↗5][1 ⚡ ]`

This weapon automatically hits.

On hit: the target must succeed on an **Agility** save or become **Slowed** until the end of their next turn. Characters that are already **Slowed** or **Stunned** instead take **4/5/6 ⚡** .

Infinite Blur
`Trait, Quick Action`

A character within line of sight and ↗**5** takes **4 ⚡ AP**. As a side effect, they become supercharged with chronal energy. On their next turn, they gain **Immunity to Slowed and Stunned**, their **Speed** increases to **10** if it is slower, they can **Boost 1/turn** as a **free action**, and they treat the layer as if it isn't **moving rapidly**. This lasts until the end of their turn, at which point they are **Stunned** until the end of their following turn.

SHARDS   New shards: 3

At the start of the Eidolon's turn, its shards can move up to **2 spaces** in any direction, but they can't take any other actions. If the Eidolon moves through a space occupied by one of its shards, that shard is destroyed in a ⊙**2** explosion. Hostile characters within the affected area take **2 ⚡** and are **Slowed** until the start of their next turn.

3: FUNDAMENTAL

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A white, polished marble statue; a bruised and battered person dripping with corrosive oils; your father or mentor, terrified and weeping.

HINTS

To have any chance of harming this layer, its shards must be reunited by being pushed back together. It would be wise to stay close together.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon has **IMMUNITY to all damage and effects**.

When this layer manifests, **teleport** all shards to nonadjacent free spaces within ↗**5** of the Eidolon. The moment all shards are formed into one contiguous shape, the Eidolon is **STUNNED** until the end of its next turn. Additionally, it permanently loses the **IMMUNITY** granted by this layer.

SYSTEMS

Core Assumption
`Trait, Quick Action`

Up to three characters within line of sight and ↗**10** must succeed on **HULL** saves or take **4/5/7** ⌀ and be knocked back **3 spaces**.

Reunite
`Trait, Quick Action`

Two characters within line of sight and ↗**15** are pushed as far as possible in a straight line toward each other. Colliding with a shard or obstacle causes them to stop, otherwise they slam into each other and must each succeed on a **HULL** save. On a failure, they take **kinetic damage** equal to the number of spaces between them when this action was taken (up to a maximum of **10/14/18** ⌀) and are knocked **PRONE**. On a success, they take half damage and avoid being knocked **PRONE**.

SHARDS   New shards: 4/5/6

These shards cannot move or take actions on their own. They have **IMMUNITY to all damage and effects** except those specified below.

The shards can be pushed up to **3 spaces** in a straight line in any direction as a **quick action**. Hitting them with **ranged or melee attacks** also pushes them **1 space** in a direction of the attacker's choice. **KNOCKBACK** and **GRAPPLE** can also be used to move them.

When this layer is destroyed, all shards on the battlefield melt into inert puddles of water.

4: MARINE

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A deep depth lit from even deeper space; the white of an endless crashing wave; a water-bloated body, unidentifiable.

HINTS

Superheating this layer will easily destroy it.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon is **SIZE 3** and has **E-DEFENSE 5**, **HULL +6**, and **RESISTANCE to all damage**. Any melee weapon that successfully damages it has a **50%** chance of becoming stuck, rendering it unusable. While adjacent to the Eidolon, the attacker can retrieve their weapon by winning a contested **HULL** check as a **quick action**. Embedded weapons fall to the ground and can be retrieved as a **free action** from any adjacent space upon the layer's destruction.

If the Eidolon overheats, it permanently loses **RESISTANCE to all damage** and becomes **SLOWED**.

SYSTEMS

Drag Under
`Trait, Quick Action`

The Eidolon deals **4** ⌀ **AP** damage to any characters that it currently has **GRAPPLED** and then **GRAPPLES** another adjacent character. It can have any number of characters **GRAPPLED** at one time and can move and take reactions normally while doing so, no matter how many characters it has **GRAPPLED**.

