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LANCER

SHADOW OF THE WOLF

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FOR BILLY, WHO FOUGHT FOR US

LANCER

SHADOW

OF THE

WOLF

A TWO-PART MISSION SERIES
FOR LANCER PILOTS
STARTING AT LLO



MASSIF

CONTENTS

SECTION 0

INTRODUCTION 6

OVERVIEW	8
PREPARATION	8
BOOK STRUCTURE	9
CONTENT AND THEMES	9

SECTION 1

SETTING PRIMER 10

THRONE KARRAKIS	12
THE HOUSES AND THE CONCERN	14
A HISTORY OF KARRAKIS	16
RELIGION AND THE PASSIONS	18
THE BARONIC MILITARY	19
THREATS TO THE BARONIES	20
THE UNGRATEFULS	20
HARRISON ARMORY	20

SECTION 2

THE KARRAKIN CAVALRY COLLEGE 22

RECRUITMENT 25

THE SYLLABI 25

THE CAMPUS 26

THE LYKEON	26
THE GARDENS	26
THE STABLES	28
THE DUELING FIELDS	28

TRADITIONS 29

BANQUETS AND MEALS	29
FORMAL BALLS AND DANCES	29
DUELING	29
BOND READINGS	29
PANKRATION MEKANI	29

SECTION 3**SHADOW OF THE WOLF 30**

SUMMARY	32
RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN	33
SESSION ZERO	33
CREATING CHARACTERS	33
NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS	36
RELATIONSHIP CLOCKS	36
HANDLING RELATIONSHIPS	36
ROMANCE AND SEXUALITY	37
FACULTY	38
OTHER NOTABLE FACULTY	40
STUDENTS	41
OTHER STUDENTS	46
SAMPLE CLASSES	47

MISSION 1: NO POINTS FOR SECOND PLACE 48

BEAT 1: UNFASHIONABLY LATE	49
BEAT 2: THORNS AMONG ROSES	50
COMBAT 1: KNOW YOUR PLACE	52
BEAT 3: NEW BLOOD	54
COMBAT 2: PANKRATI, CHARGE	56
BEAT 4: DOWN TO BUSINESS	58
BEAT 5: UNFRIENDLY COMPETITION	59
COMBAT 3: TRIAL BY FIRE	60
COMBAT 4: THE HARLEQUIN'S KNIFE	62
BEAT 6: AFTERMATH	65
DOWNTIME: CALM BEFORE THE STORM	67

MISSION 2: THEY SHALL COME ALL FOR VIOLENCE 68

BEAT 7: THE FALL OF A SPARROW	70
COMBAT 5: LIVE-FIRE EXERCISE	72
BEAT 8: THE SHADOW LOOMS LONG	75
BEAT 9: MEAT FOR THE GRINDER	76
COMBAT 6: ENTER SAND-MEN	78
BEAT 10: HAND OVERPLAYED	81
COMBAT 7: DYNAMIC ENTRY	84
COMBAT 8A: BALLROOM BLITZ	87
COMBAT 8B: PERFECT PARRY	90
BEAT 11: THE WHEEL TURNS	92

WRAPPING UP AND NEXT STEPS	93
CHANGING THE WORLD	93
CONTINUING THE STORY	93

SECTION 4:**APPENDICES 94**

APPENDIX I: PLAYER OPTIONS	96
BACKGROUNDS	96
GEAR	97
EXOTIC GEAR	97
APPENDIX II: NEW MECHS	99
TARAXACUM	100
HECATONCHEIRES	102
TAGETES	104
APPENDIX III: NEW BONDS	106
THE FIREBRAND	106
THE CELEBRANT	108
THE KNAVE	110
THE SENESCHAL	112



SECTION 0
INTRODUCTION



OVERVIEW

It is 5016u on Karrakis, a world that has carried the bright flame of humanity undimmed since the long-ago, faraway days of Old Earth. Despite this legacy, the people of Karrakis look to the future. The education of their future leaders in the arts of politics, governance, and warfare is essential to carrying that legacy forward and ensuring that Karrakis is not swept away by the many challenges of galactic politics.

Among these challenges is the prospect of war in the distant Dawnline Shore, an area of space where ancient Karrakin claims and long-established colonial worlds are being challenged once more by an upstart corporation given too long a leash. But the Shore – important as it is to Karrakin honor and the Karrakin people – is far removed from the central worlds of the Baronic Concern and its ancient capital. Here and now, in the city of Throne Karrakis, there are pilots to train in the noble tradition of mechanized cavalry warfare. Welcome, kavaliere, to the Karrakin Cavalry College!

Shadow of the Wolf is a two-mission mission series for *Lancer*, following a group of students at the most prestigious finishing school for mech pilots in the Orion Arm. Here, pilots learn the noble arts of the kavaliere, compete for glory and honor, and study the finer intricacies of operating mechanized chassis as tools of war.

In *Shadow of the Wolf*, players will face the perils of Karrakin high society alongside combat both sporting and deadly. They will make helpful friends and powerful enemies, and may find themselves caught up in a political game that threatens to alter the course of Karrakin society – and maybe even the galaxy.

PREPARATION

Shadow of the Wolf is designed to be run by a GM (game master) for 3–5 players, though it can be run for more or fewer with some adjustment. The GM will need a copy of the full *Lancer* Core Rulebook, as it contains important setting material and background information, as well as the sitreps and statistics for the non-player characters (NPCs) required to run mech combat. It is possible to run this mission series without any other Massif product, though you may wish to reference the *Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies* for more details about the setting of this mission series.

Players can play through *Shadow of the Wolf* with either the paid or free version of *Lancer* – available at [MASSIF-PRESS.ITCH.IO](https://massif-press.itch.io) – as both contain everything they need to create, manage, and handle their characters as they progress. We highly recommend using *Lancer*'s companion app, Comp/Con, to create characters and manage encounters. Comp/Con is available for free at [COMPCON.APP](https://compcon.app), along with all player-facing content from this book and other Massif Press releases.

When creating player characters (PCs) for *Shadow of the Wolf*, assume that they have good reasons for being admitted to the Baronies' most prestigious college for mech pilots, whether it be through merit, politics, or family connections. PCs will be adults, and most will have some form of combat experience, but they begin the game at **License Level 0 (LL0)** – not yet the elite pilots they will one day become.

If you are the GM, it would be best to familiarize yourself with the mission series in advance. This will help you to facilitate the narrative outlined in this book. The structure of the story – missions, enemy combatants, downtimes, and opportunities to perform **FULL REPAIRS** – is designed according to that narrative, but you can adjust, change, or expand this based on the preferences and expectations of your group.

BOOK STRUCTURE

This book contains setting material for running *Lancer* games set at the Karrakin Cavalry College, and a mission series that can be used to take players from **LLO** up to **LL2**. This mission series can either be run as a self-contained narrative, or used as a starting point for further adventures.

The book is split into four sections:

Section 1: Setting Primer (p. 10) introduces the Karrakin Trade Baronies and contains information relevant to running games of *Lancer* in Baronic space. It summarizes key facts about Karrakin society and the political tensions that will be familiar to those who live within it.

Although neither are necessary to run this mission series, both *Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies* and *Lancer: Battlegroup* are useful references for playing through *Shadow of the Wolf*. *Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies* contains a wealth of information on the history and culture of the Baronies and the Karrakin people, while *Battlegroup* includes an overview of the worlds of the Dawnline Shore and the coming war.

Section 2: The Karrakin Cavalry College (p. 22) is a primer for the College itself. It discusses the College as an institution – its role in Baronic society, its traditions, and its relationship to the Baronic Unified Command (BUC). It also details what students can expect from their experience at the College, from recruitment through to teaching, the material in its syllabi, testing, and graduation.

Section 3: Shadow of the Wolf (p. 30) presents the titular mission series *Shadow of the Wolf*. It is made up of two missions, including narrative scenes and combats along with some guidance for tying them together into a coherent story. This section is intended primarily for GMs. **If you intend to play this mission series, we recommend skipping this section** as it contains information that might spoil your enjoyment of the story.

Section 4: Appendices (p. 94) contains new player options for use in your games of *Lancer*. This includes new character backgrounds, pilot gear, variant **FRAMES**, and bonds for use with the optional Bonds system from *Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies*.

CONTENT AND THEMES

Player safety should be paramount in any roleplaying game. A good way to support player safety is to host a “session zero” (see p. 33) before you begin, to ensure that everybody at your table is on the same page when it comes to handling the content and themes of the game.

In particular, it is important to discuss how you will handle some of the sensitive and potentially distressing issues that are likely to appear in the narrative. These topics include depictions and discussions of **war, violence, imperialism, classism, institutional oppression, terrorism, manipulation, bullying, false accusations, drug use, and psychological trauma**.

Shadow of the Wolf presents a narrative set in the very heart of empire and privilege. It intentionally highlights the deeply ingrained structures and systems of oppression at the heart of the Karrakin Trade Baronies. As part of this, it positions PCs as both beneficiaries and ultimately victims of those structures and systems. The narrative invites you to critically explore concepts of nobility and chivalry, and the institutions that turn young people into tools of oppression. It is a response to romantic ideals sold to children and adults alike: ideals and aesthetics of war found in depictions of the knight and the fighter ace, used to obscure and valorize the ugly truths of war.

Although *Shadow of the Wolf* takes place in a fantastical, science fiction setting, it is inspired by the real world. The privileges that accrue to those with social connections and wealth are both a symptom and a cause of many injustices in modern society. These privileges are supported by institutions that uphold harmful structures of class and social hierarchy through tradition, unexamined bias, and complex webs of social and political interdependence.

Further, the abuses of empire and colonialism are pervasive and ongoing, and often accompanied by the specter of war. The effects of wars on those who fight in them, those who die in them, and those who must live with their consequences are very real and not to be treated lightly.

As you tell your story, be mindful of the themes you draw upon and their analogs in the real world. Be especially aware of the ways these issues can affect the people around your table, and take care of each other. Together, seek to tell stories that stand in solidarity against injustice and abuse, and strive for a better world.

*“My friend, you would not tell with such high zest
To children ardent for some desperate glory,
The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est
Pro patria mori.”*

– Wilfred Owen, 1920

For further discussion of the themes of the *Lancer* setting and how to handle them within your game, see the section, “On Content, Discomfort, and *Lancer*” (*Lancer*, p. 337).



SECTION 1
SETTING PRIMER



THRONE KARRAKIS	12
THE HOUSES AND THE CONCERN	14
A HISTORY OF KARRAKIS	16
RELIGION AND THE PASSIONS	18
THE BARONIC MILITARY	19
THREATS TO THE BARONIES	20

THRONE KARRAKIS

By the reckoning of Baronian historians, Throne Karrakis stands as the oldest continuously inhabited human city in existence. There are few cities that could challenge that claim – perhaps only fair Laurent, mercifully spared destruction during the Last Argument, or perhaps Dhamshala on Earth, preserved from before the Fall – but none that can challenge Throne Karrakis as a seat of singular power. From its founding in the days when the children of the Apollo first set foot on their new world, to its rebirth under Passacaglia and its eminence as the seat of first Annorum, then the New Federation, and finally the Federal Karrakin Monarchy, Throne Karrakis is perhaps the greatest city to ever exist.

The vast metroswathe that has expanded for well over ten thousand years from the original colonial site is now home to billions. To live in Throne Karrakis is to live at the beating heart of what is an interstellar empire in all but name, surrounded by glittering wealth, the weight of history and tradition, and humanity in all its aspects. An old saying holds that, “the lights of Karakiz never dim – such that one born under them might never see the night sky, but know they have inherited the stars”.

Throne Karrakis is both a symbol and an expression of the power of Karrakin rule. Its sheer scale, in stark contrast to the limited urbanization of Earth, is a monument to a vision of humanity that collects and centralizes power. The palaces and institutions at its heart are idealized as shining beacons of human achievement by traditionalists, and prized by those who seek to exercise those institutions’ influence. They are also constant reminders that for all the reforms across the history of Karrakis, it is a society built on the foundations of hierarchy, privilege, and control.

So too is Karrakin society built on tradition, and nowhere is that more apparent than at its very center. From Throne Karrakis, the House of Order and its many minor houses support the functioning of the Karrakin state through labyrinthine bureaucracies and time-trodden public ceremony. The House’s palaces and governmental estates are the seats upon which the greater administrative system of the Karrakin monarchy are built, and they support many worlds and peoples beyond the ancient skies of Old Karakiz. Those who engage with this apparatus, noble and ignoble alike, are subject to endless protocols and ceremonies, but such is true for much of Karrakin life – tradition suffuses everything from religious practice to rites of passage; the customs of one’s house; and the daily rituals of home, work, and travel.

In this gigantic metropolis all the amenities and luxuries a person could possibly desire lie within arm’s reach, and it is a point of pride that the residents of Throne Karrakis lack for nothing. All the various peoples of the Trade Baronies and most of those beyond are represented here in some fashion. This diversity is expressed through myriad forms of recreation and entertainment, exotic cuisines, cultural and social centers, skilled artisans of all kinds, places of worship both prominent and esoteric, beautiful public spaces, and more around every winding street corner. To visitors amazed by its unprecedented scale and variety, it quickly becomes clear why some consider Throne Karrakis to be the true capital of humanity.

KARRAKIS AT A GLANCE

HOMEWORLD

Karrakis

UNION RING

Ring 1/Rocky Mountain Line

BLINK ACCESS:

Grand Teton Station, serving Karrakis; Uinta Station, serving Khayradin; Bitterroot Station, serving Ispahsalar

CAPITAL CITY

Throne Karrakis, Karrakis

HEAD OF STATE

Prime Baron (elected by the Baronic Council)

GOVERNMENT HEAD

Premier (elected by the Ignoble House)

GOVERNMENT TYPE

Federal, constitutional elective monarchy with a bicameral legislature made up of an upper house (the Baronic Council) and a lower house (the Ignoble House)

KARRAKIN WORLDS

The Baronies' core worlds are called the Baronic Concern. The frontier of Baronic expansion, the Dawnline Shore, on the other hand, is known to Karrakins as the Baronic Interest.

Union's capital world, Cradle, is known to Karrakins as Earth. They consider the planet Karrakis to be the cultural center of the galaxy and the capital of humankind – not Earth. Cradle is recognized as the birthplace of humanity, but Karrakins consider the mass exodus during the Fall to mark the end of Earth's claim to humanity's heart.

THE CONCERN

Arrudye (House of Remembrance, Liberal)
 Karrakis (House of Order, Federalist)
 Ispahsalar (House of Glass, Federalist)
 Tilimsan (House of Sand, Hagiographic)
 Eyalet-a (House of Smoke, Federalist)
 Khayradin (House of Stone, Hagiographic)
 Umara (House of Water, Republican)
 Begum (House of Moments, Federalist)
 Bo (House of Dust, Republican)
 Dawnline Shore/The Interest
 San Simeon (House of Promise, Republican)

GIVEN NAME

When speaking of the people of the Karrakin Trade Baronies, there are numerous social codes, titles, and demonyms to hold in mind. Generally speaking, citizens and subjects of the major houses, whether in the Concern or the Interest, can be called "Karrakin" by those from Union, other states or corpro-states, and so on.

That said, although Karrakin might be acceptable shorthand for someone from the Baronies, that person would likely express their desire to be called by the demonym relevant to their homeworld – for example, someone from Khayradin would say they are Khayradi, someone from Eyalet-a would say they are Eyaleti, someone from Umara would say they are Umaran, and so on.

The particularities of social status add another level of complexity. Members of the Baronies' noble classes tend to insist on proper address from Baronic subjects and citizens. When interacting with outsiders, desire for exactitude in address is a spectrum: some nobles demand strict adherence to protocol and will take pains to have their staff inform any potential audiences of those protocols, while others may accept recognition in the form of a simple "lord", or similar.

ANNORUM

Periods of Karrakin history are organized by annorum. Annorum are a Karrakin form of dynastic, fate-sourced absolute monarchy. Best imagined as an imperial arrangement, the concept implies a certain state of thought, being, and myth in addition to the era and form of rule. Annorum can extend far beyond the reign of a single ruler, though they are often thought of as being instigated or "torn" into being by the actions of a particular fated person.

Annorum can be used in a different context as a political equivalent to empire, or even in reference to the ruling family. An Annorum's leader is an "Anno", though "Emperor" is often used and understood to be an equivalent rank.

DATES

Dates in this book are in Union Standard Years, in which "u" refers to the current Union era and "bu" refers to the time before Union era. Years are measured according to Cradle standard (365 days/year).

THE HOUSES AND THE CONCERN

The central worlds of the Baronic Concern (and, to a greater or lesser extent, the distant worlds of the Dawnline Shore, known as the Baronic Interest) are ruled by a collection of great houses. This system of government was instituted three thousand years ago in the wake of an event known as the Dynastyclade. The Dynastyclade brought an end to the singular, imperial rule that had defined Karrakis and her colonies during the Annorum Passacaglia and Annorum Tyrannus.

Today, the so-called “major houses” are more like planetary governments than they are the feudal dynasties most outsiders associate with the Baronies. They remain subject to the Federal Karrakin Monarchy and the Baronic Council, but exercise near-absolute sovereignty over their own domains.

Given the scale of their holdings it is hard to speak about the major houses in anything but the broadest political terms. The arch-conservative Hagiographic Houses of Stone and Sand maintain the traditions of old, including strict attitudes toward nobility and social station. By contrast, the abolitionist Republican Houses of Water and Dust have thrown off the traditional systems of nobility and ignobility, replacing them with representative democracies. Between these poles are the moderate Federalist houses, which seek to strike a balance between the two. The balance of power in the Baronies stands on a knife-edge, with the social upheaval of the last few centuries threatening Republican revolution across the Concern.

Within the major houses are the so-called “minor houses”, although the term means different things depending on the political context. Within traditionalist major houses, minor houses are the ancient and entrenched feudal institutions of nobility, privilege, and inheritance that often spring to mind in discussions about Karrakin politics. In more progressive houses, minor houses are democratic institutions that take the role of local governments or district administrations.

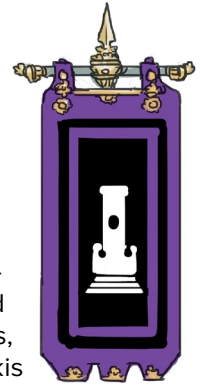
Minor houses constantly jockey with each other for status and influence within the major houses to which they belong, though their power varies wildly. Minor houses can range from the smallest families, struggling to maintain their reputations, to ancient and powerful dynasties with power over cities, moons, or entire colonial concerns.

THE HOUSE OF ORDER

World: Karrakis

Politics: Federalist

Tasked with maintaining the apparatus of the Karrakin state, the House of Order is a moderate house that emphasizes administration, bureaucracy, and ritual. The oldest of the major houses, the House of Order governs Karrakis itself and has a reputation for stubborn traditionalism.



THE HOUSE OF STONE

World: Khayradin

Politics: Hagiographic

Hailing from the ancient world of Khayradin, the House of Stone is a proud, independent, and conservative house that seeks to lead the Baronies. The House's vision for the future is one of strength and prosperity built on Karrakin military and industrial power.



THE HOUSE OF SAND

World: Tilimsan

Politics: Hagiographic

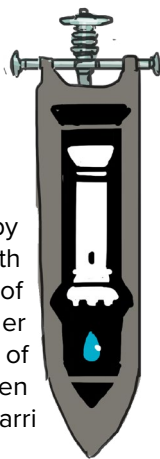
The conservative House of Sand rules over a harsh desert world filled with great mineral riches. Members of the House have a reputation for ambition, manipulation, and scheming – with the fabled “Sand-men” feared as some of the most effective spies and assassins in Baronic space.



THE HOUSE OF SMOKE

World: Eyalet-a
Politics: Federalist

The distant moon of Eyalet-a is governed by the House of Smoke, a moderate house with a special interest in the uncanny sciences of thanatology, homunculi, and other, stranger things besides. The House has a history of ennobling promising candidates and even contains a minor house comprised of Sparri immigrants.



THE HOUSE OF WATER

World: Umara
Politics: Republican

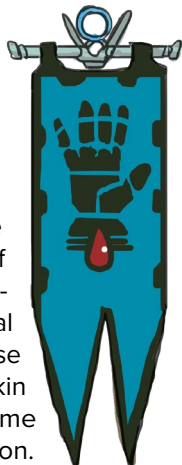
The first house to throw off the strictures of nobility, the House of Water is now a representative democracy based on the backwater world of Umara. Bombed into oblivion some three thousand years ago, Umara is slowly recovering on reclaimed land. The House of Water is notable for both the quality of its scientists and a fierce commitment to Republican ideals.



THE HOUSE OF MOMENTS

World: Begum
Politics: Federalist

The House of Moments is a moderate house based on the bitterly cold world of Begum. Among Begum's countless canyons can be found not only the medical and cloning programs for which the House is famous, but also the center of Karrakin religion: the fabled Xenoglossary, home of the augurs and the Stygos Grammaton.



THE HOUSE OF DUST

World: Bo
Politics: Republican

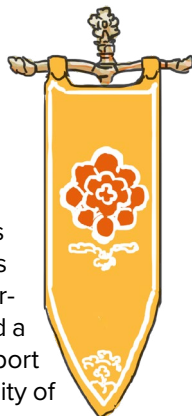
The slowly dying moon of Bo was once home to the state of the art in terraforming technologies, kept under the watchful eye of the House of Dust. In response to Republican reforms a monarchist attack released uncontrolled terraforming nanites that have continued to eat away at its surface ever since.



THE HOUSE OF GLASS

World: Ispahsalar
Politics: Federalist

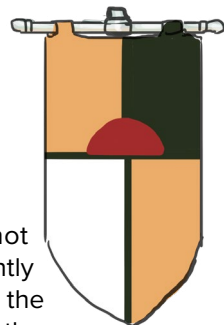
The moderate House of Glass governs a refined world of glittering arcologies and resorts from which it influences Baronic culture and fashion. It has cultivated a reputation for both excellence in the sport of pankration mekani and the high quality of its celebrity competitors, the pankrati.



THE HOUSE OF PROMISE

World: San Simeon (Dawnline Shore)
Politics: Likely Republican

Not strictly a house, or at least not yet. The House of Promise is currently petitioning to be the first addition to the ranks of the major houses in nearly three millennia. Its progress is stymied by its location in the distant Dawnline Shore as well as its Republican politics.



THE HOUSE OF REMEMBRANCE

World: Arrudye
Politics: Liberal

Karrakis' moon, Arrudye, is governed by the reformist House of Remembrance. Its carefully curated surface hosts not only the seat of the Federal Karrakin Navy, but the House's Grand Archive – a great treasury of political and historical records dating back to the Annorum Passacaglia.



Further information on each of the major houses can be found on pages 48–58 of *Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies*.

A HISTORY OF KARRAKIS

This timeline is excerpted from *Fiama Eterane*, a historical primer distributed to non-Karrakin students prior to formal matriculation at the Karrakin Cavalry College. By convention, dates are labeled “bu” (“before Union”), or “u” (“Union Era”), marked from Union’s foundation¹.

6000bu: The *Apollo* – the first of ten generation ships built before the Fall – leaves a dying Earth.

5800bu: The *Apollo* arrives on planet KA-02B, named Karrakis, establishing a colony that would become the seed of the longest continuous human civilization in existence.

5500bu: Earth is claimed by the Fall, leaving Karrakis as the sole light in the darkness.

5500bu–4900bu: The planetary administration of Karrakis asserts autocratic control, triggering the Melee: a conflict that tore Karrakis apart and left it in the hands of petty warlords and despots.

4900bu: A peasant farmer named Passacaglia retakes the ancient colony-city Karrakis with a band of soldiers, conquers the other cities, and unites the world under the Annorum Passacaglia – a dynasty that would last nearly 7000 years.

4900bu–3000bu: The Early Passacaglian Period. Karrakis experiences a technological renaissance as many technologies lost during the Melee are rediscovered. Arrudye is colonized.

3000bu–1u: The High Passacaglian Period. Khayradin, Ispahsalar, and other old worlds of the Concern are colonized, as Karrakis reaches for the stars.

1u–1908u: The Low Passacaglian Period. Karrakis struggles with corruption, incompetent rulership, and the fraying of the infrastructure essential for the administration of an interstellar empire.

1908u: The Antiannorum. Khayradin announces secession from the Annorum, declares its own Anno, and ceases its tithe to Karrakis.

1970u: General Tyran of Dellamar is sent with a huge military force to resolve the Khayradi secession and bring the world back under Karrakin control, but halts when he receives word of a succession crisis on Karrakis.

2000u: The Last Argument of Kings. Tyran returns to Karrakis, finds no clear successor to the Annorum Throne, and invades. He takes Throne Karrakis and declares the Annorum Tyrannus.



1 During the New Federation Era, Karrakis replaced its calendar with one based on Union’s founding. This “retemporalization” continues to be a sore spot for Neo-Passacaglians, Karrakin separatists, and other conservatives.

2003u–2017u: The Succession War. Tyran, now Tyrannus, begins to reconquer the Concern, sending his son Tagetes to reunify Karrakis' colonies. Meanwhile, Tyrannus fully pacifies Karrakis and purges the remnants of the Annorum Passacaglia.

2025u: Tyrannus issues the Dynastyclade – an announcement severing the Annorum after the passing of his daughter Calendula, whose reign would be spent reconstituting Karrakin society.

2089u: Calendula institutes the system of major and minor houses, and begins the transition into the New Federation Era.

2805u: The New Federation makes first contact with the survivors of Old Earth: Union. The political and cultural repercussions resound across Karrakis as the New Federation seeks integration.

2885u–3000u: The First Union–Karrakin War. Militant Hagiographers attack the UNS *Pilgrim*. Union's nascent Second Committee raises a fleet to strike back against this provocation. The Union fleet targets population centers on Karrakis and Arrudye with gigaton kinetic strikes, forcing the Karrakin defenders to scramble to intercept the projectiles rather than the incoming ships. The Union fleet picks off the scattered defenders and is poised to invade Karrakis itself, but is recalled due to events in the Sol system.

3007u: Karrakis and Union sign the New Prosperity Agreement. Karrakis acknowledges Union's military dominance, while Union acknowledges the human cost of bringing Karrakis to heel. The Federal Karrakin Monarchy (FKM) is formally integrated as a member state of Union.

3845u: By now known colloquially as the "Trade Baronies", the FKM establishes colonial administration over the worlds of the Dawnline Shore (the "Interest"), a status that is formally recognised by the Second Committee, subject to heavy restrictions.

4560u–4600u: Popular revolution against the Second Committee leads to civil war across Union, though the worlds of the Concern are largely untouched. Union's post-revolutionary Third Committee forms amidst a period of heightened political instability.

4600u–4620u: The Interest War. The upstart Harrison Armory attempts to steal Baronial worlds in the Dawnline Shore by securing protectorate agreements and building a fleet that could be used to strike at Karrakis. The FKM responds by striking the Armory's homeworld of Ras Shamra. Ill-equipped to face the Armory's mechs in ground combat, the war ends in a stunning defeat for the FKM. In the wake of a tenuous peace brokered by Union's Third Committee, this defeat prompts the creation of the Baronial Unified Command and the Great Companies system, while the Karrakin Cavalry College is repurposed to train mech pilots.

4601u–4630u: The Sanjak Revolution. Brutality on the part of House Ludra's security forces on Sanjak leads to a massacre of mine workers, which escalates into a broad uprising. Unable to effectively field military forces against the Ungratefals due to ongoing action against the Armory and Union scrutiny, the House of Stone is forced to cede the moon to the rebels, instead instituting a total blockade.

4630u: The House of Dust, having had its own struggles with rebel elements, transitions to Republicanism. COMMENCER terraforming nanites are accidentally released by Hagiographic dissenters, and the moon of Bo begins to crumble.

5016u: Today. The long-awaited Dawnline Shore blink gate is active and undergoing operational testing. Though it will be a few years until it is open to general traffic, "Blink 1" promises to open the floodgates to Karrakin and Armory colonial expansion in the region, bypassing the otherwise lengthy and dangerous real-space voyage through the Long Rim.

RELIGION AND THE PASSIONS

Karrakis is host to countless organized religions and other faiths, some from Old Earth and some arising since. The exact forms and expressions of these faiths vary dramatically from house to house, with most worlds of the Concern having wildly differing religious traditions. This diversity has only increased since contact with Union and now includes cultural influences from across the Orion Arm. Despite this, one unique aspect of pre-contact Karrakin religion has remained pervasive: the Passions.

The Passions are usually regarded as spirits, deities, or symbols that represent facets of the human experience, the ways in which humans interact with the universe and each other, and the influence of “fate”. They appear both as objects of worship and as archetypes in Karrakin media. Theatrical performances, for example, often include allusions to these tropes, whether it be the zealous Firebrand raging against the unprincipled Broker, or the secretive Magus whispering in the ear of the duty-bound Seneschal.

At birth, each child is thought to be “bonded” to one of the Passions. This connection is said to dictate their life either through the external influences of fate, or by its reflection in that person’s personality (though in practice as many individuals reject their bond as embody it). These bonds are “read” by augurs – members of the mysterious Xenoglossary who claim to be able to read the influences of the Passions on a person’s life through a process of complex calculation and ceremony.

Augurs are trusted as impartial advisors, and are commonly found giving advice to noble houses and other institutions across Karrakin space, conducting rites to the Passions, and counseling those who come to them for advice. It is commonly believed that the augurs’ consumption of a closely guarded substance known as the Blue Blood of Pangloss allows them to live hugely extended lives and even see the future. This uncanny ability is said to find particular expression among the members of the Stygos Grammaton: warrior-monks who accompany augurs on important missions and fight using a unique precognitive martial art.



THE BARONIC MILITARY

The Baronic Unified Command (BUC) was formed as a response to Karrakis' devastating defeat in the Interest War. The BUC is a unitary military hierarchy with command of both the Federal Karrakin Navy and the Federal Karrakin Army. Nominally under the control of the Ignoble House, the lower house of the Federal Karrakin Monarchy, the purpose of the BUC is to bring together the formal militaries of the houses and organize their disparate forces into a more cohesive structure.

During the initial formation of the BUC, the political realities of bringing all military power under a single banner forced a number of compromises. In particular, each major house was allowed to retain its own military forces alongside any seconded to the BUC; these eventually became known as the house companies. Meanwhile, the Free Companies – private military and mercenary groups part of a tradition dating back to the dawn of Karrakin history – were given formal charter and license to operate as independent entities.

Together, the house and Free companies form the Great Companies system. Though nominally governed by the Baronic Council, in practice this system allows the major houses to operate with a great deal of independence from the federal monarchy. In addition to this, the prestige and political power of the house companies and Free Companies allows them to claim a significant proportion of talented personnel. Of course, this is not to say the BUC is not powerful: it commands substantial resources and represents the Baronies' most effective fighting force; its shipyards and factories produce exceptional tools of war in great numbers; and its colleges offer superlative military educations with few rivals in the Orion Arm.

The Karrakin Cavalry College is formally part of the BUC's hierarchy, but (in contrast to its naval counterpart) it operates with a great deal of independence and according to a structure closer to that of a minor noble house than of a military organization. This freedom was negotiated upon the College's postwar reformation, driven by political pressure to integrate pilots from the companies. The end result was that the College was required to allow anyone to apply to the selection committee regardless of BUC service, military rank, or noble status.



THREATS TO THE BARONIES

THE UNGRATEFULS

The Khayradi moon known as Sanjak and the fate of its inhabitants, the so-called Ungratefals, is emblematic of probably the single most pressing internal issue in all of Baronian politics: the threat (or promise) of Republican revolution.