Spit Out
`Trait, Quick Action`

The Eidolon violently ejects a **GRAPPLED** character from its grasp, ending the **GRAPPLE** and knocking them **5 spaces back**. If the target collides with a shard, it explodes. The shard is destroyed and the target must succeed on a **HULL** save or take **8/10/12** ⌀ and become **IMMOBILIZED** until the end of their next turn. On a success, they take **half damage** and there are no other effects.

Swallow
`Heavy Memetic, +1/+2/+3`
`[↗15][3/4/5⌀]`

On hit: the target must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or be pulled **5 spaces** directly toward the Eidolon, or as far as possible.

SHARDS   New shards: 4

Shards can be placed within ↗**8** of the Eidolon. All shards cannot move or take any actions, and each produces a ⊙**2** area of **difficult terrain** around itself in the form of a watery expanse of shifting gravity.

5: ENCELADIAN

REPORTED APPEARANCES

Pure white sea ice from which deep cracks sound; a gray haze through which blue light can be seen; a pane of steaming black glass, marbled with frost

HINTS

Staying hot will allow you avoid the worst of this layer's effects.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon has **2 ARMOR** and **RESISTANCE to all damage** from characters not in the **DANGER ZONE**.

SYSTEMS

Creeping Rime
`Trait`

Characters take **2/3/4** ⚡ if they are not in the **DANGER ZONE** at the start of their turn. This damage cannot be prevented or reduced in any way. Characters that are **IMMOBILIZED** take **double damage**.

Characters within this aura with **0** 🌡 at the end of the round become **IMMOBILIZED** by a thick layer of frost. As a quick action, a character can break free (or break an adjacent character free) by succeeding on a **HULL** check, ending this effect.

Ice Spear
`Heavy Memetic, Seeking, +1/2/3`
[🗡 10][3/5/6 ⌀]

This weapon does **double damage** against **IMMOBILIZED** targets.

Bonechill
`Trait, Quick Action`

The Eidolon batters a ⊙**2** area within line of sight and 🗡**15** with ice. Hostile characters within the affected area must succeed on a **HULL** save or take **3** ⌀ and clear **4** 🌡 . A swirling blizzard covers the affected area, making it difficult terrain and providing **soft cover** until this layer is destroyed. The Eidolon ignores this cover.

SHARDS   New shards: 4

All shards cannot move and can only attack with **LESSER ICE SPEAR**.

Lesser Ice Spear
`Auxiliary Memetic, +1/2/3`
[🗡 10][3 ⌀]

This weapon does **double damage** against **IMMOBILIZED** targets.

6: GAZE

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A single eye, unblinking; a being made from steady light; your mother or an analogous figure.

HINTS

You can hide behind the shards or use them for cover, but it might be necessary to expose yourself to this layer's effects to damage it.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon is permanently **IMMOBILIZED** and cannot move or be moved, even by external effects. It has **RESISTANCE** to all damage **from characters not standing in a VOID ZONE**.

SYSTEMS

Searing Reality
`Trait`

Characters take **2** ⚡ and **2** 🌡 if they are not in **hard cover** or a zone that grants **soft cover** at the start of their turn.

Strip Matter
`Trait`

At the start of every round, the Eidolon causes one shard to explode into a ⊙**1 VOID ZONE** of disintegrating space. Characters that either enter this space for the first time in a round or start their turn there take **3** ⚡ , which cannot be reduced in any way.

VOID ZONES do not block movement or line of sight, or provide cover, and objects, **DRONES**, and other **DEPLOYABLES** are instantly destroyed if they move or are placed within one. They last until the layer is destroyed.

Remove Functional Understanding
`Trait, Full Action`

The Eidolon projects a 🗡**30** beam of energy in any direction. Hostile characters in the affected area must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or take **8/10/12** ⚡ . On a success, or if they are in cover, they take **half damage**.

SHARDS   New shards: 4

Shards must be placed within 🗡**8** of the Eidolon but not within **3 spaces** of each other. They cannot move or take actions, and provide **hard cover** for all characters, allied and hostile.

7: RANCOROUS

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A greasy smear of dark smoke; a tear through which thousands of reaching hands attempt to grab you; your lover or object of affection, cruel.

HINTS

Survive. This layer only lasts a very short time, so taking purely defensive actions would be beneficial.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon has **IMMUNITY to all damage and effects**. If it is attacked, it screams loudly in fear and anger.

Regardless of how many turns the Eidolon takes, it only acts during its final turn in a round. It spends its other turns pulsing angrily in the same place. On its last turn in the round, it:

1. moves toward the closest character
2. attacks with **DISGUST**
3. activates **FURY** and then **GRIEF**, ignoring action limits
4. burns itself up in white-hot fire, destroying itself.

SYSTEMS

Disgust
Superheavy Memetic, Reliable 8, +6
[✏ 20][16 ✦]

This weapon can attack two targets within line of sight at a time. The damage it deals cannot reduce characters past **1 HP**.

Fury
Trait, Quick Action

Hostile characters within ✏ **5** must pass a **HULL** save or become **EXPOSED** and **SHREDDED** until they **STABILIZE**.

Objects, **DRONES**, and **DEPLOYABLES** within ✏ **5** take **30 ✦ AP**.

Grief
Trait, Quick Action

Any characters beyond ✏ **5** must succeed on an **ENGINEERING** save or take 5 🌡 and become **JAMMED** and **SLOWED** until they **STABILIZE**.

SHARDS   New shards: 2

Existing shards scream continuously until the layer is destroyed but take no other action.

8: LABYRINTHINE

REPORTED APPEARANCES

Perfect geometry, folding recursive in on itself; crisp paper, features defined by a single folded crease; a painted wooden door, visible from only one side.

HINTS

The Eidolon has an interface of some sorts that looks like someone could interact with it – a door, a console, a game board, or something similar.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon cannot move, has **IMMUNITY to all damage and effects**, and has **SYSTEMS +2/+4/+6**.

When this layer appears, draw a **3x3 grid** – the labyrinth – on a piece of paper and sequentially mark the rows **A/B/C** and the columns **1/2/3**. Secretly note down the coordinates of two of the nine spaces (i.e., **A1**, **B3**, etc.). As a **quick action**, characters adjacent to the layer or one of its shards can make two guesses about which spaces in the labyrinth contain a mark. Tell them if they are correct or not. When a character guesses both marks correctly in the same attempt, the layer is destroyed. For each incorrect guess, the Eidolon uses **INCORRECT** against them as a **reaction**, ignoring the 1/turn limit.

Each target (i.e., the Eidolon or one of its shards) can only be used to guess once per round.

SYSTEMS

Incorrect
Quick Tech, Smart, +2/+4/+6

1-2 characters within **SENSORS**, or a character that guessed incorrectly, take **3/4/5** 🌡 and are **knocked back 4 spaces** in a direction of the Eidolon's choice.

Superheated Logic
Trait

At the start of each round, all hostile characters take 1 🌡. This increases by 2 🌡 each round (3 🌡 in the second round, then 5 🌡, 7 🌡, etc.) up to 10 🌡.

Test
Memetic, Quick Tech

A character within **SENSORS** must play a game of rock, paper, scissors with the GM. If this isn't possible, the GM and the player each roll **1d6** and the highest roll wins (rerolling on ties). If the character wins, they can make a guess about the Eidolon's labyrinth (see **RULES**). If they lose, they become **STUNNED** until another character moves adjacent to them and ends this effect as a **quick action**.

SHARDS   New shards: 4

On their turn, the shards move as far away from hostile characters as possible while remaining within ✏ **8** of the Eidolon. They can take no other actions.

9: AGONY

REPORTED APPEARANCES

Polychromatic flashing lights; a shattered, mirrored surface; a thin, robed figure, silent and shivering.