Sanjak was previously known as “Ludra’s World”, until its ignoble populace rebelled against its oppressive masters in a conflict that lasted nearly two decades. At the time, the majority of the Karrakin military was tied up in the Interest War and House Ludra was left to manage its own affairs. Ludra’s abject failure to quash the rebellion was an embarrassment to the House of Stone, which struck the ignominious minor house from its rolls. By the conclusion of the conflict, the Ungratefals had beaten back not only the Ludran security forces but also Karrakin Trunk Security and the Free Companies called in to bolster the counterrevolutionary effort, and the moon’s inhabitants established it as the Free Sanjak Commune. In response, the House of Stone resorted to economic force, placing Sanjak under an uncompromising blockade that lasts to this day.

The political situation concerning Sanjak is extraordinarily complicated and has ramifications that affect not just the Baronies, but Union as a whole. In particular, the blockade is a flagrant violation of Union’s Third Utopian Pillar, and many in both the Baronies and beyond consider the Third Committee’s hesitance to directly intervene to be a fatal weakness of Union’s utopian project.

More directly relevant to Baronian politics, however, is what Sanjak represents: increasing calls for a reformation of the old systems of nobility and hierarchy that have been central to Karrakin society for thousands of years, and the threat of revolution across the Concern. This threat has already been realized in some places, transforming the Houses of Water and Dust, and may spread further if left unchecked. Within the Baronies it is impossible to be neutral on the topic and even mentioning the name “Sanjak” sparks debate. In the palaces of the nobility, Sanjak and its Ungratefals are spoken of with a mixture of contempt and fear. For Republicans, they are a sign of hope and change – a cause and its heroes in desperate need of solidarity. Sanjak is the edge of the spinning coin that is Baronian politics, and eventually it must come down on one side or the other.

As such, the political and military situation on Sanjak has not remained static. Hagiographic and Republican houses alike have poured resources into the conflict, enforcing or subverting the blockade in turn. Counterrevolutionary forces (officially, independent Sanjak monarchists, but often suspected to be Free Companies or agents of Baronian Intelligence) continue to undermine the Ungrateful cause and strike at its leadership.

Meanwhile, Union continues its appeals to the House of Stone and pressures the Baronian Council to bring an end to the blockade. For the Council, the situation remains complex. While it is allowed to continue “unresolved”, it remains a source of political tension across the Concern. It also acts as a rallying cry for political opponents on Union’s Central Committee, who have the collective power to stymie the Baronies’ colonial ambitions in the Dawnline Shore and dial back favorable trade arrangements and infrastructure projects. However, a house’s primacy over its holdings is a fundamental underpinning of the federal system. Moreover, there are many on the Council who see advantages in undermining Union’s image and influence, and still others who would be more than happy to reverse the Republican tide entirely.

The ordinary citizens of the Baronies are likely to have wildly different views of the events on Sanjak based on their house, social status, and personal politics. House of Stone propaganda is ubiquitous across the Concern and typically feeds into a common view of the Sanjak rebels as violent, anti-Karrakin terrorists. By contrast, the Sanjak pamphleteer Tyrannocleave’s missives to “You Above” have achieved iconic status in countercultural circles, painting a picture of a Sanjak made free through sacrifice, hard work, and unflinching principle.

HARRISON ARMORY

The greatest external threat to the Baronies is another Union member state: Harrison Armory. Karrakis and the upstart corpro-state share a tangled and bloody history of imperial ambition that threatens the worlds of the Interest with war to this day.

The roots of this conflict have their origins well before the Armory’s founding, with the negotiation of the New Prosperity Agreement – a treaty with Union’s Second Committee that restricted Karrakin shipbuilding and severely curtailed the Federal Karrakin Monarchy’s colonial ambitions in the Interest. In its wake, many in the Baronies felt that the Concern had been “overlooked” in favor of SecComm’s expansionist projects elsewhere in the Orion Arm. This was despite the fact that the Second Expansion Period had seen the construction of three blink stations within the Concern, and greatly enriched the barons who provided raw materials and industrial know-how for galactic infrastructure and colonial projects.

Amid the chaos and strife of the revolution and the formation of Union’s Third Committee, the Baronian Council grasped for a solid footing in a galaxy transformed. The status quo established by the New Prosperity Agreement, contentious as it may have been, was under threat. Some on the Council feared that ThirdComm would abandon

the expansionist policies that were the foundation of their wealth; others insisted that Karrakis should use the opportunity to seek a more favorable arrangement – one that would loosen restrictions on their own imperial ambitions, and put their worlds on parity with Earth.

While debates between Council members raged, the newly formed Harrison Armory moved rapidly. Initially composed of SecComm loyalists from the old regime, the Armory rejected the Third Committee's authority and declared itself the legitimate heir to Union's legacy. Harrison I's first act after declaring independence was to consolidate power, and he saw the bickering lords of Karrakis as a target of opportunity. The Armory muscled in on Karrakin interests in the Dawnline Shore with protectorate agreements and other imperialist maneuvers. At the same time, it began to assemble a large invasion fleet – one that Baronic Intelligence determined was aimed at Karrakis.

Faced with the loss of colonial worlds in the Interest and a potential military strike against the Concern itself, the Baronic Council under Prime Baron Degarrote Bem Karraka acted with uncharacteristic speed, initiating a three-part response. First, it suspended the treaties Union had used to block Baronic activities in the Interest, and started to massively expand colonial and military investment in the region before Union could act. Second, it appealed to the new Third Committee to shift the terms of the New Prosperity Agreement and maneuvered to secure Karrakis' power on CentComm. Third, it sought to strike directly against Ras Shamra, the capital of Harrison Armory, to cut the head off the snake.

The events that followed came to be called the Interest War. Karrakin forces quickly pushed back against Armory advances, and conquered key worlds in the Dawnline Shore – beginning with the verdant moon Creighton. Their success emboldened the fleet bound for Ras Shamra, but the Karrakin optimism did not last.

Before ThirdComm, Ras Shamra had been a GMS special-projects world specializing in the production of mechanized chassis – a new and largely untested technology disregarded at that time by Karrakin traditionalists, but embraced by the Armory. The Baronic fleet broke against Ras Shamra like a wave upon a rock, briefly managing to secure orbital superiority, but never the planet itself. The ground invasion was a devastating failure, with the Baronic ground forces unable to compete against Armory mechs on Ras Shamra's harsh terrain and suffering under the disjointed leadership of officers seeking personal glory in battle. These factors led to the deaths of not only the Prime Baron, but also the barons of the Houses of Stone, Smoke, and Glass.

Worse for the Baronies: the campaign in the Interest ground to a halt, once again outmatched by Armory mechs already in place alongside well-trained local defense forces. The Karrakin forces never recovered

their momentum; an Armory counterattack forced them onto the back foot for the remainder of the war, threatening all that had been won and more.

Harrison I himself commanded an Armory fleet in the skies above his namesake moon, Creighton, slamming vessels into the Karrakin fleet at nearlight and devastating the surface with petajoule kinetic weaponry – an act that would later see him placed on trial by Union for crimes against humanity. With Baronic forces facing the prospect of further losses, the survivors surrendered quickly and the Interest War came to a swift end. A ThirdComm-brokered peace formally ended hostilities, leaving the astonished Karrakin survivors to pick up the pieces.

The stunning defeat was a wake-up call for the Baronies. Even with the restrictions on fleetbuilding imposed by the New Prosperity Agreement, the barons had trusted in the power of their navy and the numerical advantage of their traditional ground forces – an overconfidence that cost them greatly. With a new Prime Baron and a revitalized membership, the Baronic Council vowed that such a defeat would never happen again. Within a few short years the Karrakin military had been radically overhauled and all federal forces integrated into the new Baronic Unified Command. The harsh lessons of the war spurred significant investment in mech production. To field those mechs, the Council inaugurated the modern Great Companies system and repurposed the ancient Karrakin Cavalry College as a means to train pilots.

The shadow of the Interest War has hung over Karrakis for the last four hundred years, and the expansionist activities of Harrison Armory continue to make the Baronies' future in the Dawnline Shore uncertain. Now, with the recent completion of the region's first blink gate (the as-yet-unnamed "Blink 1") and the promise that it will open to general traffic within a decade, comes a renewed interest in the Baronies' colonial holdings.

This interest is bolstered by relentless propaganda from houses competing over this new opportunity and the promise that travel to the Interest need no longer take decades, irreparably displacing travelers from their homes and families. Of course, improved access has its downsides: Harrison Armory still has designs on the worlds it could not claim in the peace settlements, and the blink connection favors Ras Shamra as much as it does Karrakis.

Among the strategic planners of the BUC, it is an acknowledged fact that war is once again on the horizon. Maybe not today. Perhaps not for many years. But unless the barons want a repeat of the first Interest War, they must prepare for the second.

THE GREENHOUSES

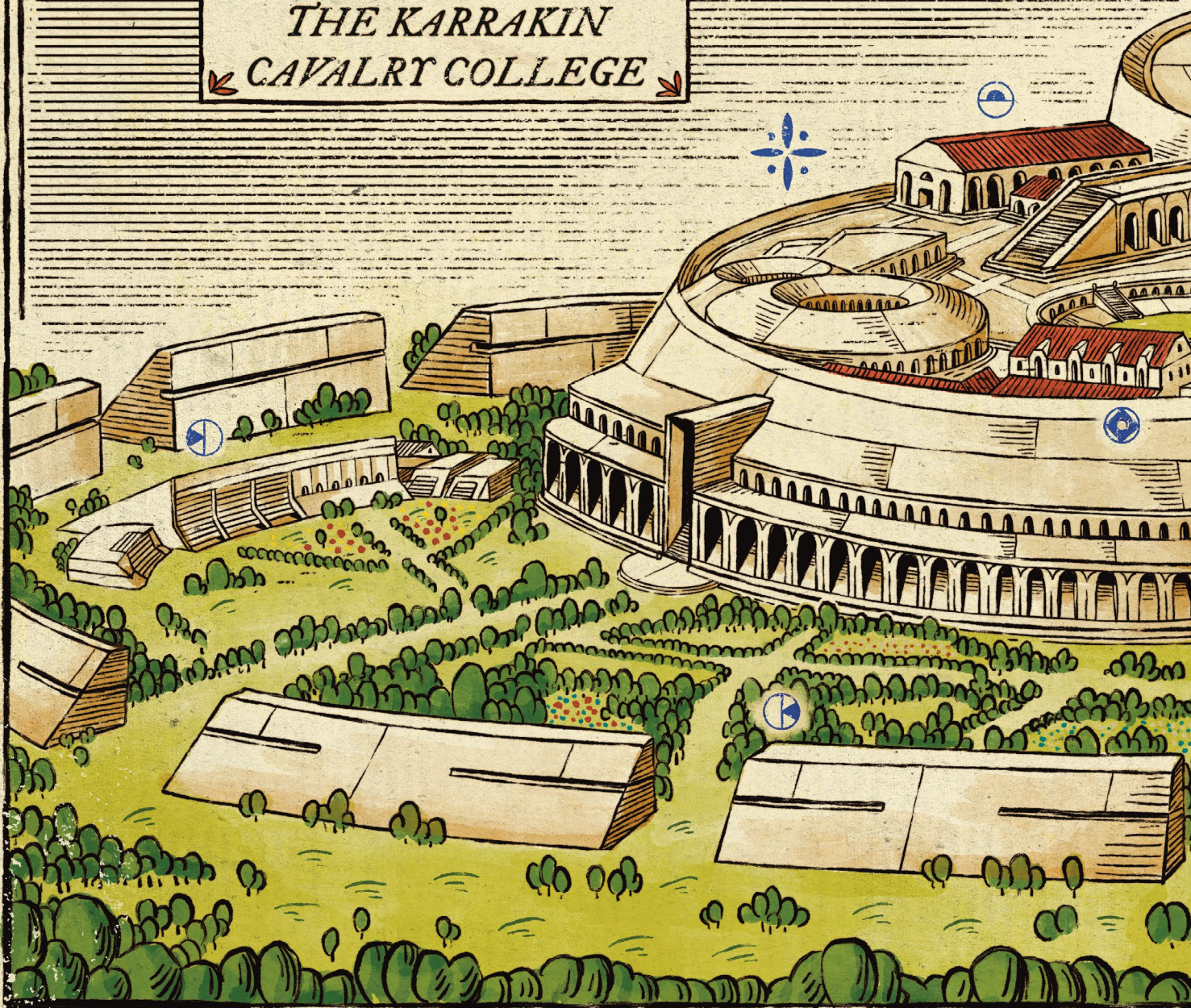


THE GARDENS



THE LYK

*The Campus
of*
**THE KARRAKIN
CAVALRY COLLEGE**



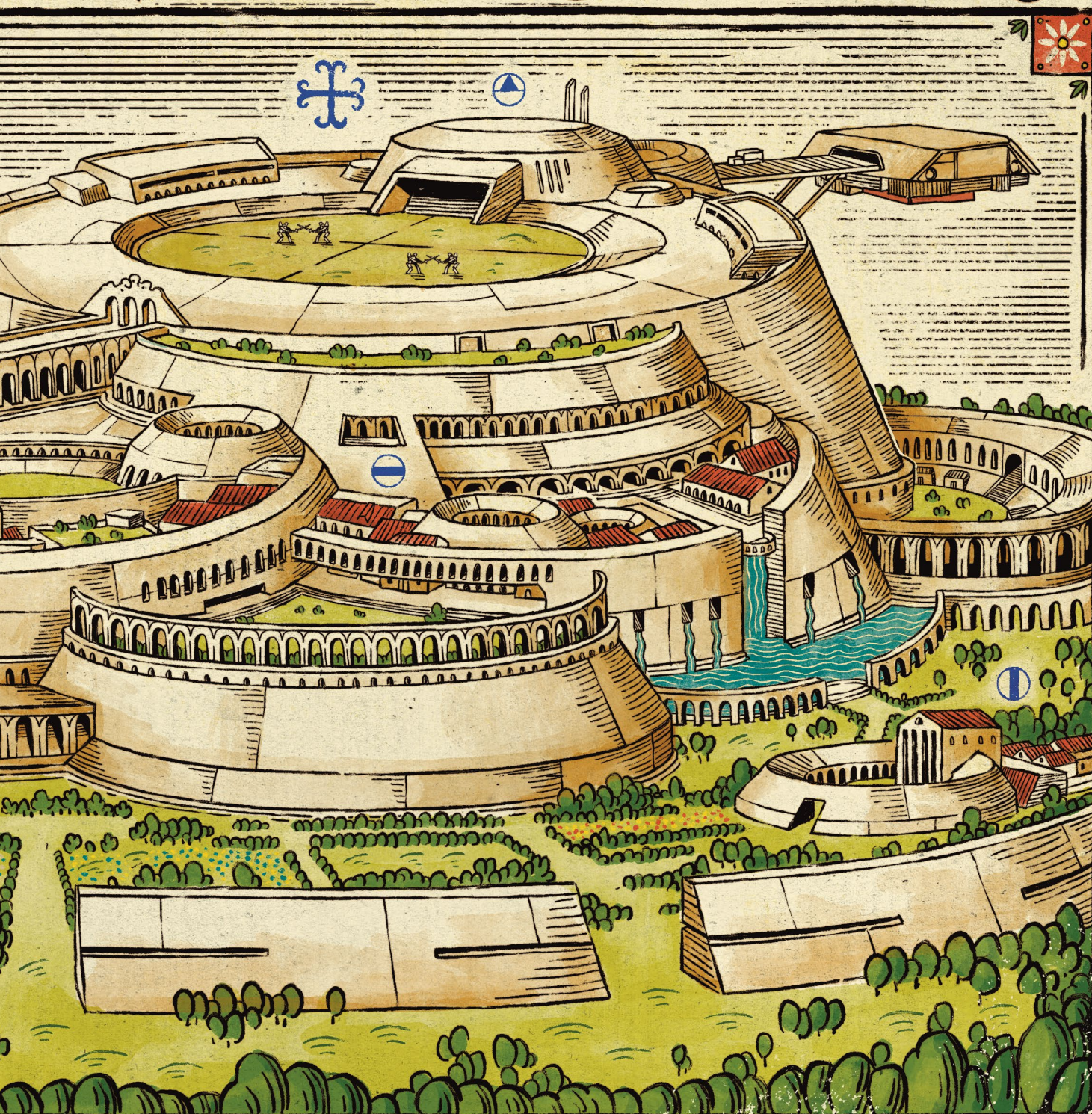
THE DUELING FIELDS



THE STABLES AND MANUFAC

SECTION 2

**THE KARRAKIN
CAVALRY COLLEGE**



RECRUITMENT
THE SYLLABI
THE CAMPUS
TRADITIONS

25
25
26
29

“Welcome, kuirassers, to the Karrakin Cavalry College. We welcome only the finest of candidates to these halls. All of you are certified mech pilots. You may have squired, studied, trained, even seen combat. You wield the sharpest steel and burn with the hottest fire of a generation. To even walk through the doors of this institution makes you outstanding by definition.”

“As of this moment, each and every one of you is dead. You are a walking corpse awaiting an unstoried end by blade, bullet, or laser. When war comes – and someday it will – the kuirasser lays down their life and does so gladly, knowing that they do so for the children of Karrakis.”

“Such spilling of blood may be a noble act, but I doubt it is your desire to water the fields of the Interest. You seek instead a more glorious fate. You are here to become a kavaliere – the best of the best of the best. You are here to exemplify piety, honor, and virtue. You are here to bear the weight of a lineage unbroken from the dawn of humanity, and carry the glory of Karrakis forward into the stars.”

“Your path from kuirasser to kavaliere will not be easy. You will soon discover that not all of you are destined for glory. But those of you with the discipline to adhere to the ideals and the traditions of this place will find not only wisdom, but opportunity. Heed the lessons you are taught here, for they are the first steps on the path towards true greatness.”

-Underbaron Iphianassa Geneia Akrita di Khayradi, head of the Tactical Syllabus

Along with the palaces of nobles and the administrative centers of the House of Order, Throne Karrakis is home to some of the BUC’s most important campuses. Once, in the distant past, they might have been distant from the city, but they have long since become engulfed by urban sprawl, integrated into the city over the millennia – and they have not remained unchanged. The rise of the mechanized chassis as a tool of war saw the ancient Karrakin Cavalry College revitalized and repurposed to train elite pilots: a transformation driven by a desire within the newly created BUC to learn from and avoid repeating the humiliations of the Interest War.

By order of the Ignoble House and with the assent of the Baronie Council, the city wards surrounding the College were repurposed to meet the institution’s increased demands for space. Today, the campus of the College nestles at the heart of the city as if unchanged since the days of Annorum. Even from the air, the campus is hard to distinguish from the other great estates and parks that dot the endless cityscape – save for the scarring of its dueling arenas and the distinctive flickering glow of the containment fields that shield its neighbors from errant weapons fire when active. The College has stood as a fixture of the city for centuries, an institution that is young by Karrakin standards and yet has outlasted the living memory of all but the most ancient Cosmopolitans.

The Karrakin Cavalry College does not exist simply to train mech pilots; it is a proving ground for the most elite pilots in all of Karrakin space. At the College, cutting-edge developments in combat and engineering are collated, analyzed, theorized, developed, and disseminated into wider practice. It is a place where the most promising mech pilots the Baronies have to offer can train under the instruction of the most incisive and qualified veterans. To the nobles of the Baronie Council and the veterans of the BUC, the College represents the dedicated application of Karrakin society’s best and brightest to the task of modern mechanized warfare – securing a future for the Trade Baronies in an uncertain and dangerous galaxy.

RECRUITMENT

The idea that the College selects only “the best of the best of the best” is part of its foundational mythos and the source of its standing both within the BUC and the broader Karrakin society. In truth, however, its selection committee justifies its choices to nobody but the College’s archchancellor, who is given a great deal of discretion by the BUC. The end result is that those with noble ties or political backing may find doors opening for them that would otherwise remain closed – with certain applicants even having their places effectively assured long before they face the committee.

While the College likes to maintain its image by cherry-picking the best ignoble and non-Karrakin applicants, these applicants face the unique challenges of maintaining both a mech to College standards and the lifestyle expected of a kavaliere. As a result, almost all ignoble candidates find themselves with some kind of sponsor: either a noble house, one of the companies, or the BUC itself. Foreign candidates are usually sponsored by a state or institution with similar resources. These sponsorships typically come with social and political strings attached, and depend on the ongoing goodwill of both the sponsor and the College.

Nevertheless, the application and selection process is demanding regardless of social background. Candidates are expected to have established track records as mech pilots, although this can range from squiring for more experienced pilots through to earning status and accolades as pankrati or even active-duty tours with companies or

the BUC itself. In addition, candidates are subjected to a withering series of technical examinations and personal interviews. It is commonly thought that the point is not to “pass” these exams, but instead to demonstrate a mindset that indicates suitability for further training.

Upon completion of their entrance exams, candidates are called to a formal meeting with the selection committee. During this meeting the selection committee either extends a formal offer to join the College or informs the candidate that their application has been declined. In exceptional circumstances so-called “remedial” candidates are given the opportunity to reapply in the future, provided they address whatever deficiencies the selection committee has identified in either their experience or their examination performance.

Occasionally, candidates who meet the technical criteria but are not considered a “good fit” may be offered a formal recommendation to one of the College’s secondary campuses across the Concern. These institutions are – in theory – equal to the central campus in the BUC’s organizational hierarchy, but in practice are significantly less prestigious and open fewer doors for their graduates. That ignoble candidates make up the majority of those offered these recommendations is not beneath the notice of reformists within the BUC, but the selection committee’s primacy over admissions is jealously guarded.

THE SYLLABI

Teaching at the Karrakin Cavalry College is structured around three foundational domains, collectively referred to as the Syllabi: the Tactical Syllabus, the Technical Syllabus, and the Noble Arts Syllabus. They are considered equally important for the development of the College’s students, who are required to receive a commendation in each domain in order to graduate with the highest honors.

The **Tactical Syllabus** covers the topics that seem most obvious to civilians: the uses of mechanized chassis in warfare. Including not only the literal act of piloting a mech in combat, but also squad-level tactics, logistical planning, and broad strategy for the deployment of mechs – both alone and as part of combined arms approaches in a variety of combat environments. This Syllabus prepares pilots to confront a range of potential adversaries: from conflicts with nation- and corpro-states of comparable standing and capability, to asymmetric warfare against insurgent or terrorist groups.

The **Technical Syllabus** surprises those from outside the Baronies who assume that the nobility have squires, servants, and staff available to handle “menial” tasks at their beck and call. While it is true that pilots rarely operate without a support staff, the College considers the hands-on technical skills of chassis engineering, electronic warfare, and the application of specialist technologies as not only of academic interest, but vital for any kavaliere seeking peak performance. As such, the Syllabus is treated with deep respect by the BUC’s most talented pilots and those seeking every possible edge in combat.

The third Syllabus, affectionately known as the **Noble Arts**, stands for the principles of piety, virtue, and leadership to which all kavalieres are supposed to aspire. From an instructional perspective, an education in the Noble Arts takes the form of lectures on philosophy, psychology, history, politics, literature, theology, dance, and art – interwoven with the classes of the other Syllabi, and taken just as seriously as those on the application of tactical movement doctrine to urban environments or the most effective techniques for overclocking a tachyon lance.

Students are expected to throw themselves wholeheartedly into studying each of the Syllabi during their time at the College. There are few opportunities to rest; intense study is a requirement alongside a demanding formal social calendar, a virtually endless reading list, hands-on practice with a variety of chassis and systems, and a relentless training schedule. Burnout is common, but the faculty argue that the high-pressure environment produces superlative results – a tradeoff the BUC is more than willing to make.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

To earn commendations in the Syllabi, students are expected to undergo a series of examinations intended as opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities in that domain. Tactical examinations in particular take the form of pitched battles, usually against faculty members themselves. The judgments of these experts can mean the difference between graduating with honors or without – a factor that can determine the trajectory of a graduate's career.

THE CAMPUS

The College's Throne Karrakis campus takes the form of a massive walled estate, with a central area containing its facilities and extensive grounds that form a pocket within the city. This style of estate is a familiar sight to residents of Throne Karrakis used as they are to the palaces of the nobility. Unlike most palaces, however, the College has a significant impact on the city wards around it, being surrounded by the secondary industries, logistical infrastructure, and staff accommodations that support its day-to-day functioning.

THE LYKEON

Beyond the military checkpoint that secures the ancient gateway sits the grand Lykeon, a building famous across the Concern for its monumental Passacaglian-era architecture. Long since expanded from less imposing origins, the various wings of the Lykeon are where the business of the College is conducted – administration, instruction, and academic work – and where accommodations and facilities for the faculty and students who live on-site can be found.

The central chambers of the Lykeon are built to echo the imposing, palatial styles familiar to Karrakin nobility. The Great Hall is a huge vaulted space lined with statues, paintings, and holographic images of the College's most celebrated alumni. It is most commonly used for extravagant formal banquets and also, more rarely, for certain ceremonial events and assemblies. Comparable in size is the Lykeon's main ballroom, a grand and formal space dedicated to dance, recitals, and other large social

gatherings. Beyond these can be found dedicated shrines to the Passions, and the offices and accommodations of the College's senior members – the archchancellor, the dean, and the heads of Syllabus.

Others may take senior combat or command positions elsewhere, roles in which they are expected to teach the College's lessons to those around them. In this way, the BUC propagates hard-won knowledge learned from combat experience alongside novel techniques and cutting-edge technical knowledge, a cascading system of continuing education that it hopes will give the BUC a much-needed advantage in any coming conflict.

Beyond the central chambers, the Lykeon's corridors and hallways open out into arcades and cloistered courtyards. In one wing, the BUC and College administrative offices manage the smooth operation of the campus and keep the job of satisfying its logistical demands behind the scenes. Another wing houses faculty offices and instruction rooms; the well-appointed suites that serve as accommodation for the students; and shared facilities including the gymnasia, libraries, and the common room – a shared social space used by students to relax and socialize.

THE GARDENS

Beyond and surrounding the Lykeon are the College's extensive gardens. Echoing the importance of flowers in Karrakin noble culture, the gardens offer not only a pleasant reprieve from the intensity of study but also an ostentatious display of the College's prestige and the prowess required to keep extremely rare and fragile plants alive at the center of a bustling metroswathe.

Landscaped by celebrated Ispahsalari architects and horticulturalists, the gardens rival those of some of the great palaces of Throne Karrakis for their beauty and the elegance of their formal structure. Their classical Karrakin style allows for privacy, scheming, and romantic trysts alike amongst the topiary and flowerbeds.



FLOWERS IN KARRAKIN CULTURE

From the earliest days of Karrakin history, flowers have been a symbol of nobility. Brought over in seed stocks and genebank records on the wake ships that followed the Apollo, they were artificially cultivated and introduced by the colonists. Karrakis had no native flowering plants and lacked the specific and complex ecosystem needed to support them. As such, the business of keeping flowers became the domain of those who could afford the extravagance: wake monopolists, special administrators, and those others who would later become the foundation of the Karrakin nobility during the Melee and the age of Annorum.

Today, flowers carry a huge number of meanings among the Karrakin noble classes. Wearing specific flowers, perfumes, or floral designs can communicate rank, relationship status, or even mood; they are a common feature in ritual and ceremony; and they are frequently used to commemorate historical events, holidays, and rites of passage. The endless complexities of what is known as “flower code” arise from a set of largely unspoken traditions from the earliest ages of Karrakin society and take dozens of forms across the different worlds of the Concern.

One could be forgiven for assuming that the gardens are purely ornamental, but in fact the greenhouses at their outer reaches conceal both the production of flowers for College events and a unique hybridization and genetic manipulation program that is considered an optional but respected component of the Noble Arts Syllabus.

THE STABLES

The building known as “the Stables” is one of the more notable reminders of the College’s legacy as a literal college for mounted troops, although it has long since been rebuilt to satisfy its new purpose. Today, its hangars house the mechanized chassis belonging to the College and its students, along with the many facilities critical for their construction and maintenance.

The Stables’ central feature is the stalls: an impressive sight and often one of the first stops for visiting dignitaries. Rows upon rows of work bays hold a huge variety of chassis; the College’s own trainer frames, prototype models shipped from the Royal Karrakin Foundries and other ateliers for assessment and testing, and top-of-the-line or fully custom frames belonging to faculty and students. For the BUC’s engineers, postings to the College’s stalls are some of the most privileged and sought-after technical positions in the entire Concern, attracting some of the best talent the Command has to offer.

Beyond the stalls lies the part of the Stables that never sleeps – the Manufactory. The extensive array of high-end fabrication machines and printers housed in the Manufactory is specialized in the production and maintenance of mech chassis, and there is usually some activity there at all hours of the day. From fabrication of new or replacement parts, to concepting and testing new designs, and the construction and finishing of entire frames from scratch, the Manufactory is an engineers’ playground and its myriad facilities are in constant demand.

THE DUELING FIELDS

Visible from the upper balconies of the Lykeon but kept at a moderately safe distance are the dueling fields, a large space set aside for formal duels, skirmishes, and training exercises. The College does maintain a few dedicated arenas, designed specifically for dueling and pankration mekani, but the dueling fields are mostly given over to a mix of huge temporary and semi-permanent earthworks, which are constantly restructured and landscaped to suit the needs of the Tactical Syllabus and the various chassis test programs run under the College’s auspices.

The challenges involved in maintaining the dueling fields as functional landscapes for regular mech combat are considerable, not least because the College does not shy away from live-fire training exercises. The construction crews based out of the neighboring city ward are on an extremely favorable retainer from the College, supporting a not-inconsiderable industry dedicated to rapid rebuilding, landscape repair, and even the limited application of terraforming nanites. This latter method has provoked repeated political and environmental concerns, but has remained in somewhat-irregular use since the COMENCITA nanite variant was first developed for localized terrain restructuring.

The other cause for concern relating to the use of live-fire exercises on the College’s grounds is the potential for collateral damage. Naturally, the dueling fields’ extensive walls and embankments are sufficient to contain the majority of the ordnance deployed during such exercises, but for everything else, an extensive and extraordinarily power-hungry containment field system exists to neutralize stray weapons fire. The flickering lights and harsh static buzz of the active fields are an unfortunate but best-case compromise between aesthetics and concern for the wider city.

Beyond the rigorous instruction, training, and testing programs, the College's timetables are filled with the rituals of Karrakin life and in particular those of the nobility. The rituals and traditions practiced at the College date back many centuries, and were themselves often derived from older noble or military customs, either from broader noble Karrakin society, or the pre-BUC military.

It is a point of some contention among reformists within the BUC that many of the College's traditions are artifacts of noble origin and reinforce the hierarchies present in wider society. In practice, ignoble and foreign participants are politely included as though they are of noble standing, provided they comport themselves accordingly, though this is little consolation to Republican critics who object to such traditions on ideological grounds.

BANQUETS AND MEALS

Central to the social life of the College are the formal banquets that are hosted regularly in the Great Hall. By tradition, formal dress and manners are mandatory within the Great Hall, and the banquets themselves are lengthy affairs filled with traditional speeches and addresses between the many courses. The courses themselves are lavish, incorporating the finest food and drink from across the Concern.

For other meals, faculty and students might either dine in the Hall or request food delivered directly to their rooms from the kitchens. A small refectory attached to the common room is open around the clock to handle the needs of the sleepless or preoccupied.

FORMAL BALLS AND DANCES

Significant occasions at the College, including matriculation, graduation, and high festivals, are celebrated by traditional balls in the courtly Karrakin style, conducted almost exclusively in the Lykeon's central ballroom.

These balls are sprawling social affairs that typically involve both political maneuvering and extravagant expressions of high Karrakin fashion. When the formal dances have concluded it is traditional for them to spill out of the Lykeon and into the gardens or private chambers elsewhere in the College as the evening continues.