HINTS

Using cover or the Eidolon's own shards will block this layer's powerful weapon.

RULES

While this layer is active, it has **IMMUNITY** to **SLOWED** and **IMMOBILIZED**, and cannot be **GRAPPLED**. It **teleports** when it moves and has **RESISTANCE to all damage**. On its turn, the Eidolon **teleports 5 spaces** then uses **BEGONE**. It takes no other actions.

SYSTEMS

Torment
Trait, Reaction, unlimited per round

Trigger: The Eidolon takes damage.

Effect: The Eidolon **teleports up to 5 spaces** to a space in line of sight. The character that damaged it must pass a **SYSTEMS** save or only have line of sight to adjacent spaces until the end of their next turn.

Begone
Trait, Full Action

A thin polychromatic beam connects the Eidolon to a character within line of sight, drawn as a line between them. The beam tracks the target with unerring accuracy. The Eidolon can have multiple beams active at the same time.

At the end of the target's turn, they must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or take **18/24/30 ⚡ AP** damage, after which this effect ends. On a success, they take **half damage**.

However, if the beam is interrupted by an obstacle or character, that object/character becomes the beam's new target until a different object/character passes through the beam. If the beam hits a shard, the shard's destroyed and the Eidolon shrieks, losing **RESISTANCE to all damage** until the end of the next round.

If an object interrupts the beam, a **SIZE 1** section is annihilated regardless of **HP**, blasted into dust.

SHARDS   **New shards: 6**

Shards attempt to move as close to hostile characters as possible, then attach to them when adjacent, sharing their space and mirroring their movement. While a character has a shard attached to them, they are **SHREDDED**, **IMPAIRED**, and take **2 ⚡** per shard attached at the start of their turn, but the shards will automatically interrupt the **BEGONE** weapon. They can remove any number of shards from themselves by succeeding on a **HULL** check as a **quick action**, pushing them off into adjacent spaces.

10: PUNISHMENT

REPORTED APPEARANCES

Tangled ropes, tightening without end; a whirlwind of chains; a rusted steel door, visible only from one side; a stone pillar, splattered with blood, behind which a figure peers out at you.

HINTS

IMMOBILIZED allies must be freed and must move close to the layer or take heavy damage.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon has **2 ARMOR**, **2 SPEED**, and **IMMUNITY to all damage and effects from IMMOBILIZED characters**.

At the start of each round, all hostile characters except one (chosen by the Eidolon) become **IMMOBILIZED**. Characters that were already **IMMOBILIZED** clear the condition. Characters **IMMOBILIZED** by this effect can only clear the condition if a non-**IMMOBILIZED** character moves next to them.

IMMOBILIZED characters cannot be knocked back by the Eidolon.

SYSTEMS

Release
Heavy Memetic, +2/+4/+6
[⟋ 15][3/4/5 ⌀]

This weapon can attack two targets within line of sight at a time. It deals **+3 ⌀** to **IMMOBILIZED** characters.

Discipline
Trait

Hostile characters beyond ⟋ 8 are **EXPOSED**. They can only clear this status by moving within ⟋ 8 of the Eidolon.

Scattering Lash
Trait, Quick Action

All hostile characters within line of sight and ⟋ 15 take **2 ⌀** and are knocked back **2 spaces** in a direction of the Eidolon's choice.

SHARDS   **New shards: 5**

The shards cannot move. As a **free action**, a character can destroy an adjacent shard, taking **1 ✳** damage and either taking **BOOST** immediately as a **free action** or clearing **IMMOBILIZED**.

11: PURITY

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A blank space from within which a single bell rings; a white void from which soft muttering issues; a perfectly clear prism.

HINTS

This layer seems to regenerate continuously. A burst of damage will be needed to destroy it, but destroying its shards will weaken it.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon has **1 HP**; however, when it first appears, and at the start of each of its turns, it gains **OVERSHIELD 10/15/20** and an additional **OVERSHIELD +5** for each shard within ↗**10**.

SYSTEMS

How Could You?
Main Memetic, AP, +1/+2/+3
[⊙2][2⚡]

On Hit: Targets are **IMPAIRED** until the end of their next turn.

Shame
Trait

When a character deals damage to a shard, the attacker takes **2⚡**. This damage cannot be prevented or reduced in any way.

Soft Ringing
Trait, Quick Action

The Eidolon moves spaces equal to its **SPEED**, then deals **1⚡** in a ⊙**2** area. Each time it takes this action in a combat, this damage increases by **+2⚡**, with no upper limit.

SHARDS   New shards: 3

The shards have **SPEED 2** and the only action they take is to move as far away from hostile characters as far as possible while remaining within ↗**10** of the layer. They attempt to move to within that range if they are further away.

As noted above, whenever the Eidolon gains **OVERSHIELD**, it gains an additional **OVERSHIELD +5** for each shard within ↗**10**.

12: REFLECTIVE

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A sheet of perfectly reflective glass; a liquid tear in space; you, as you want to be; you, as you fear yourself to be; you, as you could have been.

HINTS

Dealing energy damage or burn to this layer seems like a poor idea.

RULES

While this layer is active, any attack that deals any amount of ⚡ or 🔥 to the Eidolon has a **50%** chance to be redirected to the character closest to the Eidolon, potentially even the attacker. This check is made after the attack roll and all bonuses are applied, but before damage is dealt.

If an attack is reflected, it automatically misses the Eidolon; instead, if the result of the attack roll was high enough to hit the new target, it does so.

If multiple characters (including the Eidolon's shards) are the same distance from the Eidolon, the GM chooses who is targeted by the redirected attack.

SYSTEMS

Envy
Trait, Quick Action

All characters able to see the Eidolon must make a **SYSTEMS** save. On a failure, they must use their **standard move** to move as close to the Eidolon or any of its shards as possible and spend as many remaining actions as possible attacking the Eidolon or its shards.

Truth Spear
Main Memetic, +2/+4/+6
[↗5][4⚡]

If the line of this attack intersects with a shard, that shard projects the attack by an additional ↗**5** in a direction of the Eidolon's choice, increasing its area. This effect repeats if the extended **LINE** intersects with a new shard.

Refract
Trait, Quick Action

The Eidolon creates a new shard for every hostile character within ↗**3** of its location. These shards are warped images of those characters' pilots and appear adjacent to them.

SHARDS   New shards = # Hostile MECH Characters

The shards redirect **energy damage** and **burn** like the Eidolon. They move and take the following action:

Truth Spear
Auxiliary Memetic, Smart, +1/+2/+3
[↗5][2⚡]

13: CANOPY

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A wall of foliage; the abaxial surface of a leaf, crossed by veins of blood; a dirty, scratched crystalline plane, overgrown with moss.

HINTS

This layer seems to be harmed by the loss of its shards.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon can't move and has **Immunity to all damage and effects** other than damage dealt by its shards' **Linked** trait.

SYSTEMS

Overgrowth
Trait, Quick Action

The Eidolon creates **1d3 shards** in free spaces within ↗ **8**.

Detonate Splinter
Trait

At the start of the Eidolon's turn, one shard of its choice begins to glow with white-hot energy. Unless the shard is destroyed, it explodes at the start of the Eidolon's next turn. Characters within ◉ **2** must pass an **Agility** save or take **5/6/7** ✳ .

Empower Splinter
Trait, Quick Action

One shard of the **Eidolon**'s choice gains **Overshield 4/5/6** and **+1** ✚ on all attacks, and deals **+5 damage** with **Splintering Tendrils**.

SHARDS   New shards: 4

All shards have **1 HP**, **Heat Cap 1**, and **Speed 4**. They are destroyed if they overheat. When this layer is destroyed, all shards are destroyed along with it.