One particularly spectacular event on the College's calendar is the Cadenze de l' Pavilios, which takes place not in the ballroom, but in the gardens. The guests at the Cadenze bring and decorate or even dress their mechs, which stand at attention during the ball. A relatively recent tradition – only a century old – involves particularly daring and talented pilots performing the final dance together in their mechs.

DUELING

There are two forms of duel recognised at (and begrudgingly accepted by) the College: duel by sword, and duel by mech. Either can be invoked in the case of an "irreconcilable dispute" by formal appeal to the dean, who is responsible for judging whether the dispute has merit and then arbitrating any proceedings.

Duels by sword are normally straightforward fencing matches to first blood using personal kinetic shields (see p. 97), following the courtly Karrakin tradition. Duels by mech are more complex, requiring the preparation of an arena and operating by a set of rules similar to pankration mekani. Both are treated extremely seriously, and the outcome is taken as a binding settlement to the originating conflict.

BOND READINGS

Dating back to well before the College's reformation is the tradition of formal bond readings, typically conducted by visiting augurs. These readings are more ceremonial than religious affairs, and alongside the rituals surrounding matriculation and graduation form a set of solemn but often-incomprehensible rites of passage.

By tradition, the results of these bond readings are not shared with the faculty. This secrecy is often claimed to be the cause (or perhaps result) of an obscure historical dispute between an ancient archchancellor and augur in the years following the College's reformation – a disagreement that also led to the lack of permanent Xenogloss presence on campus in the first place.

PANKRATION MEKANI

Incredibly popular across the Baronies as a spectator sport, the discipline of pankration mekani includes various forms of competitive mech combat. Popular events include cage-fight duels, team-based arena brawls, contests similar to wrestling or sumo, among other tests of piloting and engineering prowess.

Naturally, as some of the best mech pilots in the Concern, many College students have at some point engaged in the sport, and some were even professional pankrati at some point in their careers. The current head of the Tactical Syllabus tolerates pankration mekani (if not the antics of the pankrati) for the useful lessons it can teach about the finer points of piloting. Regular bouts are held between students, with College champions wearing a ceremonial flower crown to mark their status.



SECTION 3

SHADOW OF THE WOLF



EXPLICIT NOTE AND WARNING

If you're intending on playing *Shadow of the Wolf*, **stop reading here!** We're serious about this – the following pages contain **major spoilers** for the story, the motivations and secrets of NPCs, and other hidden information that will be more enjoyable to discover in play. Explore the world as much as you like in character, trust your GM to tell their version of this story, and enjoy the ride!

If you are looking for rules information, **Appendix I** (p. 96) contains new player backgrounds and gear, **Appendix II** (p. 99) contains new variant **FRAMES** available for players, and **Appendix III** (p. 106) contains new bonds for use with the optional Bonds system from *Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies*.

SUMMARY

The PCs in this mission series are pilots newly inducted into the prestigious Karrakin Cavalry College. They will be trained to become the best of the best, ready to take up positions in the BUC or the elite Great Companies: heroes, celebrities, and pawns in the grand game of Karrakin politics.

At the College, these would-be heroes will face the challenges of Baronic high society, the rush of mech combat, and betrayals from those they thought they could trust. More, they will have to protect their fellow students against politically motivated attacks on the College and even an unthinkable strike against the heart of Throne Karrakis.

The events of this mission series take place with the specter of war on the horizon. Certain elements of Karrakin society wish to hasten its arrival, and it provides an ominous, inescapable backdrop to the lives of the young people inducted into the halls of the College.

In **MISSION 1: NO POINTS FOR SECOND PLACE**, the PCs confront fellow students from the Houses of Stone and Sand and are drawn into a duel that develops into a rivalry. They study and make new friends among the other students as they prepare for their first examination – a skirmish against members of the faculty.

Unfortunately, not only are the PCs sabotaged by their rivals, but the exam takes a turn for the worse. A mysterious group of Armory-built mechs appear on the field, attacking students and faculty alike while spouting Ungrateful slogans.

These mechs are secretly controlled by members of the Houses of Stone and Sand who are staging a false flag attack. Their goal is to create a pretext for the Baronies to crack down on the Ungratefals and potentially even go to war with the Armory.

MISSION 2: THEY SHALL COME ALL FOR VIOLENCE opens with the College still reeling from the attack, its consequences felt not just by the students and faculty but also in the broader Karrakin political sphere. Despite this, the education of the College's students must continue. The PCs are recalled to the College, but soon afterwards framed for involvement in the attack. Fortunately, they are whisked away by an augur of the Xenoglossary, who hints at a dire future if the PCs fail to avert another attack.

Their rescue by the Xenoglossians buys the PCs some time, but not quite enough to secure their safety, as they are attacked by assassins from the House of Sand. This turns out to be a blessing in disguise, however, as it allows them to uncover the true plan of their foes: another, more devastating attack on the College itself. Frustrated by the intervention of the PCs during the first attack and its failure to spark immediate action by the Baronies, this second attack is an escalation – an attempt to kill untold numbers within Throne Karrakis. The PCs must race against time to foil the plot, save the College, and prevent a future dictated by reactionary politics and war.

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

SESSION ZERO

“Session zero” is a game session held before beginning actual play. The purpose of this session is to get everyone on the same page and prepare for the story you are about to tell. Hosting a session zero before starting a campaign is valuable even if you regularly play together as a group.

The primary goal in session zero is to get to know your players (and for them to get to know each other), to establish the use of safety tools², and to set expectations for collaborative play and the narrative.

There are many unspoken rules in tabletop roleplaying games that can't be found in the rulebook, but are instead established by playing at the table. These are sometimes referred to as the “social contract”. For example, many players have preferences for whether and how they want to encounter themes like traumatic experiences, romance, and death (see p. 9 for a list of themes that might come up in *Shadow of the Wolf*). Session zero is a good opportunity to make people feel comfortable by explicitly discussing how you – as a table – intend to handle these issues before they arise in play.

Session zero also provides an opportunity to introduce the setting to your players and answer any questions they have. The information in Sections 1 and 2 of this book is spoiler-free and you are encouraged to give it to players who want to know more about the setting.

You also have the option of creating characters collaboratively. Building characters as a group is a great way to improve cohesion and familiarize yourself with each character and how they fit into the story. If your players are new to *Lancer*, this is also a good opportunity for them to ask rules questions that might be relevant to their characters.

2 Recommended safety tools include the **X-Card** by John Stavropoulos (TINYURL.COM/X-CARD-RPG), the **Lines and Veils** system by Ron Edwards, and/or the supplementary tools and alternatives detailed in the **TTRPG Safety Toolkit** (BIT.LY/TTRPGSAFETYTOOLKIT) created and curated by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk.

CREATING CHARACTERS

PCs for *Shadow of the Wolf* are standard *Lancer* PCs. By default, they begin at **LL0** with access to all General Massive Systems (GMS) weapons and systems (*Lancer*, pp. 118–121), as well as the **GMS EVEREST** (*Lancer*, p. 122): a solid, flexible all-rounder that can be customized to suit a variety of playstyles even at higher license levels.

PCs can also access two other GMS mechs if you allow them: the **SAGARMATHA**, a bulky defender (*No Room for a Wallflower*, p. 183), and the hacking-focused **CHOMOLUNGMA** (*Operation Solstice Rain*, p. 45). You don't need to purchase either book to use the mechs they provide; you can access them for free by downloading the relevant LCP files from MASSIF-PRESS.ITCH.IO, and installing them in Comp/Con – *Lancer's* online companion app.

Importantly, *Lancer* PCs are protagonists – they are assumed to be capable and talented. Each of them is a mech pilot who has been accepted to the Karrakin Cavalry College on merit or the strength of their personal connections (see p. 25 for further details of the College's admissions procedures). It is also best to assume they have some experience in combat before the game begins; some may even be seasoned soldiers. LL0 represents the point in a character's journey where they go from regular mech pilot to lancer – or, as Karrakins would put it, from *kuirasser* to *kavaliere*.

Most PCs in this mission series should also have some kind of sponsor or other connection to the social world around them. This sponsor could be a noble house or patron, a house company or Free Company, or similar. Sponsors and other connections will have certain goals and expectations you can use to help motivate the PCs or complicate their lives.

This book includes a number of backgrounds specific to its setting (see p. 96). You can use these, or the ones in the *Lancer Core Rulebook*. Each PC's background should include a detail that links them to at least one other PC in some way – an old friendship, a political entanglement, or shared experiences in the military or other organization. It is possible for the PCs to begin play without knowing each other, but shared histories give the players opportunities for interesting roleplay and good reasons to work together.

CHARACTER CREATION FAQ

CAN WE START AT A HIGHER LICENSE LEVEL?

You can, but it is recommended that you only do this if you and your players are experienced with Lancer. The first few license levels are a good opportunity to get up to speed with the system before getting overwhelmed by options.

Note also that the combat scenes in this mission series are geared towards **LLO-1** characters, so if you start at a higher license level you may need to adjust them somewhat.

CAN AN EXISTING GROUP OF PCS PLAY THIS MISSION SERIES?

Yes, they can, though for obvious reasons you will want to adjust the combat scenes for the relevant license level.

Whatever the reasons for an existing group to sign up, the College has various reasons for accepting applicants from elsewhere. One of its primary purposes is to collect and distribute “best practice” techniques in mech combat from across the Concern and beyond – something that might see your existing characters invited to become students.

Another way to bring existing characters into the story is as part of an exchange program. As established lancers, their presence at the College may prove invaluable for the training of other students, and their parent organization may have some important lessons to teach those who have only known life in the Concern.

Additionally, if your existing group already has a patron of some kind, that patron can act as any other sponsor would, using the power and privilege the College grants its students to advance their own position.

WHAT IF ONE OR MORE PCS HAIL FROM THE HOUSE OF STONE OR THE HOUSE OF SAND?

The major houses are sprawling, planetary affairs, and far from politically or culturally homogenous. While the efforts of the antagonists in this mission series align with the broader political goals of those two houses, it is just as likely that various minor houses within Stone and Sand would be opposed to their efforts – especially to their methods. Politics in the Baronies is a notoriously fratricidal affair with a great deal of maneuvering and secrecy, and minor houses are only loyal to each other insofar as it is in their interests.

Ultimately, the events of *Shadow of the Wolf* are the result of fevered political scheming between House Cannamos of Stone and House Laurent of Sand, both of which wish to see themselves on top of their respective major houses, and their respective major houses on top of the Baronies. It is unlikely that they will bring outsiders in on their plans for both operational security and political reasons. If anything, they will have an even stronger incentive to get rid of potential rivals from within their own major houses.

CAN CHARACTERS COME FROM OUTSIDE THE KARRAKIN TRADE BARONIES?

Yes; the College does accept applicants from outside the Concern – even from the Armory. These applicants might face discrimination from conservative NPCs or find themselves in a more complicated political situation, and will likely be pressured to integrate into a new and potentially very foreign culture. Check with your players in advance about whether this is the kind of story they want to tell, and adjust accordingly.

HOW DO I MAKE THE SPONSORS FEEL RELEVANT?

You can make the PCs’ sponsors feel like active participants in the world by having them stay in contact with the PCs and give them additional goals. At the start of the game you might give each PC a task or a goal from their sponsor. If the PC does what the sponsor wants, reward them with appropriate **RESERVES** representing the sponsor’s favor.

These goals will vary based on the political inclinations of the sponsor, but could range from making connections to causing the downfall of a rival, rooting out a spy or traitor, or even digging up valuable military secrets.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

CAN I EXPAND THE NARRATIVE SCENES, OR INSERT NEW ONES?

Absolutely! The narrative in this book skips a great deal of the day-to-day work, training, and downtime that comes with being a student at the Karrakin Cavalry College, with a particularly notable time skip during **BEAT 4: DOWN TO BUSINESS**. During this gap, you might want to add social events like the Cadenze de l’ Pavilios (see p. 29), or more personal scenes related to PCs’ backstories or sponsors.

There are plenty of opportunities to include additional narrative scenes involving other students or faculty throughout the mission series, especially if your players have taken a liking to (or have developed a hatred of) a particular NPC and you want to focus on that relationship. Alternatively, your players might want to get involved in extracurricular activities like pankration mekani or dueling, engage in political or interpersonal drama, or explore the College and even Throne Karrakis itself in more detail. Each of the main beats presents some options for extending the scene, but feel free to insert your own if your players want to get involved in other activities!

MY PCS WANT TO DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT OR TAKE A COURSE OF ACTION THAT ISN’T DESCRIBED IN THE STORY! HOW DO I HANDLE THAT?

In general, it’s a good thing for players to be proactive and take the initiative regarding the scenes they want to experience; it shows that they are engaged with the game. You should endeavor to support your players when they do this, and try to accommodate their choices where possible – to the degree that you’re happy to improvise.

If you want to play out the events of the mission series as written, you will eventually want to bring them back on course. For the most part, though, many of the scenes in this story are imposed by the structure of the Syllabi and the College's timetable, or else caused by NPCs taking action, so you can present them to the PCs as events that are occurring outside their control. If you find this difficult or it doesn't work, talk to them out of character and explain where you would like to take the story, then try to work together to make it happen.

WHAT IF MY PCS LOSE A COMBAT?

The consequences for defeat in mech combat are generally spelled out in that combat's briefing, and expanded in its "narrative consequences" section. The early combats in *Shadow of the Wolf* are not intended to have character death as a consequence – at worst, a pilot who loses a fight or has their mech destroyed might suffer a loss of social standing, poor grades, or disapproval from the faculty.

The nature of the Syllabi are such that the scheduled training combats will continue regardless of prior success or failure, so unless the PCs are physically unable to field a mech they will have to press on with what they have (see *Lancer*, p. 82 for details on repairing damaged and destroyed mechs).

WHEN CAN PCS REPAIR THEIR MECHS? WHY CAN'T THEY REPRINT THEIR MECHS BETWEEN EVERY COMBAT?

The PCs may **rest** and repair their mechs after each combat (*Lancer*, p. 82) unless otherwise noted, and may perform a **FULL REPAIR** in the downtime at the end of **MISSION 1: NO POINTS FOR SECOND PLACE**.

Players might reasonably ask why they can't perform a **FULL REPAIR** between combats, given that the College has printers and they aren't (usually) under time pressure. The answer is that their **REPAIRS** represent a limited stock of print credits that the College intentionally restricts, so that students don't become reliant on the luxury of printing a new mech after every minor skirmish.

WHAT IF MY PCS RUN OUT OF REPAIRS?

If one or more PCs run out of **REPAIRS**, talk explicitly to the players about their options. The PCs have multiple ways to acquire more, although some methods may not be obvious or visible to the players.

First, remind them that **POWER AT A COST** is always available, and it can be used to acquire more **REPAIRS**, or in the most extreme circumstances, a **FULL REPAIR** in the middle of the mission. The consequences for having to scrounge, steal, or beg for repairs (or to be forced to reprint from scratch) are always significant. These consequences may have lasting effects on characters' health, reputations, and relationships – but the alternative is failure, disgrace, and dropping out of the College.

Alternatively, there are multiple ways for the PCs to acquire **REPAIRS** and even brand new mechs as **EXOTIC GEAR** from NPCs by progressing their relationship clocks. For PCs whose mechs have been heavily damaged or destroyed entirely, receiving a new mech from an NPC may be a better option than spending **REPAIRS** to rebuild an old one (particularly since repairing a destroyed mech costs many **REPAIRS** and still only brings it back with **1 STRUCTURE** and **1 STRESS**).

WHAT TOOLS DO I HAVE FOR ADJUSTING THE DIFFICULTY?

Some groups may find the combats in this mission series challenging and others might find them too easy. You should always feel free to adjust combats to suit your group, their experience level, and their expectations, and aim to give your players a challenging but enjoyable experience.

The most direct tool for adjusting difficulty is to change the opposing forces (OpFors) the PCs face during combat – this is usually best done by adjusting **Reinforcements**. Adding or removing a single NPC, or having them arrive a turn early or late can have a dramatic effect on the pacing of a fight. If you feel confident handling NPCs, adjusting their optional systems can be a subtler method of achieving a similar result. You should bear in mind your PCs' mechs and capabilities when doing this: some NPCs (or combinations thereof) and NPC options will be more or less challenging for your PCs to handle based on their mech builds.

A more indirect tool for adjusting difficulty is to make it easier or more challenging to progress NPC relationship clocks. This allows you to affect the pace at which PCs acquire the various **RESERVES** and pieces of **EXOTIC GEAR** available from the NPCs, which can have a big impact on the resources that PCs can bring to bear. Even adding additional narrative scenes with NPCs present is enough to increase their clocks as PCs gain more opportunities to interact with them and develop those relationships.

There are also some above-the-table tools you can use to influence the efficacy of PCs in combat. While you should always give your players a full briefing before each combat and be open with information where possible (including NPC types and templates, and what each weapon and system does), additional information and advice can have a significant impact on how things play out.

You can always give your players advice in combat scenes if you feel it would be beneficial, perhaps framing it as something their character would know from their studies or from prior experience. For example, a newer player might not know the strengths and weaknesses of the Hornet NPC, but even without taking the **SCAN** action their character would likely know that mechs of that type are fragile but hard to hit, and vulnerable to tech attacks and smart weapons. Knowing this information can be important in deciding which target to focus on, or which weapon to choose, and consequently shift how effective they are in combat.

NON-PLAYER CHARACTERS

Shadow of the Wolf features an ensemble cast of important NPCs. The PCs might interact with some or all of them, depending on their choices and the opportunities you give them to engage with other students. As such, which NPCs are most important will vary from table to table. If your PCs decide they like (or really hate) a particular character, you might emphasize their role and let others fade into the background.

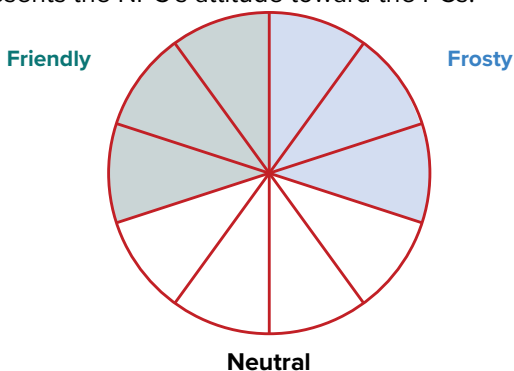
Some of the NPCs are central to the story:

- **Lord Praya** and **Count Argo** are the primary antagonists of this mission series and will cause problems throughout the narrative.
- The opinions of **the faculty** (and in particular, the heads of Syllabus) are, in theory, vital to the PCs' success at the College.
- **Augur Kahin** and **Soto** are introduced in **MISSION 2: THEY SHALL COME ALL FOR VIOLENCE** and play a vital role in sheltering the PCs and setting up the events of the finale.

RELATIONSHIP CLOCKS

Relationships between the PCs and the people around them play a significant role in *Shadow of the Wolf*. The attitude of NPCs towards the PCs is represented and tracked by the creation of a **relationship clock** for each major or recurring NPC.

Each relationship clock is a circle divided into **10 segments**, which are split into three broad categories (**Frosty**, **Neutral**, and **Friendly**). The number of segments filled represents the NPC's attitude toward the PCs.



Set out a clock for each important NPC and fill out the starting number of segments (detailed in their entry below). To begin with, these clocks should be hidden from the players; when the PCs first interact with a character make their relationship clock visible to the players.

Relationship clocks can go up or down based on the PCs' actions and the NPC's changing attitude – certain events will instruct you to fill in or erase segments. They can also be influenced by the PCs' interactions with the NPC in question. Use your discretion when deciding these effects. Don't track the progress of clocks in real time, though; instead, fill in or clear segments at the end of each scene.

You should strongly consider setting up the relationship clocks before you start playing, as this will save you time during sessions, although you should only reveal clocks to the players when they have met the NPCs in question. If something affects a relationship clock before the relevant NPC has been introduced, you can inform the players that their actions have had consequences, but track the specific changes in the background.

Relationship clocks usually apply to the PCs as a group, but it is also possible for an individual PC to have a unique relationship clock for an NPC if their opinion is sufficiently divergent – if this happens, create a new clock and track it separately.

If a PC acquires the **REPUTATION** reserve (*Lancer*, p. 51), it may be traded in for +2 to a relationship clock with a relevant NPC.

HANDLING RELATIONSHIPS

Relationship clocks are general guides to NPCs' attitudes. The precise nature of each relationship depends on context. For example, one NPC might be **Friendly**, but with that friendship taking the form of a healthy rivalry with a PC where each pushes the other to excel.

Don't feel you need to strictly adhere to the clock if the situation suggests an NPC might act differently. NPCs aren't robots or emotional vending machines; they are people with independent attitudes, desires, memories, and goals.

FRIENDLY NPCS

In general, **Friendly** NPCs (8+ segments filled) will be willing to help the PCs in tangible ways. This might take the form of specific actions that can help the party, **RESERVES** that can be called in when necessary, items of **EXOTIC GEAR**, or even access to special variant **FRAMES**. Players generally should not know what these rewards will be beforehand, so as not to influence their roleplay with a desire for specific gear, but likely rewards may be intuited through context or investigation.

When an NPC becomes **Friendly**, you might want to insert a small interstitial scene in which the NPC offers their aid – or have them make the offer immediately once you know the clock will increase. These scenes can take many forms. For example, providing access to a variant **FRAME** might involve sharing print codes or transferring ownership of a prototype or secondary **FRAME**.

If the PCs gain **RESERVES** from an NPC, these **RESERVES** can be used once per mission as long as the relationship remains **Friendly** and the NPC could feasibly help. Most **RESERVES** are single-use, but some benefit the whole group. For example, Kay can give **EXTRA REPAIRS** to each PC, which grants the whole group **+2 REPAIR CAP**.

VARIANT FRAMES

When an NPC offers a variant **FRAME**, they only offer **one instance** of that **FRAME**; the PCs will have to decide among themselves who gets to pilot it. Note that there are multiple ways to acquire these **FRAMES**.

Variant **FRAMES** are granted as **EXOTIC GEAR** (see p. 97) and characters who receive them gain them permanently³. Each comes with one system from its license, also granted as **EXOTIC GEAR**. This system is “preinstalled” when the PC receives the mech (it still costs **SP**), but can be removed.

When a PC receives a variant **FRAME**, they can choose to use it straight away. It begins at full **STRUCTURE**, **STRESS**, and **HP**, and the player may equip it with weapons and gear as if they had performed a **FULL REPAIR** – but any expended **REPAIRS** from the PC’s previous mech remain expended. Importantly, a character can only have one active mech at a time, so they will no longer be able to use their previous mech.

If a PC comes into possession of a variant **FRAME** mid-mission, there is no obligation for them to use it immediately. Players should consider carefully whether they want to do so now or wait until they increase their license level so they can pick up more appropriate talents and gain additional licensed gear. Notably, **GMS FRAMES** are powerful mechs that players will have built their characters to suit – and this is even more pronounced for players who have saved their **CORE POWER**.

FROSTY NPCS

Frosty NPCs (3 or below) will generally not help the PCs unless they have a good reason, and might even hinder them. They won’t necessarily be openly hostile or violent (though some might, if pushed), but might engage in low-stakes social conflict or sabotage the PCs more passively, making relevant checks **DIFFICULT** or **RISKY**.

If a relationship clock is reduced to zero segments, that NPC will refuse to have anything to do with the PCs beyond the bare minimum required by formality, and any future increases will be nearly impossible.

ROMANCE AND SEXUALITY

The sexualities of NPCs in *Shadow of the Wolf* are purposefully unspecified and have no direct bearing on the core narrative. Praya and Argo are partners in a mutually beneficial political arrangement, but no other relationships or romantic entanglements are explicitly specified. If these topics matter to your players, you are free to portray the NPCs as best suits the story you want to tell.

Romance and sexuality can be sensitive subjects at the table, and not all players and GMs will want to interact with them in the same way (or at all!). If you and your players decide to engage with these subjects, make sure you follow any expectations you set in session zero, and check in with each other as necessary.

NPC RELATIONSHIP BENEFITS

Archchancellor Sigune	+1 ACCURACY when making skill checks to influence College faculty or staff
Underbaron Iphianassa	RKF TAGETES with REDUNDANT SYSTEMS UPGRADE preinstalled
Lord Castor	RKF TARAXACUM with MULE HARNESS preinstalled
Stablemaster Imani	HORUS HECATONCHEIRES with HIVE DRONE preinstalled
Lady Achilleia	ENTANGLED CO-CONSCIOUSNESS RIG (Exotic Gear, see p. 98)
Lord Hesketh	1/mission use of the SMART AMMO reserve (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 51)
Dean Hebriyah	1/mission use of the REINFORCEMENTS reserve (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 52). Can only be used on College grounds; the reinforcing NPC is chosen from among Friendly students.
Eligos	Access to the College’s records and systems, granting +1 ACCURACY on related checks
Lord Praya	Will hesitate at the start of COMBAT 8 , giving each PC one free move after deployment in 8A , or arriving one turn later in 8B .
Count Argo	Will divulge the full plan in BEAT 10 without requiring a skill check
Principissa Elsa	1/mission use of the REDUNDANT REPAIR reserve (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 51)
Lady Kiriona	CHAMPION’S FAVOR (EXOTIC GEAR , see p. 98)
Lord Tomas	RKF TARAXACUM with ACESO STABILIZER preinstalled
Primors Vivian & Valentine	1/mission use of the BLACKMAIL reserve (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 51)
Lord Aloysius	HORUS HECATONCHEIRES with SCANNER SWARM preinstalled
Captain Hedros	RKF TAGETES with ANDROMEDA-PATTERN HEAVY LASER RIFLE preinstalled
Kay	The EXTRA REPAIRS reserve (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 51) 1/mission for each PC
Rawan Azar	1/mission use of the CORE BATTERY reserve (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 51)
Augur Kahin	1/mission use of the SAFE HARBOR reserve (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 51)
Soto	1/mission use of the DIVERSION reserve (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 51)

3 Unlike **RESERVES**, PCs retain access to **EXOTIC GEAR** even if their relationship with the NPC in question takes a turn for the worse.

FACULTY



ARCHCHANCELLOR BARONESS SIGUNE ZOEVA OF HOUSE CALYX

SHE/HER
HOUSE OF ORDER
CLOCK: 5 (NEUTRAL, WATCHFUL)



"A trillion people sleep soundly each night because we execute our duty with faith and without compromise."

Archchancellor Sigune is an older woman with a stately bearing and piercing eyes. She dresses impeccably for every occasion, is always accompanied by at least one or two flunkies, and uses a many-legged chair for mobility.

The baroness and matriarch of House Calyx, a minor house of the House of Order, the archchancellor achieved her position through artful political maneuvering, leveraging a decorated early career as a long-term strategist in the BUC to become head of one of the most prestigious military institutions in the Concern. She has been archchancellor for nearly four decades and it is now hard to imagine the College without her.

Sigune is a Karrakin traditionalist in a way that embodies almost every stereotype about the House of Order. She cleaves to tradition and proper courtly manner, and expects those about her to do the same. She understands more than anyone else at the College that her stewardship of the institution is as much an act of service to the Karrakin people as it is a position of personal power.



UNDERBARON IPHIANASSA GENEIA AKRITA DI KHAYRADI, HERO OF THE LUDRAN FIELDS

SHE/HER
HOUSE OF STONE
CLOCK: 4 (NEUTRAL, HAWKISH)



"Failure is the domain of the traitorous and the incompetent. I do not accept excuses, only success."

Underbaron Iphianassa is every inch the veteran's veteran. She is statuesque and battle-scarred, and her conservative Khayradi uniform bears a number of notable decorations dating back nearly four centuries of military service.

Iphianassa is notionally the head of House Akrita, a minor house that lost every other noble member during the Interest War and as a result was incorporated into House di Khayradi. In response to the loss of her house, the young Iphianassa began a long career in the military that has included suppression efforts against the rebels on Sanjak and multiple extended tours to and from the Dawnline Shore. Subjectively, she is an old soldier; the effects of time dilation have rendered her one of the oldest veterans in the BUC.

Eventually, Iphianassa's long service and extensive experience of war saw her recognised as the best candidate to teach the Tactical Syllabus at the College. Her conservative approach does not allow for compromise: she respects veterans, tolerates the pankrati, and has little time for those whose place at the College was secured through connections rather than merit.



LORD CASTOR-EYROS, SECOND HERALD OF SMOKE

HE/THEY

HOUSE OF SMOKE

CLOCK: 6 (NEUTRAL, OPTIMISTIC)



"The parade ground and the foxhole are both alike in dignity, for it is not our circumstances that define us but how we respond to them."

Lord Castor is youthful by the standards of the senior faculty; his rugged countenance and winning smile are a common sight as he delivers ceremonial speeches and lectures alike. In spite of these responsibilities, Castor is the member of faculty least often seen in formal or work clothing.

As a younger noble within the House of Smoke, Castor gained the title of herald for his skills in poetry, music, and performance. His compositions (both literary and musical) are known across the Concern, so it was a shock to many artistic peers when he chose not to accept the position of First Herald of Smoke – instead opting to head the College's Noble Arts Syllabus.

Lord Castor sees true value in art for art's sake and openly picks as his favorites those who he regards as having true passion for their work. Behind the scenes, however, he also has a shrewd and calculating mind ideal for politics, and an ambition set to greater social heights than, as one of his critics put it, "a glorified court entertainer".



STABLEMASTER IMANI RUDILIS

THEY/THEM

HOUSE OF WATER

CLOCK: 5 (NEUTRAL, FOCUSED)



"A mech does precisely what you design and build it to do, and no more. No amount of prayer improves shoddy engineering."

The only member of the senior faculty from a Republican world, Imani does not care for the demands of tradition and nobility. They wear their hair short, and are normally found with their uniform covered in grease and chemical stains.

Imani began a career on Umara as a land-reclamation engineer before being recruited by the BUC for research into the military applications of terraforming nanites. Their tour in the BUC exposed them to a new passion in the form of mech engineering. This led them to transfer to the College as one of its landscape-repair specialists – a foothold they soon leveraged into a position in the Stables, and after dedicated work, a promotion to facility head and coordinator of the College's Technical Syllabus.

Imani is the kind of teacher who is more interested in the lesson than the student. Their position as stablemaster allows them to indulge their obsession with chassis design, seeing as they are nominally in charge of all chassis on campus. They are deeply uninterested in personal or political problems but can tell you by sight alone which designer made your Monarch.

OTHER NOTABLE FACULTY

LADY ACHILLEIA CORTAIN JOYEUSE-MONTMORENCY

SHE/HER

HOUSE OF GLASS

CLOCK: 6 (NEUTRAL, HOPEFUL)



“A blade is a tool designed to kill. It can be turned to other ends, but you must never forget its primary purpose – bad habits invite a swift death.”

Lady Achilleia is a former pankrati and one of the finest competitive duelists of her generation. She teaches fencing alongside several other martial arts and supervises athletic training regimes for the students. Unofficially, she also organizes the College’s pankration mekani tourneys.

She is jovial, energetic, and painfully enthusiastic, and though she takes a shine to any student with an interest in sports, she is quick to agree with Iphi-anassa that pankration mekani is a world apart from warfare.

DEAN COMMANDER (RTD.) HEBRIYAH DOLEROS

SHE/HER

HOUSE OF STONE

CLOCK: 4 (NEUTRAL, DISTRUSTING)



“The fact that you are allowed to study in these distinguished halls is an incredible privilege. Act like you deserve it.”

The dean is a dour and uncompromising veteran of the feared Khayradin Elites, bodyguards to the Stonelords. Retired with honors to the College from the service of Stonelord Hyderad-Cannamos, she attempts to maintain the institution’s delicate balance between the BUC’s military discipline and the greater freedoms accorded to the nobility.