Splintering Tendrils
Auxiliary Memetic, AP, +1/2/3
[⚔ 1][2 ∅]

Linked
Trait

When a shard is destroyed, the Eidolon takes **2 damage** that can't be reduced or ignored in any way.

14: SACRIFICIAL

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A massive ruby; a dull basalt megalith; an open iron gate revealing a carpeted hallway that disappears into darkness.

HINTS

One character is linked to the Eidolon at a time. They must take damage in order to hurt this layer.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon has **Immunity to all damage** except any dealt by **Share Pain**.

SYSTEMS

Share Pain
Trait, Quick Action

The Eidolon chooses a character within line of sight and ↗ **10**, highlighting itself and its target in pulsing bright red light. That character gains **Resistance to all damage** and when they take damage, the Eidolon also takes an amount of damage equivalent to the full amount of damage that would have been dealt before any reductions (e.g., **Armor** and **Resistance**).

This ability can only affect a single character at a time, and the Eidolon must use this Quick Action on a different target at the start of each of its turns.

Rivalry
Trait, Quick Action

The Eidolon links two characters within line of sight and ↗ **10** together. Affected characters take **5** ⚡ damage and become **Stunned** at the end of their next turn until the end of their following turn unless they make an attack roll against the linked character or force that character to make a save. Linked characters are aware of this effect.

SHARDS   New shards: 4

The shards attempt to move as close to the character marked by the Eidolon's **Share Pain** trait as possible and then attack them.

Agony Spine
Auxiliary Memetic, +1/2/3
[↗ 5][3 ∅]

15: SIEGE

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A block of dull metal; an enormous wheel; darkness, lit by a distant flickering light; a cloud of buzzing insects.

HINTS

This layer builds up energy for some reason. You can stop it by making it crash into something.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon has **SPEED 6** and **2 ARMOR**, and deals triple damage to objects. It has **RESISTANCE to all damage** unless it is **PRONE**.

The Eidolon is immune to the **SLOWED** and **IMMOBILIZED** conditions and cannot be knocked **PRONE** except by its own shards.

The Eidolon can only move in straight lines.

SYSTEMS

Potential Energy
Trait, Full Action

The Eidolon remains in place, building energy. It targets the closest hostile character. All characters are aware of this effect.

Kinetic Energy
Trait, Full Action

This action can only be taken if the Eidolon used **POTENTIAL ENERGY** on its previous turn.

The Eidolon makes two movements equal to its **SPEED** toward the character it targeted with **POTENTIAL ENERGY**, freely passing through characters and objects other than shards.

Hostile characters in its path must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or take **8/10/12** ⌀ and be knocked **PRONE**. On a success, they take half damage and are not knocked **PRONE**. Either way, the Eidolon pushes them out of its path by the most direct route possible. Each character can only be hit by this action once each time it's used, even if they overlap.

Objects are hit by this action automatically.

If the Eidolon hits one of its own shards, it immediately stops moving and is knocked **PRONE**, ending its turn.

SHARDS   New shards: 4

The shards move toward as many separate hostile characters as possible and then use **BINDING FORCE**.

Binding Force
Trait, Quick Action

An adjacent hostile character must succeed on a **HULL** save or become **IMMOBILIZED** and unable to draw line of sight further than adjacent spaces. This lasts until the shard is destroyed or the shard and its target cease to be adjacent. The shard can take no other actions or movement while this effect is active.

16: SCREAMING

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A dark crystal, smoking shapes rippling beneath its surface; a person, trapped behind fogged glass; a wall of skin, something moving beneath its surface.

HINTS

This layer's screams don't seem to affect those who draw closer to it.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon has **SPEED 2**.

It ceaselessly screams in a distorted human voice. At the start of each round, all characters fully outside of ↗**3** but within ↗**50** of the Eidolon take **2 ⚡ AP**. This increases by an additional **+2 ⚡** each round, with no maximum.

SYSTEMS

Desperate Shriek
Main Memetic, Knockback 6, +1/2/3
[⊙1][5 ⚡]

Paralyzing Fear
Trait, Quick Action

One hostile character within ↗**5** must succeed on a **SYSTEMS** save or take **4/5/6 ⚡** damage and immediately use its reaction this turn to move a distance equal to its **SPEED** as far away from the layer as possible.

SHARDS   New shards: 4

The shards move as close as possible to the nearest hostile character and then attack them.

Keening Wail
Main Memetic, Knockback 1, Smart, +1/2/3
[⊙1][2 ⚡]

17: STABLE

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A deep blue planar prism; a rectangular marble column; a statue carved from granite.

HINTS

This layer seems to like consistency. Hitting it with a heavy weapon first might be to your benefit.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon has **45/55/65 HP**.

The Eidolon can only have one condition at a time and it immediately clears any existing condition as soon as it gains a new one. For example, if a **SLOWED** Eidolon is **GRAPPLED**, it becomes **IMMOBILIZED** as a result and immediately clears **SLOWED**.

Additionally, the first time the Eidolon takes damage in a round, it attunes to that damage. For the rest of the round, it:

- gains **IMMUNITY to all other damage types**
- deals only damage of that type
- takes and deals that amount of damage each time it takes damage.

SYSTEMS

Ordering Beam
`Main Memetic, +2/4/6`
`[↗6][X damage (special)]`

This weapon can attack two targets at a time, dealing damage of the type and amount to which the Eidolon is attuned.

Reorder
`Trait, Quick Action`

The Eidolon restructures the matter of a character within ↗ **6**, turning parts of them into glossy marble. They take **2 damage** of the type to which the Eidolon is attuned, clear all conditions, and then gain **OVERSHIELD 2**. This damage cannot be reduced or prevented in any way. Each time it takes this action in a scene, the damage dealt and **OVERSHIELD** gained both increase by **+2**, with no upper limit.

SHARDS — New shards = # Hostile MECH Characters

The shards move and attack normally.

Petrifying Beam
`Auxiliary Memetic, +3`
`[↗3][2 damage (special)]`

This weapon deals damage of the type to which the Eidolon is attuned.

18: TEMPEST

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A roiling stormcloud, rippling with lightning; a purple-white crystal; a lone figure, dripping steaming water.

HINTS

Bunching up against this layer might be a terrible idea, but overloading its shields with proximity might also be the only way to damage it.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon has **SPEED 3**, **IMMUNITY to IMMOBILIZED**, and **RESISTANCE to all damage**.

Hostile characters that start their turn adjacent to another character or object take **2/3/4 ⚡ AP**.

SYSTEMS

Batter and Toss
`Trait, Quick Action`

A character within line of sight and ↗ **10** must succeed on a **HULL** save or be pushed **6 spaces** in a direction of the Eidolon's choice. On a success, they are only pushed **3 spaces**.

Feedback
`Trait`

If the Eidolon starts or ends its turn adjacent to two or more hostile characters, it disrupts its own shielding, losing **RESISTANCE** to all damage until the end of the current round.

Photon Diadem
`Trait, Quick Action`

A character within line of sight and ↗ **10** must succeed on an **AGILITY** save or take **6/8/10 ⚡**. Either way, this effect repeats against another character within ↗ **3** of the first. This effect continues to chain from one character to another as long as there are valid targets in range, but each character can only be affected once per use.

SHARDS   New shards: 4

The shards can move and **BOOST** but take no other actions. They do, however, count as characters for the purpose of **PHOTON DIADEM** and this layer's rules, although they take no damage from the layer.

APPENDIX

19: SYNCHRONOUS

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A mirror image of this same space, distorted in a pane of glass; a mirror in which you see your reflection from behind; a mirror in which you can see nothing.