Hebriyah has no formal teaching duties, but occasionally provides guest lectures on zero-g combat; she spends most of her time handling disciplinary matters and liaising with the College’s ceremonial security detail.

LORD HESKETH VIII MORGAN

HE/HIM

HOUSE OF MOMENTS

CLOCK: 5 (NEUTRAL, DISTANT)



“A soldier lives and dies on what they know, and when they know it. What you can’t see can, in fact, hurt you a great deal.”

Formerly with Baronic Intelligence, Lord Hesketh has since retired to teach. His primary areas of competence are intelligence analysis, reconnaissance, and infiltration. Popular rumor has it that he is secretly a recruiter for Baronic Intelligence, picking out promising candidates from the student body.

The eighth of his clone line, Lord Hesketh is keenly aware of how things can go wrong in the line of duty and seeks to avoid the fate of his past selves through hypervigilance and thorough preparedness.

ELIGOS

IT/ITS

HOUSE OF ORDER

CLOCK: 2 (FROSTY, DISDAIN)



“I am not a comp/con, and neither am I your servant. I have a College to run. Find someone else to bother.”

Eligos is the College’s CORONET-class administrative NHP, responsible for much of the logistics and paperwork behind the scenes. It is known for its deep conservatism, and for loathing the student body, which it sees as disruptive to the effective running of the College. A popular description of Eligos given to the newly matriculated is, “imagine if a building could decide to hate you”.

Eligos is very old, set in its ways, and does not have much patience for students. It is extraordinarily hard to push its relationship clock above Frosty; any check to do so requires a Heroic roll (warn players about this before they invest effort into improving its relationship clock).



**LORD PRAYA-CANNAMOS,
THE IRONHANDED, FIRST
DAUGHTER AND GRAVEN
HEIR OF STONELORD
HYDERAD-CANNAMOS**

SHE/HER

HOUSE OF STONE

CLOCK: 2 (FROSTY, BELLIGERENT)



"I think you have misunderstood. This is not a dialogue. Do what I want, get out of my way, or face the consequences."

Lord Praya is a tall and looming presence who seems to dominate any space through a combination of sheer physicality and force of personality. She exclusively wears a traditional Khayradi uniform complete with extensive noble trappings and military decorations.

The Graven Heir of House Cannamos, Praya is set to inherit the title of Stonelord from her father, who is positioning himself as the successor to the current Prime Baron. At the helm of the House of Stone, House Cannamos seeks to reinforce a traditionalist view of Karrakin society in response to an uncertain future. Praya is her father's daughter – powerful, intimidating, and an unabashed bully unafraid to seize power through any means necessary.

Praya is one of the main antagonists of *Shadow of the Wolf*, and is primarily responsible for the events of the mission series. Even if she comes to respect the PCs (which is extremely unlikely), she considers them potential opponents, and treats them as inherently disposable.



**COUNT ARGO-LAURENT,
THE WOLF'S BLADE,
STORIED SON OF TILIMSAN**

HE/HIM

HOUSE OF SAND

CLOCK: 1 (FROSTY, SNIPING)



"Only the fool does not anticipate conflict. The mediocre soul prepares for it. The wise one strikes first."

Count Argo is a slight man typically dressed in plain Tilimsani clothing that belies his station. He has a wiry, poised build that might initially suggest a trained dancer and a furtive gaze that pays altogether too much attention to everything going on around him.

Argo is a trained (and exceptionally capable) House of Sand assassin, and a noble of House Laurent. This training and his membership of the feared Sandmen is an open secret, as is a politically motivated engagement to Praya. House Laurent is the real power behind the House of Sand, and stands alongside House Cannamos as one of the Hagiographic houses pushing a strongly conservative agenda in Baronial politics.

By nature, Argo prefers confrontation on his own terms. One might accuse him of cowardice, but to do so would risk choking on poison or finding a blade in one's back. Fully on board with Praya's plans, he is the second of the story's main antagonists and sees the PCs as little better than vermin.



PRINCIPISSA ELSA REGELINDA LAVERA ZOEVA OF HOUSE CALYX

SHE/HER
HOUSE OF ORDER
CLOCK: 3 (FROSTY, HAUGHTY)



"There are five great joys in life. Principle among them is knowing, in all certainty, that you are better than everyone around you."

Principissa Elsa would not be caught dead in something so mundane as a uniform. Her perfectly honed, extravagant dress sense makes her a noted trendsetter among the younger nobles of Throne Karrakis, and her eye for fashion extends even to her mech.

As principissa of House Calyx, Elsa is the daughter of the archchancellor and heir to the house. Her mother has accorded her every privilege and subjected her to every expectation. Despite her pampered demeanor, years of training and a childhood spent in the College have made her an exceptionally capable mech pilot and military leader. She seeks both to earn her mother's approval and to emulate the heroes she saw around her as a child.

Elsa presents a frosty exterior as part of a projected image of nobility, but does a poor job of hiding her obsessions with pankration mekani and its celebrity champions, and the literary ideal of the kavalier – which she seeks to someday embody. She also has a romantic streak, and is a particular fan of Karrakin historical dramas and omninovelas.



LADY KIRIONA, BRIGHTSTAR RISING OF THE HOUSE OF MOMENTS

SHE/HER
HOUSE OF MOMENTS
CLOCK: 6 (NEUTRAL, GREGARIOUS)



"The other great joys are piloting mechs, winning duels, drinking wine, and fucking. If you're not enjoying yourself, what's the point?"

Lady Kiriona is the very model of a Karrakin pankrati and kavalier: a gene-tailored facsimile clone of the legendary Underbaron Moulin-Noel, otherwise known as Brightstar. She projects boundless energy and an infectious excitement for everything she does.

Kiriona was the only one of her batch-siblings to complete the Endless Company's squiring program with honors sufficient for a recommendation to the Throne Karrakis campus. Now, she has the opportunity to become a kavalier in her own right with a guaranteed posting to the Endless Company waiting after graduation. So far she has handled the pressure of her genetic legacy and the title of Brightstar Rising with aplomb – though perhaps not grace – propelled by a frankly astonishing degree of optimism and self-confidence.

Her primary mech combat experience to this point is pankration mekani, at which she excels. Like many pankrati, Kiriona prefers to work hard and play hard, and in her downtime can most often be found training (both combat and athletic), tinkering with her mech, or partying.



LORD TOMAS ALFAROZ, LAST SCION OF HOUSE ALFAROZ

HE/HIM

HOUSE OF REMEMBRANCE

CLOCK: 5 (NEUTRAL, FEARFUL)



"If I could shirk my responsibilities and spend my days writing poetry, I would. But not all of us get to choose who we are."

Rather unassuming, Lord Tomas looks as distinctly uncomfortable in his traditional Arrudyen formalwear as he does his own skin.

The formal title of "last scion" was forced on Tomas by parents who have controlled much of his life in their attempts to craft him into the ideal heir. They are responsible for his presence at the College – he was sent to the military to "toughen him up" and "teach him some discipline". He has put a great deal of effort into living up to his parents' desires, but the conflict between those pressures and his naturally retiring, thoughtful personality has resulted in a deep melancholy.

Tomas is a surprisingly capable pilot, but only begrudgingly so. He studies hard to please his parents, though he is not a violent or confrontational person by nature. His true passion is for art, especially poetry, at which he excels – he can recite verse from memory, covering a diverse set of cultures and historical periods, and in a variety of styles. His dream is to one day travel the galaxy and see more of Union beyond the Concern.



PRIMORS VIVIAN & VALENTINE REIS

ANY/ALL

HOUSE OF GLASS

CLOCK: 6 (NEUTRAL, MERCURIAL)



*"I love it when the heroes save the day."
"Me too. Shame there's nobody to save them from their fashion choices."*

Primor Vivian and Primor Valentine are twins from House Reis who are rarely seen apart, to the point that they are usually spoken of in the same breath. They are most notable for their extravagant, even outlandish sense of Ispahsalari style, and their biting social commentary.

The primors are minor nobles within House Reis, a house that specializes in exotic technology and para-causal esoterica. Their eccentricity hides a darker side; they are secretly in the employ of a senior Ispahsalari noble who covets the archchancellor's position and is hoping to one day succeed her. This is a slow-burn plan that involves upsetting the established order by leaking information and undermining both the seriousness of the College's business and the authority of the faculty. The twins are absolutely exploiting it for their own ends.

Vivian and Valentine are notoriously mercurial and some might regard them as cruel. They are overtly and enthusiastically friendly to those around them, but are also happy to trick or prank others for their own amusement.



LORD ALOYSIUS VEREDUS FLYTE, STEWARD APPARENT OF THE TOWER ROAD

HE/HIM

HOUSE OF SMOKE

CLOCK: 6 (NEUTRAL, CURIOUS)



“History has many lessons to teach us, if we care to listen. Whether we choose to heed those lessons is another matter entirely.”

Lord Aloysius is a younger man with a thin face and quizzical eyes. His uniform is plain but sharply tailored, and in conversation he gives little away, rarely showing emotion and not given to expansive gestures.

House Flyte is an exceedingly ancient minor house with a genealogy tracing back to the High Passacaglian Period and the colonization of Eyalet-a. It is notable to historians for having made a claim to the Annorum Throne during the Last Argument. As the House of Smoke teeters on the edge of Republicanism, House Flyte is among those that stand to lose most.

Aloysius has vowed not to stand idly by as his inheritance is stripped from him, and is engaged in a clandestine plan to solidify his political standing by gaining allies on Karrakis and within the BUC before returning to Eyalet-a and crushing his political opponents. He is a savvy politician who curries favor from many sources; he is likely to identify the PCs as either potential friends or pawns, and approach them accordingly.



CAPTAIN HEDROS NADEER

HE/HIM

HOUSE OF DUST

CLOCK: 5 (NEUTRAL,
STRAIGHTFORWARD)



“When the bullets start flying, your priorities change. The why doesn’t matter to the kid who gets shot. You just make sure you get out alive.”

Captain Hedros is a literal poster boy for the Karrakin ideal of the “young buck” – the popular image of the BUC soldier as heroic go-getter, boldly carrying the flag of the Federal Karrakin Monarchy into the wider galaxy. Stalwart, serious, and driven, spending any amount of time with Hedros makes it clear he is the real deal: a combat veteran who unquestionably achieved and deserves his place at the College through merit alone.

Hedros’ drive and experience make him one of the most skilled mech pilots in the student body, a fact he feels no particular need to demonstrate. In fact, his attitude to combat is distinctly reserved and he is quick to temper any enthusiasm on the part of his peers with a reminder that real warfare is a hellish experience with serious consequences.

Privately, Hedros struggles with being held up by the BUC as a hero. He finds it difficult to reconcile this image of himself with his guilt over acts he committed when suppressing radical Ungrateful cells operating from beyond the borders of the Concern.



KAY

SHE/HER

HOUSE OF WATER

CLOCK: 5 (NEUTRAL, SHY)



"Oh, this'll be real simple. You just need a custom thermal linkage and some elbow grease. I've sure seen a lot worse."

Kay is exuberant and cheery when in her element, but struggles with the unfamiliar traditions of the nobility and is somewhat shy and anxious around strangers. She normally wears practical and comfortable work clothing, but defaults to military uniform for more formal functions.

A citizen of the Republican House of Water, Kay is one of the BUC's most talented engineers and has been building mechs since she was six. Her mother is the chief engineer of one of Umara's largest chassis foundries, and Kay practically grew up in the workshop alongside the Foundry's design team. Ordinarily, she would have risen to a senior engineering or design position, but she was handpicked by Stablemaster Imani to be their squire. As a noble practice, squiring is alien to both Umarans, but it allows Imani to take Kay on as a protege despite her combat experience being limited to an admittedly impressive number of hours in-simulator.

Kay is a fast learner who is striving to make the most of the opportunity. She is very excited to be among the BUC's most talented pilots and on the cutting edge of chassis design and operation.



RAWAN AZAR

SHE/THEY

HOUSE OF PROMISE

CLOCK: 6 (NEUTRAL, CAUTIOUS)



"If you refuse to examine the system that benefits you, how can you be sure you won't be its victim someday?"

Rawan actively refuses to conform to typical standards of Karrakin noble dress or presentation; both her attitude and attire would certainly cause trouble in a more conventional military context, but the freedoms accorded to students at the College have given her leeway to flout traditional standards.

Publicly, Rawan is sponsored by the petitioning House of Promise and claims to be a citizen of San Simeon in the Baron's Interest, positioned to join the house's banner company should the house be enrolled. She is certainly an extremely talented mech pilot, but in reality this was not an aptitude developed in proxy skirmishes against Harrison Armory: instead, it was earned through bitter conflict on Sanjak. Rawan is in fact an Ungrateful partisan, part of an extended plot from Republican revolutionary interests to gather intelligence on the BUC and position agents near seats of power and influence.

Rawan's headstrong, rebellious nature arguably does not make her the best choice for a covert agent in noble society, but her combat skills and passion for the cause are undeniable, and so far she has kept her mission secret – if not her political leanings.

OTHER STUDENTS

There are many other students who are not represented here. If you need other students in a hurry, or if your players are struggling for ideas when coming up with names or backgrounds, you can create student characters quickly using the following tables. First, roll for or pick one choice from each table to determine a **name**, a **sponsor**, and a **personality** quirk. Then, roll a d10 (half of a d20, rounded up) or select an appropriate value for their starting relationship clock.

STUDENT NAMES

ROLL 1D20

- | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | Lady Terese Montague |
| 2 | Lord Felix Vetch |
| 3 | Dame Edessa-Kass |
| 4 | Vice-Baron Craterus Roban |
| 5 | Lady Sanna Adelmari |
| 6 | Primor Argo-Rhei |
| 7 | Marchesa Laria Belmont |
| 8 | Archon Valerian Caprifoli |
| 9 | Duchess Rosaline Cosimo Diadochos |
| 10 | Principe Tybalt Deigatti |
| 11 | Lady Carlotta Hannelore d'Espina |
| 12 | Anax Ktesiphon Spyros |
| 13 | Princess Hiba Mezian |
| 14 | Lord Cassander-End CCLVII |
| 15 | Jennet-Yan |
| 16 | Braigon Grieg |
| 17 | Anastasia Pentecost |
| 18 | Erech Tornitz Clott |
| 19 | Juno Sayar |
| 20 | Bernhard Hari |

SPONSOR

ROLL 1D20

- | | |
|-------|-----------------------|
| 1-2 | Federal Karrakin Army |
| 3-4 | Federal Karrakin Navy |
| 5-6 | Major House |
| 7-8 | Minor House |
| 9-10 | Noble Patron |
| 11-12 | Banner Company |
| 13-14 | House Company |
| 15-16 | Free Company |
| 17-18 | Non-Karrakin State |
| 19-20 | Independently Wealthy |

QUIRK

ROLL 1D20

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1 | Behaves and dresses extravagantly under all circumstances |
| 2 | Uses an excessive number of titles, even by Karrakin standards |
| 3 | Follows BUC standards and regulations to the letter |
| 4 | Dreams of achieving glory in war, and seeks to emulate their military heroes |
| 5 | Will challenge students to a duel to establish a pecking order |
| 6 | Will challenge students to a duel over an intellectual disagreement |
| 7 | Will challenge students to a duel as a romantic advance |
| 8 | Uses expensive, overengineered custom gear they barely understand |
| 9 | Tells preposterous tall tales about conflicts they supposedly fought in |
| 10 | Genuinely exceptional at a very specific discipline valued by the BUC |
| 11 | Believes themselves to be the absolute best at everything they do |
| 12 | Is an unsubtle Neo-Passacaglian with deeply concerning politics |
| 13 | Is an unabashed Republican who can quote from Tyrannocleave's pamphlets by heart |
| 14 | Is a clone of a famous Karrakin military hero from the Interest War |
| 15 | Is obsessed with pankration mekani and wants to become a champion someday |
| 16 | Frequently consults with augurs over even the most trivial matters |
| 17 | Comes from a distinct non-Karrakin culture (e.g., Sparri, Aunic, etc.) |
| 18 | Is a Cosmopolitan displaced from their home era by extended nearlight travel |
| 19 | Believes a complex conspiracy theory which alleges that Tyrannus had a third, unrecorded child named Tithonia |
| 20 | Always has the best gossip and is obsessed with finding out secrets |

SAMPLE CLASSES

While this mission series heavily features mech combat, the College doesn't focus solely on fighting! The three Syllabi each have a wide variety of lectures, classes, and other opportunities to put skills into practice. The classes are typically in-depth, highly technical, and extremely demanding – requiring a great deal of skill and pushing students to their intellectual limits.

The tables in this section give some examples of classes for each Syllabus. You can roll on the tables or choose from them when running interpersonal scenes or if you want to put the spotlight on the PCs studying. If you run a scene in which a PC takes a class, consider giving that PC a single-use **RESERVE** that grants **Accuracy** on a related skill check.

TACTICAL

SYLLABUS

ROLL 1D20

1-2	Tactical Doctrine: High-level concepts governing standard BUC responses
3-4	Standard Adversary Chassis: Engaging Sherman, Everest, and other common frames
5-6	Nonstandard Adversary Chassis: Engaging HORUS pattern groups, repurposed industrial equipment, and other improvised weaponry
7-8	Combined Arms Approaches: Integrating with infantry, vehicles, and air support
9-10	Zero-G Combat: Maneuvering and combat in and around ships and stations
11-12	Combat Gunnery: Efficient and effective weapons operation and targeting
13-14	High-Density Environments: Maneuvering and combat with poor sight lines and heavy cover
15-16	Adverse Conditions: Operating in areas of extreme atmospheric or environmental hazard
17-18	Loadout Analysis: Effective selection and use of specific weapons and gear based on practical field data
19-20	Pushing the Envelope: Advanced piloting techniques and pushing frames beyond their technical limits

TECHNICAL

SYLLABUS

ROLL 1D20

1-2	Running Hot: Effective heat generation, management, and dispersal
3-4	Custom System Integration: Installing equipment from non-approved and third party manufacturers
5-6	Field Servicing in Practice: Making repairs under adverse conditions, with limited time, materials, and tooling
7-8	Distributed Systems: Effective operation of nexus weaponry, nanite hives, and drones
9-10	Electronic Warfare: Analysis of common ECM and ECCM techniques, hostile code-strains, and their effective countermeasures
11-12	Threat Systems: Detailed technical specifications and operational theory behind cutting-edge adversary systems
13-14	Intelligence Analysis: Signals and imaging acquisition and analysis, and its integration with field-acquired data
15-16	Failure Modes: Analysis of aggregated field data on chassis failure and precautionary/mitigation techniques
17-18	Paracausal Analysis: Break-down of known principles of engineering with common paracausal phenomena
19-20	Co-pilot Systems: Integration and maintenance of mil-spec comp/cons and NHPs

NOBLE ARTS

SYLLABUS

ROLL 1D20

1-2	From Dynastyclade to Federation: A History of Calendula's Political Reforms
3-4	High Passacaglian Architecture and the Neo-Laurentian Movement
5-6	Corporate Statecraft and Diplomacy with Non-Traditional Politics
7-8	Ontologies of Personhood: The Philosophical Implications of Non-Human Intelligences
9-10	The Great Seven Formal Dances and their Variants
11-12	First Contact: Union Influences on New Federation-Era Literature
13-14	Ornamental Flower Hybridization and Selection of Characteristics Through Transgenic Modification
15-16	Passions Across Worlds: Cross-Concern Comparative Analysis of Bond Readings and Divination Ceremonies
17-18	Modern Developmental Psychology and Its Influence on Rapidfax and Traditional Facsimile Cloning Programs
19-20	Words of Heritage: The Influence of Apollonian Languages on Modern Karrakin

MISSION 1: NO POINTS FOR SECOND PLACE

VIPER: "In case some of you are wondering who the best is, they are up here on this plaque. Do you think your name will be on that plaque?"

MAVERICK: "Yes, sir."

VIPER: "That's pretty arrogant, considering the company you're in."

MAVERICK: "Yes, sir."

VIPER: "I like that in a pilot."

– Top Gun (1986)

MISSION BEATS

BEAT 1: UNFASHIONABLY LATE

BEAT 2: THORNS AMONG ROSES

COMBAT 1: KNOW YOUR PLACE

BEAT 3: NEW BLOOD

COMBAT 2: PANKRATI, CHARGE

BEAT 4: DOWN TO BUSINESS

BEAT 5: UNFRIENDLY COMPETITION

COMBAT 3: TRIAL BY FIRE

COMBAT 4: THE HARLEQUIN'S KNIFE

BEAT 6: AFTERMATH

DOWNTIME: CALM BEFORE THE STORM

BRIEFING

This is not a traditional *Lancer* mission. Most of the information the players have access to before they join the College is outlined in **Sections 1** and **2** above, although you can reveal additional information from this section as appropriate. The mission starts as the PCs arrive at the College for the first time; their main goal is to make it through their first term at the College and pass their examinations.

The PCs' mechs have been transported to the College separately and brought to assigned bays in the Stables, where they are stored when not in use and can be repaired between combats.

SUMMARY

After arriving at the College, the PCs are confronted by Lord Praya and Count Argo, after which they have an opportunity to meet the other students and make friends before getting down to the hard work of studying. The first few beats of this mission are tightly paced to ensure the PCs are introduced to the central conflict and major NPCs as soon as possible.

The exams at the end of the first term include a skirmish against members of the faculty. There, the PCs may face sabotage, followed by a desperate fight for survival against a mysterious third party.

Mission Objectives: Make it through the College's notorious training regimen and pass the examinations at the end of the first term.

Stakes: Failure will result in any of a variety of social and personal consequences. In most cases, dropping out or being expelled will put a significant dampener on anyone's career.

Reward: Characters have opportunities to gain **RESERVES** and other rewards including variant **FRAMES**, as well as enough combat experience to progress to **LL1**.

Reserves: As starting characters, the PCs won't have any **RESERVES** to bring with them.

BEAT 1

UNFASHIONABLY LATE

SCENE GOALS

- Introduce the PCs to each other
- Introduce the archchancellor and faculty
- Challenge the PCs with a disorienting and high-pressure social situation
- Once the PCs are done meeting the faculty, transition swiftly out into the gardens

It is the first day of the academic year at the Karrakin Cavalry College, and the PCs are late to the Matriculation Ball. This beat introduces the PCs to the College itself as well as key members of the faculty. Their first challenge is a social one: make a good first impression with their tutors, despite their late arrival.

Stepping from the groundcars that swept you across Throne Karrakis and into the grounds of the College, you find yourselves dwarfed by the monumental entrance of the Lykeon, where colossal stone supporting figures are draped in the heraldry of heroes past. Under their watchful gaze, you smell the faint tang of ozone and hear the audible sizzle of raindrops hitting the small projected shield erected between the vehicles and the entrance.

Before you can catch more than a glimpse of the superbly manicured gardens beyond, the Lykeon's heavy doors spill warm yellow light and the noise of a distant gathering out into the humid evening air. White-gloved ushers hurry you inside, along grand corridors to the entrance of the Lykeon's main ballroom.

As the doors open, a herald announces your full names and titles to the assembled gathering.

Here, we meet the PCs. Who are they? What do they look like? What name and title(s) are they announced with? And, perhaps most importantly, what are they wearing to this formal ball?

The hubbub of conversation dims briefly in deference, until returning to a hundred different conversations backed by the refined strains of a chamber orchestra. The ballroom is a riot of color and sparkling light; students and faculty mingle and dance in a mixture of military uniforms and elaborate formalwear in a panoply of styles and fashions from across the Concern.

It is clear that you are late to the ball, and not even fashionably so – you must have missed the commencement speeches, as dancers already twirl on the central floor and conversations are in full swing around you. Gathered together near the entrance, most of the room has paid you little mind since your introduction.

You only have a few moments to compose yourselves and make any formal introductions to each other before you spot an older woman through the crowd whose steely eyes fix you with an unamused glare. She is dressed in an immaculate gown in rich purple with floating sleeves that seem to defy gravity, positively dripping with jewelry. She approaches you in a mechanical legged chair accompanied by functionaries wearing the more austere dress uniform of the college staff.

This is Archchancellor Baroness Sigune Zoeva of House Calyx of the House of Order, head of the College. She is not pleased that the PCs were late to the ball.

"I am not accustomed to having students disappoint me before I even meet them. I trust you have good explanations for your tardiness?"

Explaining why they were late is an opportunity for players to get creative with their characterization and immediately get into their characters' heads. Each character might have a different reason; how they explain themselves (or not) is up to the player. These explanations can be accompanied with a skill check (perhaps using **Charm**, **Stay Cool**, or another appropriate trigger).

After explanations, the archchancellor continues:

"In any case, as archchancellor I extend my formal welcome to the Karrakin Cavalry College. Since you missed the commencement speeches, you should meet your tutors."

She gestures to a functionary, who then guides the PCs through the ballroom to introduce three key members of faculty: Underbaron Iphianassa Akrita di Khayradi, head of the Tactical Syllabus; Stablemaster Imani Rudilis, head of the Technical Syllabus; and lastly, Lord Castor-Eyros, head of the Noble Arts Syllabus. Underbaron Iphianassa is wearing a Khayradi dress uniform, Stablemaster Imani wears standard (though slightly grubby) BUC greens, and Lord Castor is dressed in a half cape with a fashionable formal shirt slashed to the navel.

As the PCs approach, the three are discussing their impressions of the new intake of students and their preparations for the coming term. How the PCs choose to navigate these encounters will strongly inform their relationships with the staff going forward. This is definitely an opportunity for the PCs to put their collective feet in their mouths, but also an opportunity to ingratiate themselves. If necessary, the PCs can make a skill check (**Read A Situation** and **Word on the Street** might be applicable here) to figure out the best way to approach the faculty members.

Unless any of the PCs choose to engage them directly in conversation, or are particularly interesting for some other reason, Iphianassa and Imani will both make their excuses and leave the PCs with Castor, who is much more patient and happy to answer questions.



LORD CASTOR-EYROS: QUESTIONS

Q: Did we miss anything?

A: “Oh, the administrative part has been taken care of already, don’t worry. Tonight was just the usual speeches. Mine was rather good, if I do say so myself, but I won’t bore you by repeating it. Suffice to say that the archchancellor has the standard high hopes for you all, the underbaron does not, and our good stablemaster did not want to be here at all. As for me? I’m much more interested in meeting our new students; I have no doubt that you are here for good reason.”

Q: Are we in trouble?

A: “I’m sure the archchancellor was disapproving. I don’t believe that woman has been late to anything in her entire life. But as long as you don’t repeat the mistake, I’m sure it can be overlooked just this once. Sometimes these things cannot be helped.”

Q: What happens next?

A: “Well, once the formal part is out of the way, I’m sure everyone will want to blow off some steam. Have a drink! Dance! Meet people! Enjoy yourselves! Being here is hard work, and it will begin in earnest tomorrow, so you should take these moments while you can.”

Once introductions and questions are out of the way, a bell chimes. This is the sign that the formal part of the ball is over. Lord Castor recommends that the PCs go and mingle with other students in the gardens; he intends to retire for the evening. As the PCs do so, move to **Beat 2: Thorns Among Roses**.

BEAT 2: THORNS AMONG ROSES

SCENE GOALS

- Introduce the antagonists, Lord Praya and Count Argo, and make the players hate them
- Introduce their target, Rawan Azar, and make the players feel sympathetic
- Set up one of the simmering political conflicts that exists within the Baronies (the House of Stone vs. the Ungratefuls on Sanjak)
- Draw the PCs into the scene and set up antagonistic relationships with Praya and Argo

The Matriculation Ball is ending, but for the students the party is just beginning. In this beat, the PCs meet the primary antagonists and are unwittingly thrust into a challenging confrontation.

EXTENDING THE SCENE

While you should aim to move the PCs swiftly to the next beat, you can optionally extend the scene by giving the PCs chances to meet and socialize with fellow students in a formal setting, dance, listen in on (or spread) gossip, and have extended conversations with the faculty.

KEY NPCs

CLOCK

Archchancellor Baroness Sigune
Zoeva of House Calyx

5

Underbaron Iphianassa Geneia
Akrita di Khayradi

4

Lord Castor-Eyros

6

Stablemaster Imani Rudilis

5

RELATIONSHIP CLOCKS

Archchancellor Sigune: +1 if the PCs were polite and gave good explanations for their lateness.

Underbaron Iphianassa: +1 if the PCs behaved with military decorum.

Stablemaster Imani: +1 if the PCs demonstrated technical knowledge or interest.

Lord Castor: +1 if the PCs demonstrated particular passion for a topic.

Each faculty member: -1 if the PCs were rude or dismissive.

The night air is cool; it carries the sound of revelry and the faint scent of petrichor, the smell-after-rain. As you step into the gardens you find yourself walking between artful topiary screens designed to conceal, and shallow, mosaic-tiled ponds – and all throughout, flowers of every kind.

Making toward the closest sounds of laughter you round a corner and are struck by the sight of a plainly dressed figure, half-curved in a protective ball, being repeatedly and viciously kicked in the gut and head by a tall, muscular woman in an ornate uniform. A handful of students have gathered, and there is laughter at each successfully delivered kick.

The tall woman is Lord Praya-Cannamos of the House of Stone, and she barely registers the arrival of the PCs. She is accompanied at a slight aside by Count Argo-Laurent, who sneers and laughs cruelly at the spectacle. The victim of the assault is Rawan Azar, who earned Praya and Argo’s ire when they caught her speaking positively about the Sanjak Ungratefuls. All three are students at the College.

The figure on the ground cries out in a mix of pain, anger, and fear. "Help— FUCK! Fuckin' help me! Someone st— AGH!"

"There's no help coming for you, you Ungrateful- sympathizing piece of shit. Not for you or anyone like you. Not here." The uniformed woman delivers another kick.

If the PCs haven't already jumped in to intervene, Argo puts a hand on Praya's shoulder and points to them. She turns to confront them.

"Do you have a problem with this?" She rounds on you. "Don't make me teach you the same lesson."

The players can respond to this in a variety of ways. They might choose to intervene, immediately putting them in conflict with Praya and Argo. If they try to back off and let the beating continue, Argo doesn't let it go – he starts teasing them, calling them pathetic, and hammering home that he and Praya are better than they are.

This may goad the PCs into standing up for themselves, if not Rawan. If they still don't, Praya breaks off her beating and instead singles one of the PCs out for some perceived quality or slight, attempting to assert dominance.

Getting Praya and Argo to back down is a **skill challenge** (*Lancer*, p. 47). Each PC involved in the skill challenge makes a skill check using a trigger appropriate for their approach and how they contribute. Encourage your players to use their triggers creatively. Relevant backgrounds and pilot gear can also be invoked for **+1 ACCURACY**.

Success on the skill challenge means that the PCs rescue Rawan (or escape the situation without violence, if they are defending themselves). Praya and Argo back off, at least for now, and retire to a private party elsewhere.

Failure results in Praya challenging the PCs to a duel by sword on the spot. Such duels are ordinarily one-on-one, so any PC may step up to accept on behalf of the group. The duel is a **RISKY** skill check (perhaps using either **Apply Fists to Faces**, **Assault**, or **Show Off**), with the consequence being an injury – the duel might be to first blood, but Praya is a sore loser. Refusing to participate in the duel or openly breaking its rules is a big deal, and the PCs risk losing face if they do so; the consequence of doing this is a **–1** to the relationship clock for **all** noble NPCs (inform your players of this beforehand). Success in the duel means Praya and Argo back off as above. Failure means the PCs are forced to withdraw.

PCs might threaten to report Praya and Argo's behavior to the authorities or ask why they don't fear repercussions for assaulting a fellow student. Naturally, such a thing would be an inconvenience for them, but the dean's relationship with Praya's father and the political clout and connections wielded by both of their houses would be more than sufficient to cover up accusations or even direct evidence of bullying.

EXTENDING THE SCENE

The most straightforward ways to extend this scene include a conversation with Rawan (assuming the PCs rescue her), getting her medical treatment at the College's infirmary, or having the PCs move on and meet other students out in the gardens.

This scene is effectively an extended party, and is an excellent opportunity to develop the PCs' characterisation and explore how they relate to social situations. It is also an opportunity to meet other students in an environment that can be either formal or casual depending on how the PCs choose to approach them – though don't feel pressured to include all of the NPCs, given that the PCs will have the opportunity to meet everyone in **BEAT 3: NEW BLOOD**.

KEY NPCs

CLOCK

Lord Praya-Cannamos

2

Count Argo-Laurent

1

Rawan Azar

6

RELATIONSHIP CLOCKS

Rawan: +1 if the PCs stood up for her, **–3** if they didn't. An additional **+1** if they caused Praya and Argo to back down.

Lord Praya: **–1** if the PCs stood up for Rawan. An additional **–1** if she is defeated in a duel.

Count Argo: **–1** if the PCs stood up for Rawan.

Lady Achilleia: +1 if a duel occurred and a PC was victorious (you can keep this secret if the PCs have not yet met Achilleia).

All noble NPCs: **–1** if the PCs refused a duel, or were caught cheating during one.

COMBAT 1: KNOW YOUR PLACE

SCENE GOALS

- Introduce the PCs' mechs (get the players to describe them!)
- Get the PCs used to working together
- Put the PCs in a situation where their enemies are coordinated and have a game plan going in, and they have to organize themselves on the fly to succeed
- At some point if a character misses, describe the containment fields flickering to absorb the shot, in order to seed the idea for later

Sitrep: Special – King of the Hill. Both sides fully deploy in their respective **Deployment Zones**, enemy forces first.

Objective: Have a greater number of PCs in the **Control Zone** than enemies at the end of the sixth round.

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: Lord Praya-Cannamos, "Titan". **ELITE VETERAN GOLIATH** (Power Knuckle, Pin, Veterancy [+Hull], Legendary)
Count Argo-Laurent, "Sandman". **ELITE VETERAN ASSASSIN** (Spinning Kick, Cloud Projector, Veterancy [+Agility], Legendary)
Lord Aloysius Veredus Flyte, "Pilgrim". **MIRAGE** (Multiplicity)

For 4 PCs: +1x **HORNET** (Lock/Hold Javelins)

For 5 PCs: +1x **HORNET** (Lock/Hold Javelins)
+1x **ASSASSIN** (Cloud Projector)

REINFORCEMENTS

This sitrep has no reinforcements. Deploy all enemies at the start of combat.

BRIEFING

The next morning,⁴ the PCs discover they have been challenged to a formal duel under the College's regulations for mechanized combat. The appellants' names are listed as "Lord Praya-Cannamos, the Ironhanded, First Daughter and Graven Heir of Stonelord Hyderad-Cannamos", and "Count Argo, the Wolf's Blade, of the

4 If one or more PCs took a stealthy approach to resolving the events of **Beat 2** and were not noticed, the challenge might not be issued immediately due to gossip taking time to filter through the student body. Even if the PCs fool everyone, Praya and Argo are not reasonable people and will eventually find some other reason to get angry at them.

House Laurent of the House of Sand, storied son of Tilimsan" with the reason being "a point of honor".

It is clear that refusing the duel would be a mark of shame for potential kavalieres like the PCs. This is reinforced by the fact that attendants show up unasked to help the PCs prepare for the duel on the presumption of acceptance. It is technically possible to refuse the duel but doing so inflicts a –2 to the relationship clocks of all noble NPCs and puts the PCs on extremely thin ice.

The duel itself is formally adjudicated by Dean Hebriyah Doleros, who wants as little to do with it as possible and has only allowed the duel to go ahead because of her prior association with Praya's father. In fact, she is even willing to overlook Praya cheating by bringing in more pilots than the PCs.

MAP

The duel takes place in the dueling fields, in an arena watched over by a flock of camera drones. The arena is distinctly artificial in its construction, and some areas on the battlefield are clearly marked in bright colors. A zone on a hill in the center of the arena serves as the **Control Zone (CZ)**; whichever team controls this zone when the clock runs out is declared the victor.

TACTICS

Praya's goal is to take and hold the **CZ**, focus the attention of any heavy hitters on herself, use **POWER KNUCKLE** and **PIN** to both keep PCs off the **CZ** and set up targets for Argo to deal with. She tries to lock down the PCs' biggest offensive threats as soon as possible, prioritizing positioning and **CRUSH TARGETING** over using weapons.

Argo, meanwhile, hangs back (at around **LEAP** range), taking advantage of Praya's **GUARDIAN** trait and the fact that his **HEATED BLADE** has **THREAT 2**. From here, he focuses on isolated targets or those set up by his allies. He uses **ASSASSIN'S MARK** defensively on any PCs who look like they could deal significant damage to him in a single turn (e.g., PCs armed with **SUPERHEAVY** weapons).

Aloysius prioritizes using **MULTIPLICITY** on Praya and Argo, and if the PCs focus fire on one or the other he can transfer **DATAVEIL** to that target. He has joined Praya and Argo's team in order to curry favor with them, but is not personally invested in the outcome of the duel and intends to eject immediately if his mech takes serious damage (this limited investment is represented by his lack of templates).

If there are additional enemies present, they are fellow students in Praya and Argo's clique, primarily from the House of Stone and House of Sand. The **HORNETS'** goal is to harass any PCs who are trying to hang back, and apply conditions that increase the damage of Argo's **HEATED BLADE**. The second **ASSASSIN** prioritizes slipping through to the PCs' back line and taking opportunistic strikes if Argo is busy elsewhere.



OUTCOME

Whichever side loses the duel is required to make a formal apology to the victors immediately afterwards.

If the PCs win, Praya and Argo seeth at this turn of events and apologize through gritted teeth before withdrawing to lick their metaphorical wounds. Depending on the PCs' conduct in the duel, you might also apply a -1 to their relationship clocks. Although this outcome has no direct impact on the relationship clocks of other NPCs, these NPCs may begin to regard the PCs as capable and possibly heroic – depending on the circumstances leading up to the duel and their opinions of Praya and Argo.

If the PCs lose, Praya and Argo have cemented their position of dominance. Once the PCs have been made to “apologize”, they lord their victory over the PCs during the coming weeks. Further animosity or reactions from the PCs are likely to be met with mixed responses. More conservative or honor-bound NPCs will respond negatively, while other victims of Praya and Argo’s bullying may respond positively to resistance. You can make this relevant in social situations by having Praya and Argo attempt to bully and goad the players into acting in ways that might damage their other relationships.

BEAT 3: NEW BLOOD

SCENE GOALS

- Introduce the other students
- Have the other students react appropriately to the PCs and the results of the duel
- Give the players opportunities to develop their characterisation
- Ensure every PC has an opportunity to interact with people, make friends, and/or shine on their own terms. In particular, be careful not to have NPCs only interact with noble PCs.

In this beat, the PCs get to meet the other students in a more casual environment. This might be their first time meeting many of these characters, so it is an opportunity to introduce everyone and for the PCs to make friends.

This beat should introduce the remaining relationship clocks for the most relevant members of the student body. Once the PCs are notified of the upcoming fight (see **Combat 2: Pankrati, Charge**), they also have a chance to scout out their opposition.

With the duel over and your mechs returned to the Stables for repairs, Lord Aloysius sends you a message – he sends his regards for a duel well-fought. He also informs you that Praya and Argo have departed but he has retired to the common room, where the rest of the student body were watching the duel and are waiting for you to join them.

Assuming the PCs return to the common room, the waiting students greet them on arrival. If the PCs won, read the following:

The common room buzzes with energy as you enter. Judging from their smiling faces and cheering, the other students are clearly impressed by your performance – which is replaying on a large screen to one side – or perhaps, are simply glad that you defeated Lord Praya and Count Argo. Lord Aloysius steps up and shakes your hand, congratulating you on your victory.

Alternatively, if the PCs lost read the following:

The common room has a muted atmosphere as you enter, and someone quickly switches off a large screen on the wall that you guess must have been showing the arena. Still, you are met with commiseratory looks and friendly faces as you file in. Lord Aloysius steps up and shakes your hand, offering his condolences.

Aloysius returns to his seat and the atmosphere in the common room relaxes. The general vibe is collegiate and calm, and unless the PCs are actively disruptive they will find a warm reception.

At this point, describe what each of the NPCs are doing and allow the PCs to choose who they would like to interact with.

Attempts to connect with or impress the other students in ways that would advance their relationship clocks will usually require a successful skill check. The nature of the skill check might vary depending on who the PCs are talking to and how they approach the interaction. Feel free to grant **ACCURACY** or **DIFFICULTY** on these checks as relevant for each NPC.

Eventually, a flurry of beeps sound as various students – including the PCs – receive notifications from Underbaron Iphianassa. The notification informs them that they have been scheduled for an urban warfare skirmish the next day. The combatants are listed in the message (see **Combat 2**), and all of them are in this room! The PCs can follow up on this information however they want, including scouting out their opposition (see **Extending the Scene** for alternative ideas).

CLASS OF 5016

Primor Vivian, **Primor Valentine**, and **Rawan Azar** are playing Kapkat – a complex Sparri game popularly involving wagers. Rawan is holding her own, but it's an uphill struggle; the twins are not overtly coordinating their plays but clearly know each other extremely well. The game is friendly, and all three appear to be enjoying themselves. They are happy to have the PCs join them for the next round, but they won't go easy on them.

Lord Tomas is quietly studying poetry on his own. He is currently reading *Concursus Delenda Est*, a remarkably subversive (for its time) volume of New Federation-era poetry written by Lady Preveza Ruhk of the House of Smoke, containing satirical poetic commentaries on New Annorum anti-Union propaganda. If asked to explain it or comment on its political relevance he is flustered by the request but is enthusiastic about the way Lady Preveza skewered the xenophobia of her contemporaries.

Out on the balcony, **Lady Kiriona** is showing **Principissa Elsa** how to perform a complex trick shot with a pistol and a pair of small, heavily dented personal drones. Elsa is pretending not to care and offers acerbic commentary as she idly flips through the portfolio of a fashionable Begi dressmaker, but she is clearly paying close attention to Kiriona each time she lines up and takes the shot. If the PCs are interested in a challenge, Kiriona relishes competition, and despite her outward demeanor Elsa appreciates displays of skill.

Lord Aloysius and **Kay** appear to have resumed some prior argument. They are poring over the technical specs of a half-size, nexus-based frame of unfamiliar design; if questioned about it, they reveal that it is the Hecatoncheires: a HORUS pattern group that has apparently been spotted in and around Sanjak. The argument seems to center around how one might use its long-leash grey-wash hives most effectively. Kay believes that they are an inherently unsafe technology verging on blackwash, a claim that Aloysius contests. Aloysius is exceedingly friendly with the PCs and assures them his participation in the duel was simply a matter of a favor owed to Praya, not anything personal.

Captain Hedros is busy working out in a small gym area adjoining the common room, but is happy to stop and chat. If he is going to appear in the following combat, he takes the opportunity to proactively greet the PCs once he gets the notification, hoping to get the measure of them. His go-to topic of conversation is his recently completed tour with the BUC, and he is mostly interested in discovering whether the PCs have any “real” combat experience.

EXTENDING THE SCENE

The PCs can leave the common room and go see other parts of the College. In doing so they may be able to talk to staff members, get an idea of what kinds of mechs people are using, what the terrain looks like for their upcoming fight, and so forth.

The PCs can also speak to Iphianassa about the upcoming bout. Her advice will be based on their performance in the last fight and she is happy to reveal the sitrep for the upcoming match.

Alternatively, the PCs are free to the Stables or otherwise attempt to gather data on their opponents’ mechs. If they are successful, grant them advance knowledge of their opponents’ optional systems.

Lastly, the PCs can visit the dueling fields. There, they can meet with the construction crew rebuilding the arena for the next fight (and they might even meet Hale Saremin; see **Beat 9: Meat for the Grinder**). They can use this opportunity to influence the landscaping crew – if they succeed, allow them to place two pieces of terrain from the following list at the beginning of the next fight:

- A **SIZE 2** zone of **soft cover**
- A **SIZE 2** area of **difficult terrain**
- Two pieces of **SIZE 1** **hard cover**

KEY NPCS	CLOCK
Principissa Elsa Regelinda Lavera Zoeva of House Calyx	3
Lady Kiriona, Brightstar Rising of the House of Moments	6
Lord Tomas Alfaro	5
Primors Vivian and Valentine Reis	6
Lord Aloysius Veredus Flyte, Steward Apparent of the Tower Road	6
Captain Hedros Nadeer	5
Kay	5
Rawan Azar	

RELATIONSHIP CLOCKS

Each NPC present: +1 if the PCs made a positive impression, –1 if negative.

Deal with relationship clocks on a case by case basis. There are a lot of NPCs here, and a lot of ways the PCs could approach them. For cursory interactions or ones that didn’t leave a particular impression, it is fine to leave the clock at its initial value.

COMBAT 2: PANKRATI, CHARGE

SCENE GOALS

- Convey a sporting atmosphere of friendly rivalry, where both sides are trying their best to win but without the vitriol of the previous duel
- Demonstrate the value of mobility and playing the objective
- Touch on another political issue in the background of the setting – the potential conflict with Harrison Armory in the Dawnline Shore
- If you didn't get the opportunity last fight, seed the idea of stray shots hitting the containment fields

Sitrep: Control (*Lancer*, p. 268)

Objective: Score points by holding Control Zones at the end of each round

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: Principissa Elsa Regelinda Lavera Zoeva, “Sapphire”. **COMMANDER SUPPORT** (Latch Drone, Quick March)

Lady Kiriona, “Brightstar”. **ELITE CATAPHRACT** (Electrified Lasso, Electrified Bola)

Primor Valentine Reis, “Rose”. **EXOTIC SENTINEL** (Rapid Response, Blinkspace Carver)

Primor Vivian Reis, “Goldenrod”. **EXOTIC SENTINEL** (Rapid Response, Blinkspace Carver)

For 4 PCs: +Captain Hedros Nadeer, “Zero”. **ELITE VETERAN SNIPER** (Selective Loader, Moving Target, Veterancy [+Hull], Insulated)

For 5 PCs: +Kay, “Sparky”. **VETERAN BARRICADE** (Titan-Snare Drone, Veterancy [+Engineering], Self Repair)

REINFORCEMENTS

This sitrep has no reinforcements. Deploy all enemies at the start of combat.

BRIEFING

The PCs' first non-duel fight is one of the College's standard training skirmishes – designed to push students to excel by forcing them to compete against each other. This particular skirmish is intended to test techniques specific to urban warfare, including the proper use of cover and area control in a dense environment. The NPCs are generally friendly competitors (unless the PCs have upset them), and the mood before the skirmish is one of excitement.

MAP

The arena (reconstructed seemingly overnight by the College's landscaping crews) is based on recent intelligence data from the city of Avicenna, capital of New Madrassa in the Dawnline Shore. The two sides are competing to hold a facsimile of a choke point in the city's Alhambra district.

The vehicles on the road are flash-printed representations, and are treated as **SIZE 1** objects for the purposes of damage regardless of their actual size. A destroyed “vehicle” disintegrates into printstock detritus and no longer provides cover or obstructs movement.

TACTICS

The OpFor is exceptionally mobile, demonstrating how powerful a strategy of speed can be. The combination of Kiriona's raw speed and **IMPALE**, Elsa's **QUICK MARCH**, and Vivian and Valentine's **RAPID RESPONSE** make it possible for them to take control of two or even three of the four **Control Zones** within the first few rounds and quickly get the point advantage.

Kiriona's role is to move PCs out of position, cause problems, and draw focus (Elsa can target her with **LATCH DRONE** to boost her survivability). Once the NPCs have an early point advantage, they will want to keep the PCs under pressure for the rest of the match, focusing on objectives over damage. Having some method for keeping track of the NPCs' movement abilities is important, since there are a lot of them and they are easily forgotten.

On top of their own mobility, the enemy forces can also restrict the PCs' movement by applying **SLOWED** and making use of the significant **OVERWATCH** offered by Vivian, Valentine, and Kiriona. If present, Hedros can also lock down the PCs with **MOVING TARGET** and **IMPACT ROUNDS**. If Kay is present, she is the least mobile, but **GRAVITON LANCE** and **TITAN-SNARE DRONE** can deal with speedy PCs attempting to challenge the NPCs' position, while **MOBILE PRINTER** can be used to block approach routes and sight lines.



OUTCOME

If the PCs win, the PCs demonstrate their competence in the field, improving their relationship with Underbaron Iphianassa by +1. Other NPCs also come to respect them as combatants, which may be a factor in future interactions where the PCs can leverage their status as victors (potentially providing **ACCURACY** on relevant checks).

If the PCs lose, their relationship with Underbaron Iphianassa does not improve. Additionally, she calls them to her office where she lectures them (constructively) on their performance and asks them to justify their loss – this provides an opportunity for the PCs to respond rudely and damage the relationship.

If the combat was a draw, Iphianassa is satisfied that the PCs are capable and her relationship clock increases by +1, but she still calls the PCs to her office for a similar lecture.

The PCs' conduct during the fight might also impact their relationship with the other students involved; if the PCs show particular moments of skill, bravery, underhandedness, or disdain during the fight, the student NPCs will respond as appropriate. There are a wide variety of different circumstances and outcomes here; it may be easiest to go through each NPC, character by character, to examine how each would respond to what they encountered, adjusting characterization or potentially even relationship clocks as appropriate.

BEAT 4: DOWN TO BUSINESS

SCENE GOALS

- Give the players an opportunity to explore how their PCs act in a relatively “normal” situation
- Show off different parts of the College and meet a variety of different NPCs
- See the PCs knuckle down and face up to their academic challenges (or don’t!)
- Give enough detail to link the beginning and end of the term in a narratively satisfying way

This beat moves the narrative forward to the start of exam season and we find out what the PCs have been doing in the meantime. This beat is open-ended, and is a great opportunity to play out small or even individual scenes, perhaps run a training montage, let PCs improve their relationships with NPCs, and allow them to obtain any last advantage they can before their exams.

Several months of hard work pass. Having had a taste of life at the College, you fall into a grueling schedule of early mornings, rigorous study of tactical doctrine and technical specifications, constant training, and the demands of an overfull social calendar. You manage to make some time for yourself where you can, but it isn’t easy.

Ask your players to consider the following questions:

- What have you been doing in the meantime?
- Which areas of study have you excelled at?
- Which areas of study have you struggled with?
- Who have you tried to make friends with? Do you have any rivals?

Take the opportunity to play out at least one short scene or vignette with each player, illustrating their answers to the questions. These scenes might take place in classes, at social events, or simply during their downtime, but wherever they take place, they should involve some form of challenge that can influence NPC relationship clocks.

Although this beat does not constitute **downtime** (*Lancer*, p. 50), these scenes and their challenges can be represented effectively using downtime actions. They can even grant rewards. The table on this page presents some examples of activities PCs might want to undertake (or ideas for things the PCs can do if the players are struggling to think of options) and the downtime actions that can be used to present them.

REPAIRS

PCs may ask if they can repair their mechs during this time. All PCs are allowed to **rest** between combats unless otherwise specified, but they cannot normally perform a **FULL REPAIR** until the end of the mission. However, if they have already used the majority of their **REPAIRS**, they can use **SCROUNGE AND BARTER** (*Lancer*, p. 55) or

EXAMPLE EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Improve a relationship	GET CONNECTED (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 55) Reward: +2 to a relationship clock
Learn a new skill	GET FOCUSED (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 55)
Work on a project	GET CREATIVE (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 54)
Investigate an NPC	GATHER INFORMATION (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 53)
Visit the city’s markets	SCROUNGE AND BARTER (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 55)
Acquire extra Repairs	SCROUNGE AND BARTER or POWER AT A COST (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 55 & 53)
Party or blow off steam	GET A DAMN DRINK (<i>Lancer</i> , p. 54)

even **POWER AT A COST** (*Lancer*, p. 53) to acquire more **REPAIRS** – or even (in exceptional circumstances) to perform a **FULL REPAIR**. These actions are likely to involve a cost in the form of a penalty to one or more relationship clocks depending on who they acquire the **REPAIRS** from, how many were acquired, and what methods were used.

EXTENDING THE SCENE

You can extend this scene for as long as you’re comfortable running vignettes. There is significant scope for different types of activities. For example, you could help the PCs feel more grounded in their social environment by fleshing out interactions with and between NPCs, developing rivalries, revealing secrets, or presenting the PCs with social challenges.

If you want to highlight the PCs’ relationships with their fellow students by adding the pressure of a formal social event, this beat is a fantastic opportunity for the PCs to attend one of the College’s formal balls (perhaps even the Cadenze de l’ Pavilios, see p. 29), with all the pageantry, intrigue, and drama these events entail.

This beat is also an excellent opportunity to depict specific classes from the Syllabi (for examples, see the tables on p. 47) and show off the kinds of things the PCs are learning. Showing this can help players ground their characters in the academic environment of the College by fleshing out their day-to-day schedule.

Additionally, this is a natural point to check in with the PCs’ sponsors – to report progress on any goals (or set new ones) and remind the PCs of the political pressures they face from beyond the College itself.

RELATIONSHIP CLOCKS

If most or all of the PCs excelled in a particular Syllabus: +1 to the relevant faculty member’s clock

If most or all of the PCs struggled with a particular Syllabus: -1 to the relevant faculty member’s clock

NPCs who appear in vignettes can have their relationship clocks change as normal.

BEAT 5: UNFRIENDLY COMPETITION

SCENE GOALS

- Take some time to explore the PCs' connections with their mechs and how the PCs feel about them
- Build tension before the examinations
- Reinforce the idea that Karrakin noble society is fratricidal and filled with power plays, backstabbing, sabotage, and covert maneuvers
- Set up Praya and Argo as the actual driving force behind the sabotage attempt, should the PCs discover it

In this beat, the PCs face a final challenge before leaving for their exams in the form of some other students attempting to sabotage them. It also focuses the story on the mechs themselves, fleshing them out as though they were characters and showing how the PCs relate to them.

It's finally time for your first set of exams. Your tutors constantly reinforce the need to prepare; it's clear they are no joke. The exams have a brutal reputation and the potential to influence not only your future at the College but your career as a pilot.

By tradition, your exams will take place on a military training range north of Throne Karrakis known as the Hounds Teeth Range. As training draws to a close you are given only a few short days to ensure your mechs are in fighting shape and ready to go before a transport lands next to the Stables and you are instructed to load them aboard.

It's time for things to get serious. The exam will take place off-campus, so PCs must load their mechs onto a transport before preparing to journey north to the Hounds Teeth Range. For more detail regarding this area, see the briefing for **COMBAT 3: TRIAL BY FIRE**.

This scene is an opportunity to really focus on the PCs' mechs: fleshing out their descriptions, recapping damage from previous combats, and exploring how each PC relates to and feels about their mech. Ask each player to describe their mech as they load it onto the transport and how their character is feeling in this moment.

One of two things can happen once the PCs have finished loading their mechs onto the transport, depending on the status of their relationship clock with Primors Vivian and Valentine.

If the PCs are not **Friendly** with the twins, they are accosted by Primor Vivian, who engages them animatedly in conversation on whatever topic they think might get and keep the PCs' attention – being intentionally comical or provocative if necessary. Their conversation covers anything from politics or gossip (feel free to make up rumors about other NPCs) to spiteful comments about Praya and Argo. If the

PCs try to break off the conversation, Vivian actively tries to regain their attention and continue talking (perhaps by shifting topics). Meanwhile, in the background, Vivian's twin, Primor Valentine, is supervising the technicians loading the pair's mechs onto the transport, a process that seems to take a suspiciously long time.

The players might ignore Valentine entirely, but if they become suspicious and want to investigate, they can make a skill check to discover what's really happening (**Read a Situation** or **Spot** might be appropriate triggers in the moment, or **Investigate** or **Blow Something Up** after the fact). Success means they discover that small remotely controlled explosives have been secreted inside the chassis plating of each of their mechs.

Alternatively, if the PCs are **Friendly** with Vivian and Valentine, Valentine hands over the bombs directly to the PCs instead of planting them on their mechs, calling them “a present from Argo” but otherwise offering no further information unless pressured to do so. The PCs could choose to do a number of things with these bombs, including attaching them to another student's mech. Doing so applies a –2 penalty to the relationship clock of anyone targeted this way, but also causes them to “fail” their exam and appear incompetent in public, which might have further consequences.

If the PCs catch Vivian and Valentine planting the bombs and confront them about it, the two primors apologize wryly for their “hilarious joke”, help remove the bombs (and provide instructions for how they might be planted elsewhere), and reveal that they were put up to the job by Argo as a political favor. If the PCs press them and demand some kind of recompense, they may attempt to parlay secrets they have gathered about other NPCs (examples of these secrets can be found in the NPC entries above, but feel free to invent your own scandalous gossip!) in exchange for leniency and renewed goodwill.

EXTENDING THE SCENE

One optional addition to this scene would be Praya and Argo showing up to load their mechs and antagonize the PCs before the big test – perhaps goading them into doing something inadvisable that might get them sanctioned by the dean. You could also have them taunt the PCs by claiming (somewhat preposterously) to have already secured a pass even before heading to the Hounds Teeth Range, and rubbing the PCs' noses in their “achievement”.

KEY NPCs

Primors Vivian and Valentine

CLOCK



RELATIONSHIP CLOCKS

Primors Vivian and Valentine: +1 if the PCs caught them and either took it in good humor or accepted the apology with grace, –1 if the PCs caught them and acted with open hostility (did not “get the joke”).



COMBAT 3: TRIAL BY FIRE

SCENE GOALS

- Give the PCs an opportunity to use the lessons they've learned so far by taking on a tough but static group of enemies that need to be picked apart systematically
- Introduce the PCs to the unique challenges of an Escort mission, where moving the objective is a challenge on its own
- Characterize the faculty members further through their actions during combat

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

Objective: Move the **objective** to the **Extraction Zone** and extract

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: Underbaron Iphianassa, "**Alecto**". **ELITE VETERAN ASSAULT** (Rank Discipline, Micro-Missile Barrage, Veteranacy [+Hull], Headshot)
Lord Castor, "Jester". COMMANDER PRIEST (Greater Investiture, Press On!)
Stablemaster Imani, "Chaos". VETERAN WITCH (Chain, Veteranacy [+Hull], Self Repair)
2x **GRUNT ARCHERS**
2x **GRUNT BASTIONS**

For 4 PCs: +**Lady Achilleia, "Saber". VETERAN RONIN** (Instinct Mode, Veteranacy [+Engineering], Acrobat)

For 5 PCs: +**Lord Hesketh, "Auspex". VETERAN SCOUT** (Spotter, Veteranacy [+Engineering], Deadly)

REINFORCEMENTS

Hold the **GRUNTS** as reinforcements, along with "**Saber**" if present. Ingress begins from Round 2 onward, from **Ingress Zones** on the cliffs at the sides of the map.

BRIEFING

The PCs and their mechs are transported to a remote area of snow-covered moorland in northern Karrakis known as the Hounds Teeth Range, a desolate and mostly uninhabited wilderness operated by the BUC as a military training range. Traversing the Teeth was a historic rite of passage for Karrakin military commanders throughout the Annorum era, while today it is mostly used by the Federal Karrakin Army for war games and other training operations.

By tradition, the Hounds Teeth Range is also the site at which the College's students face one of their toughest trials: direct combat against their tutors as part of their examinations. For the students, the stakes are high – without extenuating circumstances, success in these exams is effectively required to proceed on to further

study. There are also no safety nets here; no containment fields to catch stray fire, no referee or supervising tutor, and no easy access to printers or medics.

The examination scenario constructed for the PCs is challenging but straightforward enough – move up a narrow river valley to assault a well-defended set of bridges and deliver the objective – a **SIZE 1** dummy payload drone – to a marked location. If the PCs are new to the **Escort** sitrep, make sure to draw specific focus to the rules for moving the objective.

MAP

A pair of bridges cross the river valley as it narrows: from one side to a central rise, and from that rise to the other side. Defensive emplacements on the hillside and central rise provide cover.

The valley itself is choked with boulders providing **hard cover**, and the water of the river counts as **difficult terrain**. A minefield (an area of **dangerous terrain** (*Lancer*, p. 62) dealing **explosive damage**) hampers a direct approach to the central high ground.

The bridges themselves are objects that can be damaged and destroyed but not moved. They have **20 HP** and **2 ARMOR**. These are real bridges used by the Federal Karrakin Army and their destruction is not part of the examination; destroying them will lead to additional interrogation and scrutiny in **Beat 6: Aftermath**.

EVENTS

At the start of Round 2, the PCs receive a smug message from Praya wishing them "the best of luck" with their exam. If the PCs did not catch Vivian and Valentine planting the bombs in the previous beat, each PC must then make an **ENGINEERING** check as the concealed bombs detonate. On a failure, they take **1d6 explosive damage** and become **IMPAIRED** until the end of their next turn. On a success, they take **half damage** and are not **IMPAIRED**.

TACTICS

The faculty have cover and good lines of fire from atop the cliffs, but as the PCs approach they break formation to move down and contest the objective. Iphianassa positions herself ready to fire down at the PCs as they approach, focusing on whoever she perceives to be the biggest threat. Castor moves with Iphianassa to provide support (taking advantage of her **RANK DISCIPLINE** and his **INVESTITURE**). Imani remains on the back lines and focuses on whoever has control of the objective, using **CHAIN**. As the PCs approach the choke points on either side of the central rise, the faculty move down into whichever route the PCs chose, looking to prevent the objective's progress by moving adjacent to it.

The **GRUNTS** are regular BUC pilots brought in to bolster the tutors' forces. When they arrive, the **ARCHERS** position themselves to cover the PCs' approach while the **BASTIONS** provide additional cover using **GUARDIAN** and punish the players for bunching up with their **GRENADE LAUNCHERS**.



If Achilleia is present, she pushes forward to challenge the PCs directly, using **ACROBAT** for extra speed and **INSTINCT MODE** to punish attempts to move her away from the objective. If Hesketh is present, he moves up with Iphianassa and Castor, giving yet more **ACCURACY** with **SPOTTER** (not only does this make Iphianassa extremely accurate, it also makes **ABJURE** a force to be reckoned with), and protecting them with **CLOAKING FIELD**.

OUTCOME

If the PCs win, they gain +1 to the relationship clocks of each faculty member who took part in this combat as well as the archchancellor. The PCs' performance here reflects on them directly. Conversely, if the PCs lose or the combat is a draw, they lose -1 to the relationship clocks of the same NPCs.

Note that if this would increase any relationship clocks far enough for the PCs to gain a benefit, the PCs cannot access this benefit until **after COMBAT 4: THE HARLEQUIN'S KNIFE**, which follows immediately after this combat.

With the examination completed, the faculty members dismount (or climb out of wrecked mechs) and acknowledge the PCs for their efforts. The PCs are instructed to take a brief moment to pull themselves together and patch up the worst of the damage to their mechs so they can swiftly vacate the area and return to the garrison. Meanwhile the heads of Syllabus take a moment to confer out of earshot, further down the valley.

BETWEEN COMBATs

Regardless of the combat's outcome, **the PCs may not rest following this combat**. Instead, they can each pick one of the following options:

- Spend **1 REPAIR** to restore their mech to full **HP**.
- Spend **1 REPAIR** to restore a single destroyed weapon or system.
- Clear all **HEAT**.
- Repair a destroyed mech by spending **4 REPAIRs**. As usual, other PCs may contribute their **REPAIRs** if the PC whose mech has been destroyed does not have enough remaining.