HINTS

Only the person synced to the layer seems to be effective against it.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon has **Resistance to all damage from other characters** and **Immunity to all other conditions and effects**. The synced character (see below) ignores this restriction.

At the start of its turn, the Eidolon syncs with the closest hostile character. Its attacks and effects can only target the synced character. It attempts to move as close to them as possible.

If a character is synced for two of their consecutive turns, they become **Exposed** at the start of their turn. They can only clear this condition if a new character becomes synced or the Eidolon is destroyed.

SYSTEMS

Horrible Realization
Main Memetic, Reliable 5, +2/3/4
[⚔ 5][8/10/12 ✷ (special)]

This weapon only deals **1 ✷** to characters other than the synced character.

On hit: The target becomes **Slowed** until the end of their next turn.

Sympathetic Healing
Trait, Quick Action

The synced character and the Eidolon both gain **Overshield 4**. The Eidolon must take this action if possible.

SHARDS   New shards: 3

The shards attempt to move as close to the synced character as possible. They can take standard moves but no other actions.

The synced character gains **+1 ⊖** on all attacks, checks, and saves for every shard within ↗ **3**.

20: ABYSSAL

REPORTED APPEARANCES

A voidspace; the accretion disk of a black hole, ringed by dying light; a starfield of incredible depth.

HINTS

This layer uses its shards as decoys. They are fragile and easily crushed, unlike the real thing.

RULES

While this layer is active, the Eidolon is **Size 1/2**, permanently **Invisible**, and **teleports** when it moves.

As soon as this layer manifests, pitch black darkness blankets the entire battlefield and the Eidolon **teleports** to a point within line of sight and ↗ **8**. Characters other than the Eidolon and its shards cannot draw line of sight to or target anything further away than ↗ **2**. However they do share line of sight with allied characters and can make attacks against targets within ↗ **2** of them, allowing them to act as spotters for each other.

The precise locations of the Eidolon and its shards are not revealed on the map unless a hostile character moves within ↗ **2** of them. Characters that are targeted by **APPETITE** are aware of the cardinal direction the attack came from, but not the precise location.

SYSTEMS

APPETITE
Heavy Memetic, Ordnance, Reliable 3, +2/4/6
[↗ 10][2 ⚡]

Each time this weapon is fired, its damage increases by an additional **+2**, with no maximum. The Eidolon can use **APPETITE** from its true location or from the location of any of its shards.

Conjure Shade
Trait, Quick Action

The Eidolon creates two new shards in free spaces within line of sight and ↗ **3**.

SHARDS   New shards: 2

New shards are created in free spaces within ↗ **3** of the Eidolon's location after appearing and teleporting for the first time

When it first appears, the Eidolon can redeploy any active shards to any free space within ↗ **3**.

The shards have **1 HP**, are **Invisible**, are destroyed if they fail a save or take **heat**, and cannot move or take any actions, although the layer can use their positions to fire its **APPETITE** memetic.

If the Eidolon is successfully hit by an attack or effect, all active shards are immediately destroyed (although it can still create new ones).

EIDOLONS

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APPENDIX

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BEAT INDEX

NPC INDEX

SOLO TERRA

Elevation

Forest

Kilometers

L. Grenal

L. Gaol

R. Bulor

R. Stillness

L. Terada

R. Sorrow

L. Palmer

R. Isen

R. Straight

EASTNESS MASSIF
3,267m

L. Planow

L. Smith

L. Omura

R. King

L. Hartidan

L. Pleiades

R. Harbonne

R. Fanow

R. Stilhuven

R. Landmark

Tower 2

Evergreen

Landing Boul

Tower 1

M. Cooper
3,223m

Merricktown

Chau Farm

Liu Maize

R. Arbor

R. Calthorp

R. Highbright

Tower 3

R. Leatbright

R. Stilvan

L. Kumata

L. Briggs

BAY
of Halfun

L. Douglass

BAY
of Swailes

BAY
of Nimrock

LAGUNAN STRAIT