In addition, the PCs clear all statuses and conditions currently affecting their mech, and reload all **LOADING** weapons.

If any PCs end up without an active mech (e.g., they were destroyed and the PCs do not have enough **REPAIRs**), they may take control of one of the inactive trainer mechs located nearby. You can decide how this mech is equipped, but for the sake of ease, it is often easiest for it to be the same **FRAME** with the same weapons and gear as the PC's regular mech. Whatever its loadout, the trainer mech has **1 STRUCTURE** and **1 STRESS**, and has no **CP**.

Once these repairs have been resolved, move immediately to **Combat 4**.

COMBAT 4: THE HARLEQUIN'S KNIFE

SCENE GOALS

- Convey a sense of genuine danger
- Put the PCs into a difficult position in which they need to weigh rescuing their teachers against their own safety
- Give the PCs confusing and conflicting information about the source of the attack
- Demonstrate the disposability of the OpFor; in particular have the Operators melt themselves down by abusing Limitless

Sitrep: Modified Extraction (*Lancer*, p. 269); there are three objectives instead of one.

Objective: Return at least one objective (**Underbaron Iphianassa**, **Lord Castor**, or **Stablemaster Imani**) to the **Extraction Zone** and extract. PCs (and allied NPCs) must also extract or face consequences.

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: “**Bad Guest**” and “**You Want These Guns**”. 2x **RPV VETERAN OPERATORS** (Skirmisher, Veterancy [+Engineering], Limitless) “**Broken Border**” and “**Picket Line**”. 2x **RPV VETERAN AEGISES** (Ring of Fire, Veterancy [+Engineering], Parting Gift) “**Chasm Runner**”. 1x **RPV HIVE** (Driving Swarm) “**Sanjak’s Reckoning**”. 1x **RPV PYRO** (Siege Armor)

For 4 PCs: +“**House Loser**”. +1x **RPV HIVE** (Driving Swarm) +“**Dawn of a New Age**”. +1x **RPV PYRO** (Siege Armor)

For 5 PCs: +“**Spit on the Hand**”. +1x **RPV VETERAN OPERATOR** (Skirmisher, Veterancy [+Engineering], Limitless) +“**Fuck Your Lottery**”. +1x **RPV VETERAN AEGIS** (Ring of Fire, Veterancy [+Engineering], Parting Gift)

REINFORCEMENTS

All forces are held as **reinforcements**. Ingress begins from the start of Round 1 onwards, from **Ingress Zones** on the cliffs at the sides of the map.

BRIEFING

As the heads of Syllabus confer and the PCs begin patching up their mechs, a glint of sunlight flashes off the chassis of an unknown mech on the hillside. The glint is swiftly followed by a hail of energy weapon fire directed at the faculty, who are forced to scatter. If their mechs survived, they are reduced to slag in the crossfire. If the PCs have dismounted, they are forced to mount and boot up immediately – the faculty members are under attack, and need rescuing!

IMPORTANT NOTE

This combat is not intended to be a fair fight. Extracting any of the objectives is a victory; extracting multiple objectives is exceptional.

This combat is purposefully challenging, with a goal of forcing the PCs to make hard choices. The PCs’ mechs are likely damaged, and they had only limited time to perform repairs before the attack begins. There are too many objectives to easily extract them all. The enemy forces can deal a lot of damage at long range and take a lot of punishment in return. And, unlike a regular **Extraction**, there are three potential objectives to extract.

You should explicitly **tell your players that extracting even one of the faculty members is considered a “victory” as far as this combat is concerned**, and that it may not be possible to extract all three. They can attempt to do so if they want, but it will be both dangerous and extremely difficult.

You can additionally use one of the faculty to emphasize this to the PCs themselves (Iphianassa is a good candidate for this). The chosen NPC instructs the PCs to extract on their own and leave the faculty behind, emphasizing that this fight might be more than they can handle.

MAP

The fight takes place on the same map as the previous combat, but reversed: the faculty (objectives) are spread out and taking cover down the valley, while the PCs deploy in the previous combat’s extraction zone. No other changes are made to the map.

Each of the objectives represents one of the three heads of Syllabus: Underbaron Iphianassa, Lord Castor, and Stablemaster Imani. Assign each to one of the starting objective spaces (you can do so randomly or choose based on the proximity of the spot and that character’s relationship with the PCs).

OPTIONAL RULE: EXPANDED COMPARTMENTS

If a PC has the **EXPANDED COMPARTMENT** system, you may use the following optional rule for this combat: as a **full action**, that character may allow an adjacent, uncontested objective to **MOUNT** their mech, filling the **EXPANDED COMPARTMENT**. Doing so moves the objective into the PC’s space. The member of faculty becomes untargetable as though they were a mounted pilot, move with all of the PC’s movement, and cannot be contested as an objective until the mech is destroyed.

ALLIES

In this combat, you may optionally provide the PCs with one or more allied characters as backup. You should normally give the PCs one ally, but if they are in a particularly rough position and have developed their relationships, you can give them multiple.

If you do give the PCs an allied character, allow the players to choose from among the students with whom they have Friendly relationships. They appear as the appropriate allied NPC mech from the following table.

Allied NPCs show up as **reinforcements** from the start of Round 2 onwards, arriving from an **Ingress Zone** that is not occupied by a hostile character.

The allied NPC(s) can and should take direction from the PCs as appropriate, but left to their own devices they prioritize supporting the PCs as best they can. By default, you control which actions allied NPCs take, but you can give direct control to the players for the duration of the fight if doing so makes the combat easier to manage.

Allied NPCs joining the fight are at risk; they can be attacked, their mechs can be destroyed, and they can potentially even be severely wounded or killed if they are unable to extract.

ALLIED NPCs

Principissa Elsa	COMMANDER SUPPORT (Latch Drone, Quick March)
Lady Kiriona	ELITE CATAPHRACT (Electrified Lasso, Electrified Bola)
Lord Tomas	ELITE SCOUT (Spotter, Expose Weakness)
Primors Vivian and Valentine	2x EXOTIC SENTINEL (Rapid Response, Blinkspace Carver)
Lord Aloysius	COMMANDER MIRAGE (Multiplicity, Military Discipline)
Captain Hedros	ELITE VETERAN SNIPER (Selective Loader, Moving Target, Veterancy [+Hull], Insulated)
Key	VETERAN BARRICADE (Titan-Snare Drone, Veterancy [+Engineering], Self Repair)
Rawan Azar	VETERAN PIRATE SPECTER (Fortress, Veterancy [+Hull], Splinter Rounds)

Important note: If an allied NPC's templates would ordinarily grant it multiple activations (such as from the **ELITE** template), it only has a single activation. Additionally, allied NPCs cannot move objectives.

TACTICS

The OpFor splits up into distinct fireteams composed of an **AEGIS** and an **OPERATOR**, with each pair deployed together. The teams pick positions with good lines of fire from which the **AEGIS** can activate **DEFENSE NET** to provide protection and immunity to the **IMPAIRED** from the RPV's **NO PILOT** trait, while the **OPERATOR** fires on priority targets. These fireteams do not prioritize contesting the objectives directly, leaving that task to the other NPCs. The **OPERATORS** have **LIMITLESS** and aim to use it every turn even if this would cause them to become **EXPOSED** or melt down; they are not intended to survive the combat.

If **RING OF FIRE** is not enough to dissuade PCs who get too close, **OPERATORS** can grapple their **AEGISES** (you still need to roll to hit) and use **STEP** to **teleport** them somewhere else. If that still doesn't work, **SELF-ERASURE** and **PARTING GIFT** make melee attacks costly.

Despite its disposability, the OpFor still targets the most obvious threats first (i.e., active mechs rather than pilots), in an attempt to disable them or force them to retreat.

The **HIVES** and **PYROS** should be deployed later in the fight, ideally between the PCs and the **Extraction Zone**. Their job is to take up space, block the PCs' escape, and make extraction harder using swarms and pattern weapons. The OpFor has the ability to deal a lot of **burn** (thanks to the **AEGISES' LIGHT LASER** and the **HIVES' RAZOR SWARM**) so the **PYROS** can deal a lot of extra damage if the PCs are unable to clear their **burn** effectively.

INFORMATION FOR PLAYERS

What you tell players about these NPCs is very important, particularly if the players take the time to **SCAN** them.

The following facts are true and can be revealed through **SCAN** or after the combat with a successful skill check:

- These mechs do not have pilots and appear to be piloted remotely. It is not possible to determine the source of the signal in the midst of an active firefight.
- The emissions from these mechs show they are being run ragged and unstable. They are clearly not intended to survive the skirmish.
- Their current mission is to cause indiscriminate damage and potentially kill senior College faculty members.
- The mechs appear to have teleported in from elsewhere. It must have been relatively close by (or their presence would have been flagged earlier), but it is hard if not impossible to determine this for sure without interfacing directly with their systems.
- The callsigns attached to these mechs suggest a relationship to Free Sanjak. They are Ungrateful slogans – references to the revolution and the ongoing blockade of Sanjak by the House of Stone.
- The mechs themselves appear to be factory-fresh Harrison Armory designs that have had their origin markers and serial numbers scrubbed. The energy and flame weaponry, energy shielding, and teleportation technology are all Armory staples.

Some of these facts are intentionally misleading. In particular, the identity of the pilots and the construction of their mechs contain several layers of obfuscation and misdirection intended to pin the blame for the attack on either the Ungratefuls or Harrison Armory.

If the PCs reach the conclusion that there's something fishy about all this (How did they get so close without being noticed? Why are they being so blatant? Why attack the students and faculty of the College rather than a softer target?), feel free to acknowledge those questions and the mysteries they pose – the PCs will have the opportunity to investigate and potentially find more information should they survive the fight.

RELATIONSHIP CLOCKS

Any objective NPCs: +2 if extracted.

All other non-Frosty NPCs: +1 if the PCs extracted any NPC objectives.

OUTCOME

If the PCs extract any objectives, upon their return they are hailed as heroes for saving the life of the faculty member(s) in question.

Any faculty members or allied NPCs who are not extracted take enemy fire during the escape attempt and are incapacitated (or at your discretion, killed outright). Incapacitated NPCs typically need to recover from their injuries, meaning they will not appear in **MISSION 2: THEY SHALL COME ALL FOR VIOLENCE**.

Any PC who fails to extract faces significant consequences as they are either heavily wounded or forced to flee. Talk with the player to determine an appropriate penalty that will be fun for them to play out. Consequences could include grievous injuries that apply **DIFFICULTY** to relevant rolls until they are healed, disfavor from their sponsor (resulting in withdrawal of support), or a significant penalty to a relationship clock.



BEAT 6: AFTERMATH

SCENE GOALS

- Make the PCs consider the evidence and come up with theories based on what they know
- Get the PCs to finger either the Ungratefuls or Harrison Armory as being responsible for the attack. It is possible that the PCs will be unwilling to commit, point out holes in the evidence, or have other theories entirely, but the wider Karrakin society will end up blaming one or the other – any information the PCs provide is likely to tip the scales between these two choices.
- Show the PCs that there are greater political forces moving within Karrakin society, with potential biases and agendas of their own

In this beat, the PCs deal with the fallout from the attack. As cleanup begins, deaths are tallied and accusations fly. This is an opportunity for the group to gather more information and reach some conclusions before they are interviewed by Baronie Intelligence.

Almost as suddenly as it started, the attack ends – mechs detonating and melting into slag, or teleporting away. A pall of smoke and steam hangs over the valley, carrying the lingering tang of energy weapon fire and the acrid smell of burnt vegetation.

For a few seconds, there is a strange stillness. Then your comms flicker to life, a chaotic barrage of messages and orders. Hold still. Help is on the way. Take cover. Do not move.

You have a few moments to collect yourselves and absorb the aftermath of the attack before you spot the distinctive green uniform of troops from the Federal Karrakin Army cresting the hill. They immediately begin securing the area.

The PCs are ordered to hold still while a unit from the Federal Karrakin Army, pulled from exercises taking place nearby, secures the area and administers emergency aid to injured survivors.

While the area is being secured the PCs can collect information from wrecked mechs and consult their own mech's sensor logs. Successful skill checks grant any of the remaining information about the attacking forces listed in **Combat 4**, and additional clues at your discretion. You may also want to use this opportunity to provide contextual information on the Trade Baronies' political conflicts with the Ungratefuls and Harrison Armory.

Once the site has been secured, the PCs and their mechs are returned to the Hounds Teeth Garrison where they await debriefing by a senior BUC officer. After several hours of waiting, however, the officer who arrives to debrief them is not from the BUC – but from Baronie Intelligence.

Lady Diana LeFleur (she/her) is an older woman from the House of Order with a crisp uniform, a businesslike attitude, and an unnerving stare. She sits the PCs down as a group and reveals her Baronie Intelligence credentials, conspicuously clicks on a recording device,⁵ and begins the debriefing. She is probing with her questions but not aggressive, and mostly seeks to confirm information she already knows. Her main questions for the PCs include the following:

- What were you doing when the attack started?
- Who did the attackers target? What could you determine about their aims?
- How did you respond?
- What other details do you recall about the assailants?
- Do you have any information that could suggest who was responsible for the attack?

LeFleur presses for additional detail if any answers are unclear or suggest follow-up questions. The identity of the attackers is of particular interest and she will press the PCs into an answer if necessary, highlighting both that they are direct witnesses and that as students at the College they are well placed to make expert judgements about the attackers' identity. She is strongly predisposed to believe that either the Ungratefuls or Harrison Armory are responsible, and is unlikely to seriously consider other theories without solid evidence.

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Emphasizing this detail is a good way to make your PCs paranoid, which can add an extra layer of intrigue to this beat.



How the PCs respond to this last question will have a significant impact on the political climate going forward, not just within the College but within the wider Concern. There are many factions within Karrakin society eager for a *casus belli*, and any theories that the PCs advance during the debriefing interview will begin to gain serious traction if they pander to existing biases. This may become apparent in background details or in the upcoming downtime, but it will also specifically impact **Combat 5: Live-Fire Exercise**, as the College begins to tailor its training exercises to focus on specific adversary chassis.

At the conclusion of the interview LeFleur thanks the PCs and leaves them to recover, assuring them that Baronik Intelligence will get to the bottom of the attack. She requests that they refrain from discussing the attack with non-military personnel until she has had time to finish her investigation.

EXTENDING THE SCENE

One way to extend this scene is to have the PCs be contacted by their friends, relatives, and/or sponsors in the day or so after the attack – either to check up on them after the examination, or out of concern as rumors rapidly travel through the whisper networks of Karrakin society.

If the PCs leak information about the attack, it may also have an impact on broader responses in Karrakin society. Notably, however, LeFleur is monitoring the PCs’ communications, and breaches of information security will likely be folded in as supporting evidence during **Beat 9: Meat for the Grinder**.

KEY NPCs	CLOCK
Lady Diana LeFleur	None



DOWNTIME: CALM BEFORE THE STORM

SCENE GOALS

- Get a look into the home lives of any PCs who return home to their house, sponsor, or family.
 - Discover what the characters patrons are up to and how they influence the PCs' actions.
 - Find out what the characters do for fun or to relax.
 - Explore the broader setting through the small snapshot of a downtime action.
- Show what it's like to live in Throne Karrakis and the wider Baronies.

Following the attack, the PCs return to the College where the archchancellor issues a formal statement in a ceremony that feels both time-trodden and hastily arranged all at once. This statement, an "Exceptional Proclamation", declares that studies at the College will be temporarily suspended while the College administration and BUC deal with the fallout of the attack at the Hounds Teeth Range.

Students are free to remain at the College during the suspension, although an increase in the number of BUC soldiers openly carrying weapons and temporary restrictions on events put a distinct damper on any revelry or social activity on College grounds. The formal recommendation from the College is for students to return home where possible, or otherwise take up temporary residence elsewhere in Throne Karrakis.

While its duration is limited, the enforced break gives the PCs an opportunity to take some downtime. This can take many forms: a cut away from the College to explore the PCs' home lives (if any), a quick break elsewhere in the city or even elsewhere on Karrakis, or knuckling down and continuing to work despite the restrictions and the lack of formal academic activities.

This might also be a chance for PCs' patrons to weigh in, asking for information on the attack and/or giving instructions for when studies resume. The political world beyond the College is in flux, still working out how to respond to the news, and any reports the PCs make are likely to influence Baronial politics in subtle but important ways.

Mechanically, the PCs enter a period of **downtime** and each gain a license level (bringing them up to **LL1**). During this time, each PC may perform a **downtime action** (*Lancer*, p. 53) and a **FULL REPAIR**. This **FULL REPAIR** can be used to equip any new weapons or gear gained from their new license.

If desired, PCs can interact with or bring along particular NPCs as they pursue their downtime actions. For example, a PC might **GET A DAMN DRINK** with a fellow student and blow off steam together, **GET CREATIVE** in the Manufactory by working on a collaborative project, or dive into their studies and **GET FOCUSED** with a member of faculty.

If a PC is accompanied by an NPC for a downtime action, they must make an additional skill check using an appropriate skill trigger to determine whether the NPC leaves with a positive or negative impression of the PC (+1 or -1 to that NPC's relationship clock). Feel free to grant **ACCURACY** or **DIFFICULTY** on this check if the activity is particularly appropriate or inappropriate for the NPC.

MISSION 2: THEY SHALL COME ALL FOR VIOLENCE

HALLECK: “Shield practice.”

PAUL: “Shield practice? Gurney, we had practice this morning. I’m not in the mood.”

HALLECK: “Not in the mood? Mood’s a thing for cattle and loveplay, not fighting.”

PAUL: “I’m sorry, Gurney.”

HALLECK: (lunging) “Not sorry enough.”
– Dune (1984)

MISSION BEATS

BEAT 7: THE FALL OF A SPARROW

COMBAT 5: LIVE-FIRE EXERCISE

BEAT 8: THE SHADOW LOOMS LONG

BEAT 9: MEAT FOR THE GRINDER

COMBAT 6: ENTER SAND-MEN

BEAT 10: HAND OVERPLAYED

COMBAT 7: DYNAMIC ENTRY

COMBAT 8A: BALLROOM BLITZ

COMBAT 8B: PERFECT PARRY

BEAT 11: THE WHEEL TURNS

BRIEFING

In the wake of such a brazen attack, everyone is on high alert and accusations fly wildly. Beyond the College, the Baronic media is busy pointing fingers at both the Ungrate-fuls and Harrison Armory. Meanwhile, the PCs – those who were closest to the action – may have the most clues to resolving the mystery. Whether they hope to chase that thread or let it lie, it is time to return to their studies.

SUMMARY

This mission opens with a College simultaneously gripped by paranoia and a desire for normality. The PCs soon meet an augur from the Order Xenoglossia. Per tradition, Augur Kahin reads their bonds – and pronounces an ill omen.

This portends betrayal; the PCs are framed for complicity in the attack on the College and have to flee to safe harbor provided by the Xenoglossary.

Unfortunately, they are followed by assassins intent on taking them out permanently. After fighting for their lives, the PCs learn of an even more audacious plan to attack not just the College but Throne Karrakis itself: one they must return to the College to foil.

Mission Objectives: Prepare for future conflict with the Baronies’ enemies. Later replaced by: Save the College.

Stakes: As military personnel, the PCs are called upon to defend the Baronies against attack. Later, when they are betrayed, both their personal reputations and the lives of countless innocents are on the line.

Reward: Characters can receive **EXOTIC GEAR**, including variant **FRAMES**. Additionally they will receive enough combat experience and potentially political backing to progress to **LL2**.

Reserves: Establish what Reserves or resources the PCs have available prior to this mission, including Reserves granted through friendship with NPCs (these are particularly important to reassess if any characters died during **Combat 4**).



XENOGLOSS AUGUR KAHIN

HE/HIM

ORDER XENOGLOSSIA

CLOCK: 7 (NEUTRAL, RECEPTIVE)



"I have seen it, the great Wheel, and the lives its grist. Lo, it turns! Oh, how it turns! Throw wide the gates of the shrouded city lest they be sundered!"

Very little of Augur Kahin is visible below layers of the Order Xenoglossia's all-encompassing robes, save maybe for part of his face and hands. What can be seen of his almost artificial-looking skin is wrinkled and carries the traditional blue tinge of an augur.

The first time the PCs meet Kahin he is flesh and blood, but by **Combat 6: Enter Sand-Men**, he will have substituted himself for a remotely piloted subaltern. The only clues to the switch are the limited areas of synthetic like-skin visible under clothing, and subtle changes to his posture and movements.

Kahin suffers from the so-called Curse of Pangloss: exceptionally lurid and distracting visions that are difficult to distinguish from reality, and prevent him from taking on a more traditional role as a political adviser. Fortunately (or perhaps by ancient design), he can take advantage of the College's time-worn tradition of bond readings to pursue his order's ends. The augur's true purpose in coming to the College is to ensure that the PCs are positioned to deal with the coming crisis, which the Xenoglossary predicts will result in great suffering.



SOTO, STYGOS

GRAMMATON MONK

THEY/SHE

ORDER XENOGLOSSIA

CLOCK: 5 (NEUTRAL, STOIC)



"All things have a purpose. There is a storm coming, and you have a part to play as it breaks."

Soto is wiry and precise, giving the impression at all times of a highly compressed spring waiting to be released, or perhaps a predator waiting to pounce. Their shorn head is uncovered and their loose-fitting, uncomplicated clothing is typical of a monk from the Stygos Grammaton.

Decades of training have made Soto a noted master of both stealth and the Grammaton Art: the unique precognitive combat style of the Stygos Grammaton. This martial art favors economy of movement, subtle evasion, and precise, efficient strikes. In this way, a Grammaton Monk can effectively fight many opponents without tiring even on very unfavorable terms – an important ability, given that Soto is Augur Kahin's sole bodyguard for this extraordinarily dangerous mission.

Soto is aware that the augur's mission is of vital importance, and trusts him implicitly. They are extremely reserved and speak very little, but break occasionally from impassivity to keep Kahin grounded when the augur's visions become overwhelming, helping to present coherent information to the PCs.

BEAT 7: THE FALL OF A SPARROW

SCENE GOALS

- Convey the solemnity, seriousness, and mystery of Karrakin religion
- Introduce Kahin and Soto, who will shortly become quite important
- Shine a spotlight on the characterization of the PCs by highlighting their ties to the Passions – and whether they embrace or reject their bonds
- Spook the players with some ominous foreshadowing

Students have only just returned to the Karrakin Cavalry College after the suspension of studies, but the rituals of the College must continue. In this beat, the PCs meet an augur from the Order Xenoglossia and have their bonds read.

The return to academic activities is marked by a flurry of nervous activity and heightened security. There is a noticeable increase in the number of BUC troops stationed at the College's entrance, and the dean has already begun to crack down on rules violations that might previously have passed beneath notice.

Despite this, the time-trodden rituals of the College continue as if nothing were out of the ordinary. In fact, the very first day of studies is interrupted by one of the institution's oldest ceremonies. You are apparently required to attend the Great Hall, there to meet with one of the fabled augurs of the Order Xenoglossia, who will perform a traditional reading of your bond to the Passions.

Attendance at this ceremony is not strictly mandatory but the absence of any PCs will be noted. Missing the bond reading incurs a –1 penalty to the relationship clocks of both Archchancellor Sigune and Dean Hebriyah, the latter of whom demands an explanation from the PCs for their absence (this provides an opportunity for the PCs to further infuriate the dean if they are rude or provide an unsatisfactory answer). Skipping the reading will also be brought up alongside the litany of evidence brought against the PCs in **Beat 9: Meat for the Grinder**, although they will not know it yet. If Kahin cannot deliver his prophecy here, he attempts to seek out the PCs in the gardens or a similarly secluded area after **Combat 5: Live-Fire Exercise**.

Assuming the PCs attend the ceremony, they wait in the Great Hall under the watchful eyes of the archchancellor and dean as students are called to the area of the Lykeon containing the shrines to the Passions. Most are called one by one – but unusually, the PCs are called in quick succession and must wait together outside the shrines for a group reading. This form of reading is highly unorthodox but nobody appears willing to challenge it.

Rather than being seen individually as you were expecting, your group is collected together outside the shrines. The attendants responsible for conducting students to and from the Great Hall seem to be taking this development in their stride, apparently not wanting to question an augur on the performance of their sacred duty.

When you are all together outside the shrines, a small door opens and the unmistakable sweet smell of traditional Begi incense billows out on a wave of smoke that rolls from the opening. The interior is dark, but your eyes quickly adjust to a scene picked out in flickering candlelight. An elderly figure behind a low table, swathed almost entirely in the robes of the Order Xenoglossia, extends a single blue-tinged hand and beckons for you to sit before him.

This is Kahin, one of the prophetic priests of the Passions known as augurs. Also in the room is a Stygos Grammarion monk, Soto, who closes the door behind the PCs once they have all entered. As the PCs sit, they discover that on the table before each of them lies a card representing one of the Passions. If your players are familiar with Karrakin religion (*Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies*, p. 59–61, 92–107), ask them what is depicted on the card; if not, you can refer to the following table for an appropriate Passion to represent their character.

THE PASSIONS

The Titan	Strength, leadership, force
The Wolf	Precision, coldness, intimidation
The Harlequin	Cunning, subterfuge, deceit
The Broker	Manipulation, influence, elegance
The Fool	Perseverance, learning, luck
The Magus	Passion, faith, intuition
The Builder	Diplomacy, creativity, empathy
The Pathfinder	Curiosity, exploration, understanding
The Firebrand	Charisma, iconoclasm, dedication
The Celebrant	Enthusiasm, indulgence, open-mindedness
The Knave	Resolve, ruthlessness, ambition
The Seneschal	Honor, loyalty, integrity

If you are using the rules for bonds detailed in *Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies*, you can refer to the bonds the PCs selected when they reached **LL1**. These rules are **not required** for this scene, though; you can reference bonds and have Augur Kahin perform readings solely as part of the narrative.

Ask each player how their character feels about what is depicted on the card before them, and give them an opportunity to reflect on how the Passions have influenced their life (if at all).

While the PCs consider their cards, Soto formally introduces the augur and takes a position at his side. Introducing the PCs is of course unnecessary; if any of them attempt to introduce themselves Kahin raises his hand and informs them that he already knows who they are – perhaps better than they know themselves.

At this point, the PCs have an opportunity to ask about the cards in front of them; if you intend to extend the scene by giving individual bond readings you can do so here (see **Extending the Scene**).

Otherwise, once introductions have been made and any initial questions answered, Augur Kahin produces a small bottle of blue liquid from the interior of his robes. This is the Blue Blood of Pangloss, a legendary liquid said to grant the augurs their precognitive powers. He peers at the PCs from under his hood and focuses on each of them with a wild gaze as he drinks its contents. As he finishes, the empty bottle slips from his hand, but Soto catches it mid-fall and sets it on the table in a single elegant movement. The augur begins to speak:

“I see a great wheel, turning across the sky. Its name is Dis, and it is the cycle of power, and of empires, and of violence – the snake that bites its own tail.”

“The wheel is a promise whispered to the ruthless and the wicked, those who seize cities and destroy lands and are a law to themselves. Woe to those in their path, for the wheel would crush all before it, and righteousness must struggle to prevail.”

“I see a shadow that looms long before an ever-setting sun, and the shadow prowls amongst the people, and its ravening teeth bring destruction upon the innocent and the guilty alike. The shadow is war, and it is death, and it would take us all into the night if we allow it.”

The prophecy is vague, and Kahin will not (or more accurately, cannot) say for certain what it means. The future, according to Kahin, is unwritten – how the PCs choose to respond to events will shape what is to come in radical ways.

The PCs may have questions for him, and he is willing to answer to the best of his ability.

Q: Can you really see the future?

A: “There is no truth but the eternal, forever-moment that is now – all else is but a vision through smoke. Things that were, things that might have been, things that one day could be. Each are equally distant; we reach for them with our mind’s eye.”

Q: What does the vision mean?

A: “War is coming. Those who would manipulate Kar-rakis for their own ends are hard at work to ensure it, even now. The cost of such meddling is death and suffering on a scale you cannot imagine.”

Q: What does this have to do with us?

A: “All of us have a part to play in what is to unfold, and it falls to you to influence what is to come. Woe that I must bestow this burden on you, but I have seen it: it is only by your hands that disaster can be averted.”

Q: What do we do next?

A: “I see too many futures, in far too short a time. I can only give you this: you must trust. In each other. In yourselves. In a future where righteousness prevails. You must stand before the wheel and stretch out your hands and cease its turn. Though I shall not be with you, when then is now, you will know what to do.”

As the reading concludes, an attendant guides the PCs back into the Great Hall. They have a brief moment to discuss the portents they were given, and potentially to discuss readings with the other students – all of whom will have received dire readings, though nothing matching the intensity of the PCs’.

EXTENDING THE SCENE

Before the PCs leave the shrine, Augur Kahin is willing and able to provide personalized bond readings for the PCs. These can be performed as a group, or in private if the PCs request it.

These readings take the form of small, three-part visions: the first part references the character’s personal history or backstory, potentially including details that nobody should be able to know. The second references their current studies at the College, any challenges they are currently facing, and how they embody (or reject) their bond. The third ostensibly relates to their individual future, though as with the group prophecy it is likely to be cryptic and unhelpful.

Use this moment to foreshadow any plans you have for a PC’s narrative arc, reinforce existing plot threads, or present mysteries that the PCs can pursue as side stories.

KEY NPCS

CLOCK

Augur Kahin of the Order
Xenoglossia

7

Soto, Stygos Grammaton Monk

5

RELATIONSHIP CLOCKS

Augur Kahin: +1 if the PCs take the visions seriously and at face value.

Soto: No specific changes, unless the PCs act wildly inappropriately or threaten the augur.

COMBAT 5: LIVE-FIRE EXERCISE

SCENE GOALS

- Introduce the PCs to their presumed enemy and the tactics they could expect to face
- Show how the College forces students to assume roles and conform to the expectations of authority
- Allude to the political implications of what appears to be a defensive scenario set on Karrakin soil
- Confront the PCs with the unfairness of the College's approach to training during the conversation with Rawan and Tomas

Sitrep: Recon (*Lancer*, p. 273)

Objective: Identify and control the true Control Zone at the end of Round 6

ENEMY FORCES

ADVERSARY SCENARIO: HARRISON ARMORY

For 3 PCs: Rawan Azar, "Saxifrage". **VETERAN PIRATE SCOURER** (Flash Lens, Veterancy [+Hull], Feign Death)
Lord Tomas, "Conscience". ELITE SCOUT (System Flayer, Dataveil)
 1x **PYRO** (Napalm Bomb)
 1x **AEGIS** (HA Blackwall System)

For 4 PCs: +1x **SEEDER** (Grav Spike)

For 5 PCs: +1x **PYRO** (Napalm Bomb)
 +1x **AEGIS** (HA Blackwall System)

ADVERSARY SCENARIO: UNGRATEFULS

For 3 PCs: Rawan Azar (see above)
Lord Tomas (see above)
 1x **SEEDER** (Tripwires)
 1x **BARRICADE** (Seismic Repulsor)

For 4 PCs: +1x **DEMOLISHER** (Seismic Destroyer)

For 5 PCs: +1x **SEEDER** (Tripwires)
 +1x **BARRICADE** (Seismic Repulsor)

REINFORCEMENTS

This combat has no reinforcements. Deploy all enemies at the start of combat.

BRIEFING

The PCs prepare for their first combat exercise since returning to the College. Rather than the hypothetical scenarios they have become used to, closer to duels than real combat, Iphianassa's⁶ exercises now focus on what the College refers to as "adversary chassis" – with the clear subtext that the students are now training for specific combat scenarios against specific enemies.

These training scenarios take place on a rotating basis, with students designated as "adversaries" piloting a mix of their own mechs and common Harrison Armory or Ungrateful designs (depending on the College's new focus). The College has also revised its guidelines on weapon safety during exercises; limiters put in place to prevent collateral damage have been removed, demanding greater trust in Eligos's control over the containment fields. To offset the increased damage, Iphianassa has declared that the winning side will be rewarded with additional print credits.

MAP

This combat takes place on another facsimile of an urban environment. A number of large prefabricated buildings have been erected in the dueling fields in a representation of a city street that would not be out of place on Karrakis itself. The buildings, including those enclosing the **Control Zones**, are 4 spaces high and have roofs strong enough to support the weight of mechs – a testament to the skill of the construction crews.

ADVERSARY SCENARIOS

In this combat, there are **two possible OpFor compositions**, depending on which of Karrakis' political enemies is receiving the most blame for the attack at the Hounds Teeth Range. This will depend on the PCs' reports to Baron Intelligence in **Beat 6**. In both scenarios, the map and sitrep remain the same – only some of the NPCs vary.

Observant players might notice some differences in Rawan and Tomas's mechs from the NPC types and systems they use when called as allies (see p. 63). Rawan has been given a mech armed with high-powered energy weapons (a Sherman, or an up-armored and refitted civilian mining mech), while Tomas's advanced target-painting suite has been switched out for electronic warfare systems. Iphianassa hopes this will force the two of them to pilot more aggressively.

The supporting mechs round out the adversary force with either Armory-standard Genghises, Saladins, and Iskanders, or common Karrakin industrial mechs of the kind often adapted for combat by Ungrateful forces. These mechs are piloted by other, unnamed students.

6

If Iphianassa has not returned to the College following **Mission 1**, Lady Achilleia has temporarily taken charge of the Tactical Syllabus.



They are unlikely to play any significant role in the narrative, but if you want to name or characterize them for the purposes of roleplay, you can choose from or roll on the tables in the **Other Students** section on p. 46.

Both versions of the OpFor are relatively slow but heavily armored. Because of this, all units should be deployed at the start of the fight without holding any as **reinforcements**, to give them time to get into position. Their slowness can make it tough to set up a defensive position without revealing the true **Control Zone**, but note that you only need to have a single NPC in the true **Control Zone** at the end of Round 6 to prevent the PCs from winning. As such, you can preserve ambiguity by holding the middle of the map and moving into the area

around the true **Control Zone** after the PCs have spent a few rounds narrowing down the options.

TACTICS: HARRISON ARMORY

Despite an unfamiliar mech, Rawan retains her talent for opportunism, and her **THERMAL LANCE** rewards her for picking targets that are separated from the rest of the group (perhaps those attempting to scan **Control Zones**) and threatening them with **Focus Down**. If the PCs stay grouped up, her **FLASH LENS** can punish them and hopefully convince them to scatter.

Tomas focuses on using his **MARKER RIFLE** to apply **LOCK ON** for the benefit of other NPCs or attempting to invade targets in the **DANGER ZONE**. Using **DATAVEIL** to take

aggressive positions, he can make the most of **REBOUND SCAN** and **SYSTEM PLAYER** while **INVISIBLE**. That said, he can transfer it to another NPC and activate **CLOAKING FIELD** in the same round when necessary (e.g., if Rawan is taking heavy fire).

The **AEGISES** use their **HA BLACKWALL SYSTEMS** to section off areas of the map and reduce PC mobility. Meanwhile, the **PYROS** push forward and discourage the PCs from approaching certain map areas. The two can work together (the **AEGIS** applying burn with the **LIGHT LASER** before the **PYRO** hits with its **FLAMETHROWER**) or the **PYRO** can work alone, using its **NAPALM BOMB** for the same purpose. If the **SEEDER** is present, it discourages PCs from moving into areas by laying **mines** and using its **GRAV-GRENADE LAUNCHER** and **GRAV SPIKES** to force PCs to move into difficult positions (into the Blackwall or mines, or near to **PYROS**).

TACTICS: UNGRATEFULS

Rawan and Tomas's basic tactics are similar in this scenario to those above. The key difference is that because of the OpFor's defensive orientation, they prefer to hang back in areas protected by other NPCs.

The **SEEDERS** in this version of the fight prioritize blocking off and locking down the approaches and entrances to **Control Zones** with **TRIPWIRES**, while the **BARRICADES** push forward to attract attention and use cover from their **MOBILE PRINTERS** to block sight lines and approaches in the center. The **BARRICADES** should save their **SEISMIC REPULSORS** to use as defensive maneuvers in response to PCs who get too close, or later as the combat focuses on a smaller area (note that they affect allied characters as well).

If the **DEMOLISHER** is present, it is extremely slow and short-ranged. It is best used either in response to a PC rushing forward or to control one of the **Control Zones**. It should save its **SEISMIC DESTROYER** to use defensively (be aware that despite the similar name, this system works differently than the **SEISMIC REPULSOR**).

OUTCOME

Win or lose, the PCs are called to Iphianassa's office after the combat, along with Rawan and Tomas. She leads the group in a dissection of the fight and their tactics, and calls on the PCs to explain what they could have done better (even if they won) and summarize what they learned from the combat. This is an opportunity to impress her – if the PCs put in a good showing that demonstrates learning, increase Iphianassa's relationship clock by +1. Conversely, rude or unserious responses might result in penalties to her clock.

Iphianassa then distributes the promised rewards. If the PCs win the combat, each of them are rewarded with the **EXTRA REPAIRS** reserve (*Lancer*, p. 51). If the PCs lose the combat, she gives the extra print credits to Rawan and Tomas instead. If the PCs point out the inherent unfairness of giving print credits to the winning team (who presumably need them less), she admonishes them for believing that war is fair.

After being dismissed, the PCs can chat with Rawan and Tomas more casually. If the PCs lost the combat, and either or both of Rawan and Tomas are **Friendly** towards them, they will offer to donate their share of additional print credits (as **EXTRA REPAIRS**) to the PCs.

For Rawan, donating repairs is an expression of solidarity in dealing with an unfair system where the rewards are unevenly distributed, something she is happy to point out if the PCs haven't already. Additionally, if the combat followed the Ungratefals adversary scenario, she comments on how it is "bullshit" that the College is "training us to suppress people defending their homes". For Tomas, donating the repairs is both a conciliatory gesture and an expression of his reluctance to engage with the Tactical Syllabus as a whole, particularly in light of the possibility of war. He may even make a comment about how reactionary and xenophobic the response has been from the politicians and the media – an assessment that Rawan will agree with.

BEAT 8: THE SHADOW LOOMS LONG

SCENE GOALS

- Highlight the specter of war hanging over the College; how it has changed people's perception of the future and colored their moods
- Show how the PCs' reporting to Baronie Intelligence has influenced Karrakin society more broadly
- Explore each PC's attitudes and opinions to war as a real threat and not a hypothetical
- Further show off the College's teaching and demonstrate how seriously the College takes its responsibility to educate
- Unsettle and intrigue the players with the augur's message

In this beat, the PCs confront the changing atmosphere in the College, attend their classes, and receive a message from Augur Kahin warning of an impending betrayal. This is an opportunity to emphasize the tension in the College, and explore the consequences of any faculty or students failing to return to the College as a result of events at the end of **Mission 1**.

The atmosphere at the College remains tense and focused. Students and faculty alike keep a weather eye on militaristic posturing coming from the Baronie Council and Ignoble House, and conversations about the future inevitably turn toward the prospect of deployment. The shift in attitude is most significant during classes, as a new, cold seriousness underscores each lesson.

Ask your players to consider the following questions, to be explored in a short scene:

- How does your character react to the change in atmosphere?
- Is your character thinking about the future? What do they think might happen? Are they worried?
- What is your character's opinion on the posturing of the politicians?

While they consider their answers, the PCs must still attend classes. Ask the players to choose a Syllabus (default to the Tactical Syllabus if they cannot decide). Once they have chosen, pick or roll for a class from the tables in the **Sample Classes** section on p. 47. Use this class as the backdrop to a short scene exploring the answers to the questions asked above.

Unless they are absent as a result of events in **Mission 1**, the class is led by the appropriate head of Syllabus. Use this scene to demonstrate the more serious atmosphere of the class, and during a break or a practical segment

have an NPC (most likely another student with whom the PCs have a good relationship) prompt the PCs to answer the questions. This is an opportunity to explore both the PCs' thoughts and attitudes towards their studies with the specter of war on the horizon, and their relationships with the people around them.

At some point during the class, a College functionary wordlessly delivers a message bearing the distinctive seal of the Xenoglossary to the PCs. It reads as follows:

The hour draws near, as does the blade. Be not in your beds when they strike for your heart. Your savior moves worlds for you – gird yourselves and do not tarry at their call.

Written in a different hand at the bottom of the message are the letters "RV" and a series of numbers.

The message is an instruction to leave the College via means arranged by Augur Kahin. One of the landscape reconstruction specialists who regularly rebuilds the dueling fields in between skirmishes has a heavy transport capable of concealing and extracting the PCs' mechs in a way that will not raise attention. The numbers at the bottom of the message are coordinates to a rendezvous point in a nearby industrial district within Throne Karrakis.

The message is cryptic and its meaning may not be obvious – allow the PCs to make a skill check to interpret its meaning (appropriate triggers might include **Read A Situation** or **Investigate**).

If the PCs figure out the clue and are particularly proactive, they may decide to go straight to the dueling fields. If they do, move on immediately to **Beat 9: Meat for the Grinder**, where they will meet a surprised Hale who has only just received a message of their own from the augur. Otherwise, continue with the class and move on when you feel the players have answered the questions posed above.

EXTENDING THE SCENE

An excellent way to extend this scene is to have PCs attend different classes, either in groups or individually. Playing through multiple scenes will allow you to dwell on the questions asked at the beginning in greater detail, further explore the PCs' characterizations, and personalize the experience more for each player. If you opt for this approach, the augur's message is delivered to each PC or group of PCs separately; after classes are done, they can meet up to discuss its contents.

KEY NPCs

CLOCK

Underbaron Iphianassa, Stablemaster Imani, or Lord Castor, as appropriate,



Substitute heads of Syllabus: Lady Achilleia, Dean Hebriyah, Lord Hesketh



Other students taking the class



BEAT 9: MEAT FOR THE GRINDER

SCENE GOALS

- Demonstrate to the PCs how vicious Karrakin politics can be, and how fragile and ultimately arbitrary their privilege and protections are once they're positioned as outsiders
- Motivate the PCs to some kind of active response by highlighting the ludicrousness of the accusations and the fact that Praya had some involvement
- Make the PCs feel pressured and threatened, but give them opportunities to escape
- Present Hale as the most obvious option for escape; highlight that facing the charges is a possibility but the outcome of doing so is unclear

In this beat, the PCs must decide whether to heed the augur's warning and leave the College, or stay and take their chances. Ideally, the PCs will manage to escape the College one way or another and find refuge with the augur.

In a rare break from classes, the PCs receive another message, this time over their personal devices. It informs them that a member of the landscaping crew wants to talk with them in person at the Stables. Ostensibly, this relates to whatever combat they were last involved in, although it is highly irregular for a member of the crew to ask for a direct meeting with students.

When the PCs arrive at the Stables, they are met by **Hale Saremin** (they/them), assistant chief of the construction crew and the person primarily responsible for landscaping logistics. Hale has prepared a transport hauler plastered with distinctive warning signs – “CAUTION: HAZARDOUS CONTENTS” and “NANITES IN TRANSIT”. Fortunately, the hauler is empty. Hale has instructions from Augur Kahin to load up the PCs' mechs (which barely fit), and transport them to a specific location in the city – a location that happens to match the coordinates on the message the PCs received earlier. Hale has no idea why they have been asked to do this, but has been well compensated for their time and does not want to displease an augur.

Whether or not the PCs head to the Stables or trust Hale with their mechs, their personal devices soon start lighting up with notifications. First comes an order from the dean to immediately report to her office. Second, a message from one of the PCs' friends with a message saying something along the lines of, “this can't possibly be real, can it?”, along with an attached breaking news story. Other notifications follow in a flurry of similar messages from friends, family, and sponsors.

It rapidly becomes clear that somebody has released a large body of doctored evidence onto the Karrakis-local omninet, framing the PCs for being involved in the attack on the Hounds Teeth Range. The accusations involve a series of absolutely wild misrepresentations regarding the PCs and their actions (and include several outright fabrications), but it appears that security forces are acting on them out of an abundance of caution. It is unclear what will happen next, but the PCs are potentially facing arrest and military tribunal if someone decides to take the accusations at face value. They likely have mere minutes to grab their mechs and escape before the College's security detail arrives to arrest them.

If the PCs go with Hale, they arrive at the warehouse without incident; the containment warnings on the hauler are more than enough for them to be given a wide berth. Once they arrive, Hale immediately abandons the hauler and rapidly departs on foot, realizing that they have gotten themselves tangled up in something messy and wanting nothing further to do with the situation.

If the PCs investigate the accusations, they can find a wide spread of false information released with suspiciously coordinated timing – a clear smear campaign. It is not possible to determine the source of the campaign in such a short span of time, but at least one point of corroborating evidence appears to have come from Lord Praya, who has given an interview affirming the accusations and claiming that the PCs are traitors to Karrakis. The smears are uncharacteristically and suspiciously sloppy – there is little hard evidence to substantiate them and it would be easy to defend against them in a tribunal.

If the PCs delay their departure, a contingent from the College's BUC security detail will attempt to accost them. Escaping is a **skill challenge** (see *Lancer*, p. 47). Each PC involved makes a skill check using an appropriate trigger, depending on their approach and how they contribute. As with previous skill challenges, encourage players to use their triggers creatively, and remind them that they can invoke relevant backgrounds or pilot gear for **+1 ACCURACY**. Additionally, **Friendly** relationships with any surviving faculty members can be invoked for **+1 ACCURACY** each.

Success on the skill challenge means that the PCs evade the security forces and escape into the city, where they can rendezvous with the augur at the agreed location or head elsewhere if they have a different plan. Failure results in capture.

EXTENDING THE SCENE

Assuming the PCs successfully avoid capture, there are several ways to extend this scene. For example, you could describe the hauler passing through the College's security checkpoint and making its way through Throne Karrakis, potentially dodging more security contingents on the way. By default, security has no reason to suspect Hale and certainly no desire to interfere with a hauler supposedly carrying a large quantity of dangerous nanites – but you can use this as an opportunity to ramp up the tension of the escape and let the PCs make their own lives harder.

Another option is to extend the PCs' arrival at the rendezvous point. When they arrive at the warehouse, they meet Soto, who instructs them to wait for Augur Kahin. While they wait, they can get their bearings and either speak to Soto or look at the accusations against them in more detail to find out how individual NPCs and factions have responded.

KEY NPCs

Hale Saremin

CLOCK

None

RELATIONSHIP CLOCKS

For now, the accusations have no direct effect on relationship clocks; with such flimsy evidence, the NPCs default to their existing biases.

Despite this, social checks involving NPCs who aren't already Friendly (or otherwise disposed to help the PCs) become Difficult until the PCs can clear their names – most people will not want to risk directly associating with or helping accused traitors.

CAPTURE OR SURRENDER

The accusations against the PCs are ludicrous and unfounded, and the PCs may decide to defend themselves legitimately. Doing so would not be hard, merely time-consuming. Alternatively, failure to escape results in capture by the College's security forces. In either case, they are forced to remain under guard in the College, and therefore – in the eyes of those who set them up – out of the way for what is about to happen.

Arrest or capture moves the timeline of the mission forward significantly. Skip **Combat 6: Enter Sand-Men** and **Beat 10: Hand Overplayed** entirely, and instead run a scene in which the PCs learn of the attack by the Khayradin Elites while being held in the College awaiting military tribunal. When they learn about the attack, create and reveal the **Countdown** clock outlined in **Beat 10** (see p. 83). The PCs will need to escape amidst the chaos to help defend the College.

Escape attempts are best handled as a series of **skill challenges**, with the PCs' goals being “escape confinement”, “gather additional information about the attack”, and then “get to their mechs unnoticed”. If the PCs succeed on all three skill challenges, they are able to slip their bonds, sneak to the Stables, and break their mechs out of storage, moving to **Combat 7: Dynamic Entry**. Failure on one or more of these challenges will advance them to the same point, but incur consequences at your discretion.

Sample consequences for failing challenges include:

- having to kill someone or implicate an innocent NPC, significantly damaging relationships
- making checks on subsequent skill challenges within this series **Difficult** or **Risky**
- taking **structure** or **stress damage**
- advancing the **Countdown** clock
- being unable to bring an ally into **Combat 8**.

Whether or not the PCs succeed or fail on these challenges, they will not have faced Count Argo in **Combat 6**, meaning he will be present for whichever version of **Combat 8** the PCs eventually attempt.

COMBAT 6: ENTER SAND-MEN

SCENE GOALS

- Shock the PCs with the augur's death
- Scare the PCs with genuine threats to their lives despite the relative safety of their mechs
- Demonstrate Argo's ruthlessness and overconfidence
- Have at least one enemy pilot survive (ideally Argo) so the PCs have someone to interrogate

Sitrep: Modified Holdout (*Lancer*, p. 272). There is no scoring, and PCs do not need to hold the central control zone.

Objective: Survive

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: Count Argo-Laurent, "Sandman". **ELITE VETERAN ASSASSIN** (Spinning Kick, Cloud Projector, Veteranacy [+Agility], Legendary)
2x **PIRATE HORNETS** (Lock/Hold Javelins, Prying Claws)
2x **PIRATE PRIESTS** (Fractal Assault, Coreworm Rockets)
4x **GRUNT SCOUTS**

For 4 PCs: +2x **SPECTERS** (Drain Systems)

For 5 PCs: +2x **PIRATE HIVES** (Motile Swarm, Coreworm Rockets)

REINFORCEMENTS

Hold **Count Argo** and half of each type of NPC as reinforcements. Ingress begins from Round 2 onwards, from **Ingress Zones** on the edges of the map.

BRIEFING

Surrounded by the sounds of a city filled with life and activity, you thread your way through an industrial district to a warehouse at its heart. Judging by the fading paintwork and the dust that kicks up as you reach the entrance, this building has not been in regular use for some time. Inside, you are confronted by the eerie sight of rows of unfinished subaltern bodies stacked next to racks of robotic heads that stare into space with lifeless eyes.

Movement breaks the mortuary stillness: garbed almost entirely in the concealing robes of his order, the Xenogloss augur from the College steps from the shadows and approaches you with surprising haste.

The PCs arrive in the industrial district and discover a large, disused warehouse. Augur Kahin is here, along with Soto, who is perched high above on a gantry. Kahin greets the group and hurries them inside along with their mechs, muttering something about not having time. Once the PCs are inside, he dismisses Soto, who asks

if he is *absolutely sure*; the augur confirms and tells his bodyguard that he will see them later.

Following Soto's dismissal, Kahin finally engages with the PCs. They only have a short time for dialogue or questions, however, as a mech-sized metal javelin plunges through the side of the warehouse, barely missing the PCs. It strikes the augur in the torso, impaling him against the floor as weapons fire and chaos breaks out. The PCs are under attack by unknown assailants!

These are assassins from the House of Sand (the infamous Sand-men), and their mission here is fairly unambiguous – they are trying to kill the PCs. They have a limited amount of time to achieve this before the fighting attracts unwanted attention, but nevertheless prioritize taking out combat-capable PCs over finishing off **DOWN AND OUT** pilots. At your discretion, the Sand-men may be simply attempting to capture the PCs (potentially on orders from Argo, who may want to gloat). If anyone attempts to **SCAN** an assassin for additional secret information, you can give the basic information from **Beat 10: Hand Overplayed**, and/or grant **ACCURACY** on checks made to investigate the wrecks after the fight.

MAP

The PCs begin in a central warehouse surrounded by other warehouses and factories from which the assassins emerge. The surrounding area is cluttered with industrial machinery, vehicles, construction materials, and other obstacles. As with **Combat 5**, the warehouse and surrounding buildings are 4 spaces high and their roofs can support the weight of mechs.

TACTICS

For maximum dramatic effect, don't deploy Argo straight away; instead, bring him in with the first round of **reinforcements**. His reveal (accompanied by some dialogue in which he gloats about the PCs' imminent demise) should be a surprise to the players, if not exactly a shock. When determining which other NPCs to deploy and which to hold as **reinforcements**, a good starting point is to deploy half of each NPC type, though you may wish to prioritize deploying NPCs with **COREWORM ROCKETS** so they have more opportunity to use them.

The attack is supposed to be a surprise surgical strike. Especially during the first round when Argo has not yet arrived, the NPCs remain in cover as much as possible, taking the **HIDE** action if necessary.

The **PIRATE** template in this scene represents deadly NPCs equipped with systems designed to directly target the pilots of enemy mechs. Those carrying **COREWORM ROCKETS** attempt to use them as soon as possible. Try to target a spread of PCs with these rockets, and remind the players of their options for dealing with them. For example, allies can help by using **BOLSTER** for **ACCURACY** on attempts to remove them, or can even make the check themselves if they are adjacent. Alternatively, PCs can



simply ignore the coreworms in favor of continuing to fight, using **SHUT DOWN** – or **DISMOUNT**, if they are brave – at the last moment before the coreworms reach their target.

Where possible, the **HORNETS** use their mobility and small size to attack and then move back into cover. They prefer to use **LOCK/HOLD JAVELINS** and **PRYING CLAWS** opportunistically on isolated targets. The **PRIESTS** maintain **ABJURE** on the most dangerous damage dealers, and **INVESTITURE** on Argo to empower and protect him with **FRACTAL ASSAULT**.

The **SCOUTS** are inherently disposable and hang back at range, using cover to break line of sight where possible. Their primary purpose is to apply **LOCK ON** that can be

consumed by **HORNETS** using **IMPALE SYSTEMS**, **SPECTERS** (if present) using **DRAIN SYSTEMS**, and **PRIESTS** using **ABJURE**, all of which are nasty tech attacks that lack **ACCURACY** of their own. Additionally, targets **SHREDDED** as a result of receiving **LOCK ON** from a **MARKER RIFLE** are perfect targets for Argo's **HEATED BLADE**.

The **SPECTERS**, if present, use **PROWL** to keep themselves safe and harass any PCs who break off from the group. **DRAIN SYSTEMS** is vicious but easily disrupted when used against clustered PCs. The **HIVES**, if present, use **DRONE BARRAGE** to force PCs into isolated spots where they can be picked off by Argo or a **SPECTER**, and prioritize placing and moving motile **RAZOR SWARMS** so that PCs must choose between taking damage or maintaining a cohesive position.

OUTCOME

Succeed or fail, all remaining assassins pull out of the fight after six rounds. The alarm has been raised and security forces are on their way, and the Sand-men do not wish to be caught in the act.

As long as at least one PC avoided becoming **DOWN AND OUT**, they have bought themselves some breathing room – grant the group a single collective use of **BOUGHT TIME**, a reserve that can be used in several ways:

- In **Beat 10: Hand Overplayed**, **BOUGHT TIME** can be used to gain an extra round of skill checks to investigate the situation and gather more information.
- If the PCs lose **Combat 7: Dynamic Entry**, **BOUGHT TIME** can be spent to partially offset the consequences of the loss, causing the **Countdown** clock to increase only by **1** instead of **2**.
- **BOUGHT TIME** can also be used to prevent or offset one increase of the **Countdown** clock caused by using **POWER AT A COST** (e.g., if the PCs need additional repairs, want to call in a favor, or need to spend time on some other task before beginning **Combat 7**).

If Argo was killed or captured during the battle, searching him reveals **THE WOLF'S BLADES**, a pilot weapon which one PC can take as **EXOTIC GEAR** (see p. 97). The PCs will have an opportunity to interrogate any captured pilots in the next beat, though all are seasoned operatives and will not be particularly cooperative.

WHAT IF THE SAND-MEN WIN?

PC death is a risk in *Lancer*, albeit not a common one. You have a few different options for handling character deaths in this encounter (or elsewhere, if your players take risks).

First, remember that pilots don't immediately die when they are reduced to **0 HP** – instead, the player rolls for one of the **DOWN AND OUT** results (see *Lancer*, p. 49), likely rendering them unable to continue fighting. Even when a pilot goes **DOWN AND OUT** they have a good chance to survive – the assassins will prioritize their own survival, and generally prefer to focus on more dangerous targets over finishing off a **DOWN AND OUT** PC.

Second, note that facsimile-clones are common in Baronic society – especially clones of nobles and other important individuals (like students at the College!). If a character dies, they can potentially return as one of these clones, most likely with the use of subjectivity override due to time constraints. Exactly how a clone might show up at this perfect, crucial moment could be a source of further mystery, perhaps tied to the influence of the Xenoglossary or machinations by the character's sponsor. See *Lancer*, p. 83 for more details on clones.

Thirdly, in the extreme case that all PCs are reduced to **DOWN AND OUT**, they surrender, or they otherwise lose the combat, you can instead have them be captured by the Sand-men and dragged in bonds to the College along with their mechs (the assassins do not want to leave evidence behind). There, Praya and Argo will be able to gloat over their capture and monologue at them, perhaps explaining how they plan to frame them for the coming attack while the PCs try to figure out how to escape their bonds and save the day. If this happens, skip **Combat 7**, but add Argo to whichever version of **Combat 8** the PCs eventually attempt.

BEAT 10: HAND OVERPLAYED

SCENE GOALS

- Have the PCs discover the nature of the attack on the College. While extra detail can be discovered using skill checks, the PCs should end this beat knowing where they need to go and what they need to do next
- Give the PCs the opportunity to discover some of the “why” behind the smear attempt, the assassination attempt, and the attack on the College
- Create tension regarding the possibility of an attack in the very heart of Throne Karrakis, with the potential for horrifying collateral damage that implies

With the assassins defeated but the ring of weapons fire still echoing in the PCs’ ears, it can’t be long before security forces show up to investigate the fighting. In this beat, the PCs must gather as much information as possible under time pressure and escape in Hale’s abandoned transport before they’re discovered.

As the PCs collect themselves, Soto returns, covered in blood. The blood does not appear to be hers, and she refuses to answer questions about it.

INVESTIGATION

Soto asks the PCs what they will do next and informs them that they have a short window in which to find additional information. **Each PC may make a single skill check to investigate the situation.** Getting basic information is guaranteed, but a successful check gives additional information based on the method of investigation.

No matter the approach or results of the skill checks, the PCs find out that someone is planning an attack on the College that could kill large numbers of civilians, and they need to get there soon to prevent it.

The PCs have four avenues for further investigation:

- pulling data from wrecks
- interrogating captives
- examining the augur’s corpse
- analyzing the facts

The PCs can also talk to Soto for advice, which does not require a check. Soto can offer suggestions and commentary if you think the PCs need additional help.

The following pages provide example approaches for each of these avenues, along with suggested triggers players can invoke on skill checks. These are not the only ways to uncover information – let players be creative with their investigation and use of skill triggers. Unless the PCs choose to delay their departure (see **Delays and Bought Time** below for examples), they only get one check each, so they need to make them count.

TALKING TO SOTO

Soto is largely unfazed by the attack, but emphasizes the need to move on as quickly as possible before security forces arrive. They begin preparing to leave, and though they will not delay in this task, they can be asked a few questions:

Q: *What happened?*

A: *“Assassins from the House of Sand. No doubt they came to seal your fates. Do not mourn the augur, for he is not dead.”*

Q: *Where are we going?*

A: *“I am not the augur; I do not have such vision. He believed you would know. All I know is that I must take you there.”*

Q: *How would we know?/What should we do?*

A: *“I would begin by inspecting the fallen. But do so quickly; we have little time.”*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PULLING DATA FROM WRECKS

Reading data logs from downed enemy mechs will not reveal much hard evidence regarding the broader mission of their employers. These logs do, however, include dossiers containing vital statistics and biographical information for each of the PCs and technical specifications for their mechs; detailed maps of the warehouse and surrounding district; and a set of encrypted files.

Decrypting these files (e.g., **Hack or Fix**) reveals coordinates for a rendezvous point at the College. They also contain an instruction to leave Throne Karrakis by any means necessary if it is not possible to reach the rendezvous point “before detonation”.

PCs that successfully read between the lines of the data found on Argo’s mech (e.g., **Read A Situation**) can determine that he sent (and received) a series of limited-content pings to and from Praya just before the attack on the PCs, suggesting she is involved somehow. Most of them are encoded with an uncrackable private cipher, but the most recent one is a plaintext pair of coordinates – one matching the location of Argo’s mech at the warehouse, and the other, a location within the College.

INTERROGATING CAPTURED PILOTS

Argo (or another captured pilot if Argo escaped or died) spits and curses and struggles against any bonds placed on him, and ultimately regards the PCs with little more than contempt. He is not immediately willing to give anything up other than his desire to get the PCs “out of the way”.

Forcing Argo to reveal information (e.g., **Threaten**) is a **RISKY** check and has mixed results. Interrogating always reveals that the College is being threatened with a bomb. On a successful check, he explains the bomb’s specific nature (enough to give the PCs clues on how to deal with it, which they can leverage for **ACCURACY** on checks to disarm the bomb in **Combat 8A: Ballroom Blitz**). The risk is that he may also lie about his involvement, claiming that he has information proving the involvement of senior Harrison Armory officials (or Ungrateful cell leaders, if he thinks the PCs are more likely to believe that), and that he believed the PCs were working for them. On a **20+**, the PCs realize that he is lying to them, but while he’s being threatened it will take active evidence to the contrary to make him recant his deceit.

It is also possible to lure Argo into accidentally revealing information through a more subtle interrogation (e.g., **Charm**), though this is a **DIFFICULT** check. He might carelessly reveal his and Praya’s plan, referring to it as “our plan”, although this is absolutely more ego than reality. If goaded or pressed further, he might even slip up substantially and mention his “vision” for the future of Karrakis, in which it returns to its rightful place in the galaxy with the Houses Cannamos and Laurent at the forefront.

EXAMINING THE AUGUR’S CORPSE

The augur’s body appears to be that of a subaltern, with artificial skin covering anything not concealed by robes. The subaltern bleeds a thick black oil that pools and mixes with some kind of strange green hydraulic fluid. Neatly tucked in a seam on its chest is a partially torn scrap of paper, printed in a strange ink:

as **PASSACAGLIA** and **TYRAN** forged the swords of Empire in the burning of worlds, and quenched them in the blood of their people, so too would this new Empire of **SAND** and **STONE** be born. But the great wheel **DIS** demands more on each turning. The price for its birth would be to tear out its own heart, and see the thousand thousand lights of **KARAKIZ** extinguished with a single violent breath. A price gladly paid

A cryptic message is handwritten on its reverse, shaky and difficult to read:

*Go now to your halls.
Do not hesitate.
Do not fear.
All is not yet lost.*

A successful check to interpret the message (e.g., **Read a Situation**) suggests the prophecy might refer to an attack, bombing, or some other violent strike in Throne Karrakis itself. The message on the reverse is an instruction to return to the College with urgency – in combination, they point toward an attack on the College itself.

A successful check to thoroughly search the warehouse or examine the augur’s subaltern more closely (e.g., **Investigation**) reveals a small wooden case containing a number of vials (one for each of the PCs). These vials contain the **BLUE BLOOD OF PANGLOSS, EXOTIC GEAR** that the PCs gain as single-use **RESERVES** (see p. 97).

ANALYZING THE FACTS

Once the PCs have gathered all the clues there are to find, they might want to reason out how best to deal with an attack on the College and the threat of a bomb.

If the PCs analyze the facts they quickly determine that an attack on the College would only succeed if the security forces in the surrounding area were either in disarray or absent. This chaos may provide a limited opportunity for the PCs to return to the College, fight their way through any opposition, and reach the bomb before it can detonate.

The obvious way to deal with the bomb is to defuse it, but a successful skill check to assess the tactical situation (e.g., **Assault** or **Blow Something Up**) will suggest an alternative solution – something the PCs could attempt if they are unable to reach the bomb in time, or can’t fight their way through whatever opposition they face. If the PCs can reach the containment field generator, it might be possible for them to overcharge the containment fields designed to protect the city against errant weapons fire, and direct the majority of the blast upwards instead of outwards. This method would likely still kill anyone left inside the fields, but would hopefully minimize the collateral damage. As such, this should probably not be the PCs’ primary plan, but might prove to be a useful backup that they can prepare for if necessary. For more details on how the PCs can implement this plan, see **Combat 8B: Perfect Parry** (p. 90).

CONTACTING THE COLLEGE

If the PCs attempt to contact the College or anyone there (perhaps to warn them of the attack), they find themselves unable to do so via regular communication channels.

However, the attempt prompts a response from Eligos, the College's administrative NHP. Eligos confirms that the College is under attack by unidentified assailants, who have seized control of the Lykeon and are assembling what appears to be a bomb in the ballroom. Additionally, if the PCs have not already uncovered the backup plan, Eligos informs them that it is an option (and also the probable consequences). Eligos is taking a significant risk by contacting the PCs, and the conversation is forcefully cut off if it continues for too long.

THE COUNTDOWN CLOCK

When the PCs discover the basic information about the attack, create a six-segment clock titled “**Countdown**”, starting at 0 segments. Inform the PCs that this clock represents the number of rounds they will have to act during the final combat (either **Combat 8A: Ballroom Blitz** or **Combat 8B: Perfect Parry**).

As the PCs gain more information, you can reveal more about the nature of the **Countdown** clock – for instance that it represents the timer of a bomb that the PCs will have to defuse, and that excessive delays will result in segments being filled in. Emphasize that the clock does not only cause problems if it is filled; marking any number of segments is bad, because it can make it much more difficult to defuse the bomb in **Combat 8A**.

DELAYS AND BOUGHT TIME

The PCs *really* don't have a lot of time, a fact reinforced by Soto, but they may still choose to delay and gather more information. They can do this in two ways: continuing to investigate at the warehouse, or while on the move. Either option advances the **Countdown** clock – inform the players of this and ensure they understand the consequences before they commit to anything.

If the PCs do choose to remain at the scene and gather more information, they can attempt another round of skill checks as outlined above. Unfortunately, security forces will begin to arrive as they finish their investigations; the subsequent attempt to either convince or evade them advances the **Countdown** clock by +2.

The PCs can also choose to continue their investigations on the move, whether by interrogating captured pilots, poring over data logs, or something else. This allows them to attempt another round of skill checks, but at +1 **DIFFICULTY**. Additionally, doing this means they cannot fully focus on evading security forces and their roundabout route advances the **Countdown** clock by +1.

Delaying for any other reason (such as to pick up **REPAIRS**) counts as **POWER AT A COST**, the cost for which is likely an advance of the **Countdown** clock.

The PCs can use the **BOUGHT TIME** reserve to reduce an advancement of the **Countdown** clock by -1. This could be used to offset the time taken for a more thorough investigation, to pay for a different **POWER AT A COST**, or to offset any delays that come about as a result of losing **Combat 7: Dynamic Entry**.

The PCs can use **POWER AT A COST** to obtain an additional **BOUGHT TIME** reserve as they travel to the College – this might represent the group taking dramatic and dangerous shortcuts, busting through a security check-point in a hail of gunfire, or getting bailed out by one of the PCs' patrons. Example costs for this include forcing a PC to consume **CORE POWER (CP)**, damaging the PCs' mechs, or forcing them into a significant personal or political compromise – time is extraordinarily valuable right now, so feel free to make the cost harsh and the decision a difficult one.

EXTENDING THE SCENE

Time is of the essence, but you can extend this scene by depicting the PCs as they travel to the College, giving them one final chance to roleplay as a group before throwing them back into combat.

The nature of this scene will depend on the tone you have established so far and the actions of the PCs. It might be stressful and fraught as the PCs come to terms with the information they have gathered and the pressure they are under, or it might be a moment of rising anticipation, where the PCs psyche each other up for the challenge ahead. If you think your players could do with an additional challenge, it could also be an action scene involving a skill challenge, representing the frantic dash to the College and the obstacles the group encounters along the way.

KEY NPCS

Soto

CLOCK



Argo (if captured)



RELATIONSHIP CLOCKS

Soto: +1 if a majority of the PCs succeeded on their skill checks or otherwise demonstrated competence while investigating. -1 if the PCs delay their departure against Soto's recommendations.

Argo: -1 if he is interrogated, -3 if he is threatened.

COMBAT 7: DYNAMIC ENTRY

SCENE GOALS

- Encourage PCs to consider their approach and their targets carefully, emphasizing the use of positioning, cover, and target selection to mitigate incoming fire
- Have fun blowing up terrain and destructible objects, and highlight the collateral damage caused by war machines fighting in an ornate space never meant to contain them
- Put some pressure on the PCs as they approach the climax of the mission series, and potentially force them to make difficult decisions about delaying to perform more substantial repairs

Sitrep: Gauntlet (*Lancer*, p. 271)
Objective: Gain entrance to the College

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: **RAINMAKER** (Hound Missiles)
2x **BASTIONS** (Fearless Defender)
2x **SQUADS** (Armored)
PRIEST (Empowered Shield)

For 4 PCs: +1x **ACE** (Rapid Response)
+1x **PRIEST** (Empowered Shield)

For 5 PCs: +1x **ACE** (Rapid Response)
+1x **RAINMAKER** (Hound Missiles)

REINFORCEMENTS

Hold the **ACES**, and half (rounded up) of the **RAINMAKERS** and **PRIESTS** as reinforcements. Ingress begins from Round 2 onwards, from **Ingress Zones** on the edges of the map.

BRIEFING

The PCs mount up in the back of the hauler, and hurtle towards the College with Soto at the wheel. The Grammar-ton monk swerves through the streets at top speed, just barely slipping through tight gaps and dodging oncoming vehicles. Eventually the hauler approaches a service entrance in the College's exterior walls where hardsuited BUC security forces appear to be exchanging weapons fire with unknown forces within.

Several security officers attempt to hail the speeding hauler as it approaches before diving for cover as it becomes clear that it isn't stopping. The hauler bursts through the ornate gate amidst a hail of gunfire, crashing headlong into the topiary marking the edge of the gardens in a blaze of fire, smoke, and tearing metal. With a dead calm to their voice, Soto instructs the PCs to get out and make a push for the Lykeon before they are overrun.

The PCs do not have much time to cross the gardens and gain access to the Lykeon before hostile forces arrive. Arrayed before them and closing in on their position are a number of unfamiliar mechs and troops in heavy hard-suits – Karrakin in style, but not belonging to the College.

MAP

The PCs must cross a section of the gardens – heavily landscaped and containing topiary, water features, and other statues and ornamentation. Areas of shallow water count as **difficult terrain**. The pathways of the gardens lead up to a raised terrace and one of the entranceways to the Lykeon itself, flanked by large pillars.

TACTICS

The NPCs in this fight can inflict a lot of damage if the PCs don't deal with them quickly. To succeed, the PCs will need to take advantage of cover and focus on neutralizing the OpFor's biggest damage dealers – the **SQUADS** and the **RAINMAKERS**.

The **SQUADS** and **BASTIONS** should be deployed at the start of the combat using the forward deployment zones in the middle of the gardens. The **SQUADS' SPREAD OUT** trait makes it extremely easy for the **BASTIONS** to use both **FRIENDLY INTERDICTION** and **FEARLESS DEFENDER**, as they can simply move into or through a **SQUAD** to maintain adjacency. Note that **SQUADS** cannot take advantage of **GUARDIAN** (or the other cover around them) due to **UNDERSIZE**.

Meanwhile, the **RAINMAKER(S)** remain at the back, using **JAVELIN ROCKETS** to cover lines of approach and prioritizing targets that are not in cover with their **MISSILE PODS**. They launch **HOUND MISSILES** whenever possible to give the PCs yet more problems to think about. The **PRIEST(S)** use **DISPERSAL SHIELD** on the **RAINMAKER(S)** to increase their durability, and otherwise push forward to use **ABJURE** on significant threats.

Hold half of each of the **RAINMAKERS** and **PRIESTS** as **reinforcements**, rounded up (for 3 PCs, none should be deployed at the start; for 4 PCs, deploy one **PRIEST**; and for 5 PCs deploy a **PRIEST** and a **RAINMAKER**). **RAINMAKERS** and **PRIESTS** should ingress alongside each other near the back of the map, taking advantage of their range as they move into position.

If the **ACES** are present, hold them as **reinforcements**. They arrive from the **Ingress Zones** at the side later in the fight. Once they are on the field, they remain at the outer range of their **MISSILE LAUNCHERS**, harassing the PCs before taking cover and using **BARREL ROLL** and **RAPID RESPONSE** to move away and out of range of the PCs' weapons.



DESTRUCTIBLE TERRAIN

Certain objects on the map (statues, sculptures, etc.) are **SIZE 1 destructible** objects. These objects are fragile and offer only temporary shelter.

Destructible objects are automatically destroyed when they are hit with any attack or take any damage. Until their destruction, they are obstructions that provide **hard cover**. If the cover they provide would impose any **DIFFICULTY** on an attack roll and that attack roll misses, the object is automatically destroyed.

OUTCOME

If the PCs win, they gain access to the Lykeon before the defending forces are able to slow their momentum, and can fight their way through with relative ease.

If the PCs lose, they still gain access to the Lykeon but their advance is delayed as they face entrenched resistance and struggle to break through. Advance the **Countdown** clock by +2.

BETWEEN COMBATS

Regardless of the combat's outcome, **the PCs may not rest following this combat**. Instead, they can each pick one of the following options:

- Spend **1 REPAIR** to restore their mech to full **HP**.
- Spend **1 REPAIR** to restore a single destroyed weapon or system.
- Clear all **HEAT**.
- Repair a destroyed mech by spending **4 REPAIRS**. As usual, other PCs may contribute their **REPAIRS** if the PC whose mech has been destroyed does not have enough remaining.

In addition, the PCs clear all statuses and conditions currently affecting their mech, and reload all **LOADING** weapons.

If any PCs end up without an active mech (e.g., they were destroyed and the PCs do not have enough **REPAIRS**), they may take control of one of the inactive trainer mechs located nearby. You can decide how this mech is equipped, but for the sake of ease, it is often easiest for it to be the same **FRAME** with the same weapons and gear as the PC's regular mech. Whatever its loadout, the trainer mech has **1 STRUCTURE** and **1 STRESS**, and has no **CP**.

If the PCs are struggling for repairs, remind them that **POWER AT A COST** is an option. This can grant them enough time to properly repair their mechs with a **rest** rather than using the above rules, or even obtain additional **REPAIRS**. The cost for each (they can do both if they are desperate!) is advancing the **Countdown** clock.

MOVING ON

Ordinarily, the narrative will now move on to **Combat 8A: Ballroom Blitz** with the **Countdown** clock remaining at its current level. This represents the PCs assaulting the ballroom where the bomb is being guarded and trying to defuse it within the rounds allotted.

However, you may now offer the PCs the following alternative, whether or not they intuited it in **Beat 10**: they may reset the **Countdown** clock entirely and enter **Combat 8B: Perfect Parry**. This represents the PCs cutting through to the unguarded facilities wing of the College, and preparing to raise the containment fields in time to deflect the blast. Before the players choose this option, be sure to be clear about the consequences of their choice: **this will not stop the blast, only contain its worst effects to the College**, and there is a strong likelihood their characters might die even if they are successful.

You may optionally run a short narrative scene before the upcoming combat, in which the PCs encounter some of their fellow students fighting back against the attacking forces, who are revealed to be Khayradin Elites. This is an opportunity for PCs to interact one last time with important NPCs or secure an ally who can aid them in the next combat.

COMBAT 8A: BALLROOM BLITZ

SCENE GOALS

- Make the stakes of the combat as clear as possible
- Force the PCs to choose between their own safety, dealing with enemies, and defusing the bomb
- Demonstrate Praya's dedication to her goal and overconfidence in her abilities
- Show the capabilities of the **VOID REND** system and its use both for ingress and egress

Sitrep: Disarm the Bomb (modified Gauntlet, *Lancer*, p. 271). There is no Control Zone. Instead, the PCs must disarm the bomb.

Objective: Disarm the bomb before the Countdown clock is completed.
(Optional objective: Prevent enemies from escaping)

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: **Lord Praya-Cannamos, "Titan". ELITE VETERAN GOLIATH** (Power Knuckle, Pin, Veterancy [+Hull], Legendary)

KHAYRADIN ELITES

"Galanthus". VETERAN DEMOLISHER (Broad-Sweep Haft, Veterancy [+Systems], Void Rend)

"Hemlock", VETERAN ENGINEER (Shepherd Field, Veterancy [+Systems], Void Rend)

"Hellebore", BERSERKER (Harpoon Cannon)

"Taxus", SUPPORT (Empowered Cloud)

For 4 PCs: **"Nightshade", VETERAN ENGINEER** (Shepherd Field, Veterancy [+Systems], Void Rend)

For 5 PCs: **"Snapdragon", BERSERKER** (Harpoon Cannon)

"Illex", SUPPORT (Empowered Cloud)

REINFORCEMENTS

Hold NPCs without **VOID REND** as **reinforcements** (excepting **Lord Praya**). Ingress has special rules – see **VOID REND** below.

BRIEFING

The PCs fight their way through too-tight hallways toward signals coming from mechs in a room never meant to hold them: the ballroom. As they converge on the entrance, they see a large and complex device at the center of the dance floor. At its heart appears to be a trio of unstable power cores. Their sensors start spiking off the scale – this is a bomb, primed and counting down to detonation.

Arrayed before the device are mechs carrying standards bearing the symbol of a Karrakin two-headed spear grasped in a gauntlet: the feared Khayradin Elites, bodyguards to the Stonelords. At their center, a familiar mech towers over the rest: that of Lord Praya of House Cannamos of the House of Stone, ready and waiting as if for one last dance.

ALLIES

For this combat, you may choose to provide the PCs with an allied character as support. As in **Combat 4**, players may choose from among any students with whom they have a **Friendly** relationship. This allied NPC follows the rules described on p. 63, cannot defuse the bomb, and deploys with the PCs in the **Player Deployment Zone**.

MAP

This combat takes place in the College's ballroom, within the Lykeon. It is clear that the ballroom has taken damage in the fighting; rubble and collapsed pillars provide some cover scattered across the open floor. In addition, makeshift barricades have been hastily assembled from a mix of field-printed extrudite, wrecked mechs, and whatever furniture was at hand, granting cover to the forces protecting the bomb seated upon the ballroom's stage.

THE BOMB

The bomb is a **SIZE 2** object with **20 HP**, **EVASION 5**, and **E-DEFENSE 10**.

At the end of each round, fill in one segment on the **Countdown** clock. When the clock is completed, the bomb detonates.

The bomb will also automatically detonate if it is destroyed. None of the NPCs will damage the bomb willingly; they have an exit plan and want to survive.

DISARMING THE BOMB

Any character adjacent to the bomb may make progress toward disarming it with a skill check (appropriate triggers include **Blow Something Up** and **Stay Cool**). This skill check may be attempted as a **full action** as normal, or as a **quick action** by pilots on foot or mechs with **MANIPULATORS**.

Disarming the bomb requires **three** successful checks – one to disarm each of the unstable cores. These checks do not need to be consecutive and may be made by different characters, so long as they are all performed before the bomb detonates.

If the PCs are worried that they do not have the appropriate skill triggers or have little margin for error, remind them about the **BOLSTER QUICK TECH** action, which grants **+2 ACCURACY** to skill checks.



If a PC imbibes the **BLUE BLOOD OF PANGLOSS**, they receive a strange vision of the complex web of Karrakin politics reified as wires and circuitry, along with a sudden understanding of how all these things are connected. These visions grant **+1 ACCURACY** on all skill checks to disarm the bomb for the rest of the scene. In addition, the next check they make to disarm the bomb may use any skill trigger of their choice, as they are struck with a strange insight into a tangled web of cause and effect.

TACTICS

The OpFor's primary goal is to defend the bomb at almost all costs short of self-destruction. Praya physically interposes her mech between the PCs and the bomb, using her **POWER KNUCKLE**, **PIN**, and even **GRAPPLE** to keep PCs away. For her, this fight is personal – she may make rash decisions if goaded or taunted by PCs.

The Khayradin Elites are more professional, sticking to a straightforward game plan: cut off the route to the bomb and concentrate their fire on any PCs that get close. Only the **BERSERKERS** have a particular desire to push forward and engage the PCs. Since the PCs must come to the bomb to disarm it, the other NPCs are happy to hang back and prepare actions if necessary.

On the first turn Galanthus uses **VOID REND**. On later turns, they attempt to punish any PCs that move adjacent to the bomb with the **DEMOLITION HAMMER**, switching over to **BROAD-SWEEP HAFT** when multiple PCs are in range (note that the bomb is not a character and so is not targeted by this attack).

Hemlock and Nightshade can place turrets near the bomb, positioning them such that both turrets and bomb can benefit from their **SHEPHERD FIELD**. This also minimizes the need to use **ENGINEER'S MARK**, as their turrets are likely to already be focused on priority targets.

Hellebore and Snapdragon use **AVALANCHE CHARGE** to intercept the PCs and cause havoc. Their **HARPOON CANNONS** can be used alongside their **CHAIN AXES** as part of a **BARRAGE**, but are mostly useful for pulling PCs out of position and denying them access to the bomb.

Taxus and Ilex use **RESTOCK DRONES** to repair allies and **EMPOWERED CLOUD** to clear conditions as necessary. Their size allows them to physically interpose themselves as resilient obstacles, and even **RAM** or **GRAPPLE** troublesome PCs to keep them away from the bomb.

VOID REND

Some of the Khayradin Elites are equipped with a special **VOID REND** system; if someone **SCANS** them (or the wreck is inspected at a later point), it appears to be a custom-built entropy-manipulation device, employing paracausal technology that shares a codebase with the RKF Calendula (see *Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies*, p. 142). Like that chassis, it appears to have some connection to the Aunic Firmament.

Void Rend

System, Recharge 6+, Full Action

This system creates a **tear** in reality in an adjacent free space that lasts until the end of the scene. The **tear** is not an object or character, does not provide obstruction, and cannot be interacted with in any way.

Characters that enter a space occupied by a **tear** may choose to leave realspace and enter a strange, gray, interstitial realm in which they can no longer see or interact with the real world. Characters that leave realspace in this way are removed from the battlefield entirely and cannot return for the remainder of the scene.

This system is the Khayradin Elites' entrance and exit strategy. For the purposes of this combat, the spaces adjacent to a **tear** count as an additional **Ingress Zone** for hostile forces. At least one NPC with this system (usually Galanthus) activates it in Round 1 for this purpose. Approximately half of the NPCs (those without **VOID REND**, excluding Praya) should be held as **reinforcements** and enter from Round 2 onwards.

When the bomb is about to detonate (e.g., there is only one segment remaining on the **Countdown** clock), or if it is successfully disarmed, the OpFor begins using **VOID REND** and its **tears** to leave. If the PCs want to stop them escaping, you can (optionally) continue the combat until all NPCs have escaped or been destroyed.

The PCs may attempt to chase enemies through these holes in reality, or otherwise use them to escape the consequences of the bomb's detonation. You can allow PCs to take a parting shot at escaping NPCs by leaving realspace through the **tears**, but this strange non-space is difficult to navigate without special equipment and training – fleeing NPCs are almost guaranteed to get away if they are not destroyed.

OUTCOME

If the PCs manage to disarm the bomb, they save the College and many many thousands of lives in the surrounding city. Additionally, the relationship clocks for all NPCs in the College (with the exception of Praya and Argo) increase by +2, as the PCs are personally responsible for saving their lives.

If Praya is killed or captured as a result of this fight, one PC can take her **MONOFILAMENT RAPIER** pilot weapon as **EXOTIC GEAR** (see p. 97).

If the PCs fail to disarm the bomb, it detonates. This will destroy the College at minimum, and will destroy more of the surrounding area depending on the number of unstable power cores armed when it goes off. The precise scale and ramifications should take into account the generally established tone of your game and any expectations set in session zero, but the end result is ultimately a horrifying loss of life on a scale that is difficult to imagine.

If the PCs enter one of the tears in reality, they are immune to any direct consequences of the bomb detonating. Instead, they will quickly become lost in the strange parallel space to which they have escaped, lacking the ability to effectively navigate or to leave by their own volition.

PCs lost here may experience strange visions of their past or their future, of eerily familiar conceptual entities embodying archetypal aspects of society and personhood, or of things stranger still. The PCs have only a short time to contextualize and interrogate these experiences before they are rescued by a figure quickly identifiable as Soto. The monk is piloting an RKF Calendula – a mech used by the Xenoglossary and known for its ability to manipulate the boundaries of realspace. Soto brings the PCs back through another tear in reality, arriving either in the middle of the ballroom or the desolate ground zero where it once stood.

However the fight ends, move on to **Beat 11: The Wheel Turns** to deal with the consequences.

COMBAT 8B: PERFECT PARRY

SCENE GOALS

- Make the stakes of the combat as clear as possible
- Force the PCs into a “last stand” situation where they must put everything on the line to win
- Demonstrate Praya's anger and determination to succeed
- Show the capabilities of the **VOID REND** system and its use both for ingress and egress

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

Objective: Control the containment field generator by the time the **Countdown** clock is completed.

ENEMY FORCES

For 3 PCs: Lord Praya-Cannamos, “Titan”. **ELITE VETERAN GOLIATH** (Power Knuckle, Pin, Veterancy [+Hull], Legendary)

KHAYRADIN ELITES

“Atropa”, **VETERAN WITCH** (Spread Suffering, Veterancy [+Systems], Void Rend)

“Ragwort”, **VETERAN BREACHER** (Thermal Charge, Veterancy [+Systems], Void Rend)

“Hellebore”, **BERSERKER** (Harpoon Cannon)

“Taxus”, **SUPPORT** (Empowered Cloud)

For 4 PCs: “Mandrake”, **VETERAN BREACHER** (Thermal Charge, Veterancy [+Systems], Void Rend)

For 5 PCs: “Snapdragon”, **BERSERKER** (Harpoon Cannon)
“Ilex”, **SUPPORT** (Empowered Cloud)

REINFORCEMENTS

Hold **specific NPCs** as **reinforcements**, including Lord Praya (see **Tactics** for details). Ingress begins from Round 2 onwards from **Ingress Zones** on the edges of the map.

BRIEFING

The situation is desperate. Power readings are going haywire, and there is precious little time before the bomb detonates. But perhaps there is one last hope – not to stop the blast, but to contain and redirect it. The PCs punch through to the one area of the College with the least resistance: the facilities wing, which happens to house the controls and generator for the College's containment fields.

There is one problem: the fields are not intended to absorb a blast of this magnitude, and will need to be reconfigured to provide a single overcharged burst of shielding at precisely the correct moment. This will not be simple; moments after the PCs reach the generator, thermal charges detonate and the Khayradin Elites arrive to prevent their interference.

COUNTDOWN

At the beginning of the combat, reset the **Countdown** clock regardless of its previous value. At the end of each round, fill in one segment on the **Countdown** clock. When the clock is completed, the bomb detonates and the combat ends. The PCs must protect the generator and control it in the final round to ensure they can time the burst correctly.

ALLIES

For this combat, you may choose to provide the PCs with an allied character as support. As in **Combat 4**, players may choose from among any students with whom they have a **Friendly** relationship. This allied NPC arrives as **reinforcements** from Round 2 onward following the rules described on p. 63; however, they may not use **tears** created by **VOID REND** as an **Ingress Zone**.

MAP

The facilities wing is a cramped, dense, building never intended to accommodate mechs. The generator room is the largest space in this area. The ceilings are **3 spaces high**, providing just enough space for Praya to move. Individual sections of wall (delineated with thick black lines on the map) are relatively fragile; each section is a single, **10 HP** object.

Some corridors are blocked by doors. These doors are **destructible** objects (see p. 85) that can be removed from the map as a **free action** by a mech with **MANIPULATORS**.

TACTICS

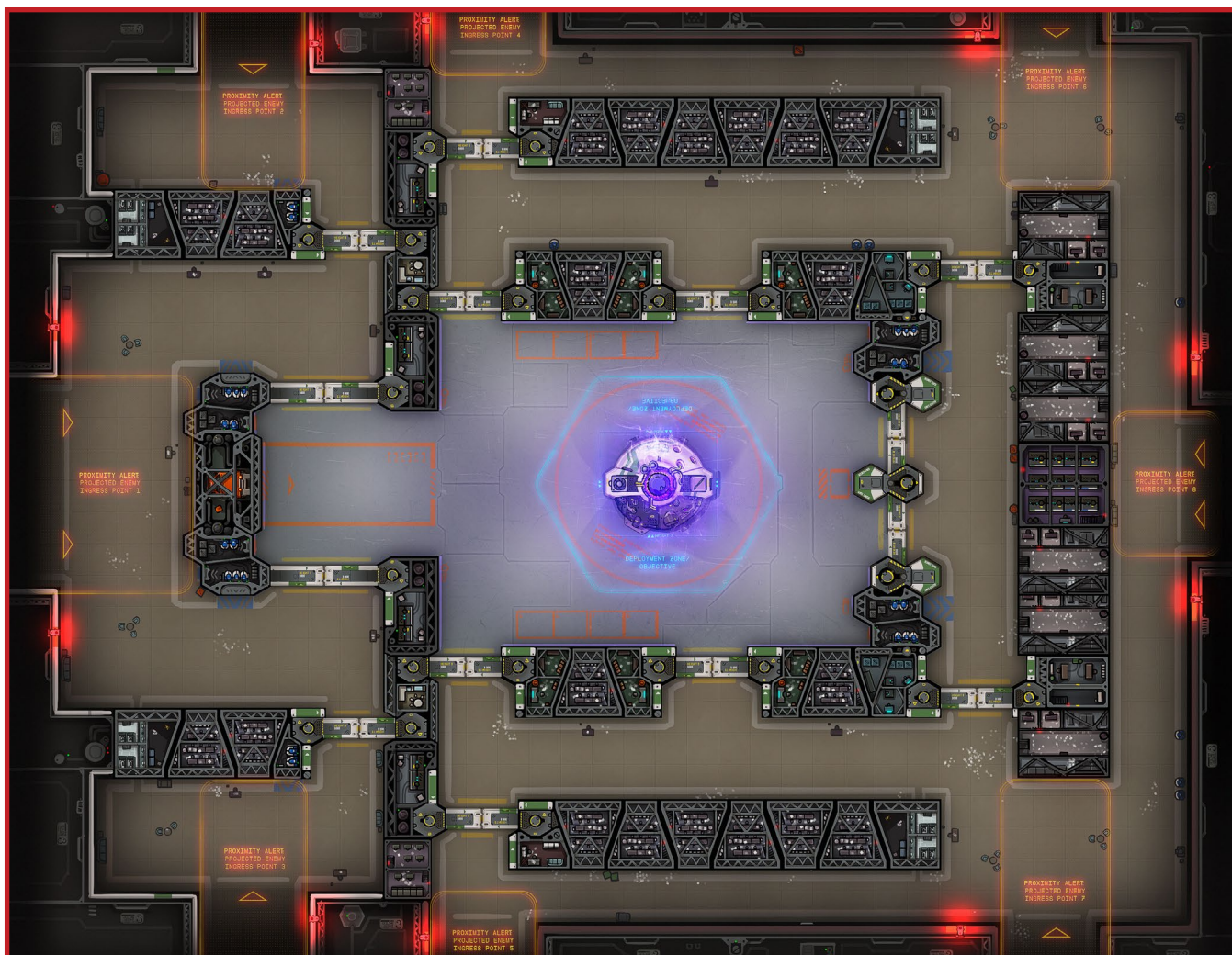
Several members of the OpFor – Praya, Hellebore, Snapdragon, Taxus, and Ilex – should be held as **reinforcements**. These NPCs have been diverted from their defensive positions around the bomb (see **Combat 8A**), which you can use as an opportunity to make Praya's reveal more spectacular by having her arrive at the start of Round 2.

Atropa's main goal in this combat is to use **SPREAD SUFFERING** to punish the PCs for grouping up. They can do this most effectively while remaining in cover at or around **SENSORS**, using **BLIND** against PCs equipped with long-range **ARCING** or **SEEKING** weapons, and forcing the PCs to leave the **Control Zone** in order to respond.

Meanwhile, Ragwort and Mandrake open up approach lines for Praya and destroy the PCs' cover using **BREACH RAM** and **THERMAL CHARGES**. This done, they attempt to pick out and focus on isolated targets in the hopes of triggering **BREAK ARMOR**.

Praya's major goal is to reach the **Control Zone** as quickly as possible, using **BOOST** to maximize speed and using **CRUSH TARGETING** on anyone threatening Atropa. Once she reaches the **Control Zone**, she attempts to displace PCs by a combination of **POWER KNUCKLE**, **GRAPPLE**, and **RAM**.

Hellebore and Snapdragon seek to pull PCs out of position using their **HARPOON CANNONS**, isolating them so they can be picked on at leisure. They benefit from having lines of approach opened up by the **BREACHERS** (Ragwort and Mandrake), but should avoid ending their turns adjacent to minimize friendly fire from **AGGRESSION**.



Taxus and Ilex attempt to keep their allies alive using **RESTOCK DRONES**, moving aggressively to keep up with anyone looking to be at close range. They are good sources of **LOCK ON** and can **RAM** enemies to apply **PRONE**, both of which are helpful for the more aggressive NPCs whose weapons are less accurate.

Several members of the OpFor are equipped with **VOID REND** (see p. 89). As with **Combat 8A**, the **tears** created by this system acts as their exit strategy. When they are close to the **Control Zone**, NPCs equipped with **VOID REND** will create **tears**. The spaces adjacent to a **tear** can be used as an **Ingress Zone**, and in the final rounds NPCs will begin using the **tears** to leave the combat before the bomb detonates.

OUTCOME

If the PCs hold out until they can raise the containment fields, they can use the fields to mitigate and redirect the major part of the blast. They may not have saved the College, but they will have saved many thousands of people in the surrounding city wards of Throne Karrakis.

If the PCs fail, they are forced away from the controls and unable to activate the containment fields as the bomb detonates. As in **Combat 8A**, the consequences for Throne Karrakis and its people are terrible, with loss of life on a scale that is difficult to describe.

Even a success may lead to character death as the blast devastates the College. If it would be unsatisfying for the PCs to die in their attempt to save the city, there are several ways you can handle the consequences – depending on your table's tolerance for special treatment or deus ex machina solutions, and any plans you have to continue the story.

The first and most practical escape route for the PCs is the tears in reality created by **VOID REND**. If a PC leaves via one of these tears, they will be immune to any direct consequences of the bomb's detonation; follow the description in **Combat 8A** for more detail regarding handling this possibility.

Alternatively, you could rule that the PCs are sufficiently protected by their mechs that they can (barely) survive the blast; that they have just enough control over the containment fields to focus them around themselves; or even that the PCs are indeed killed, but are replaced by cloned versions of themselves (see p. 80).

However you choose to resolve the outcome, it is important to handle the detonation as you move on to **Beat 11: The Wheel Turns** with the seriousness and weight it deserves, demonstrating the impact an attack of this nature has on the people of Throne Karrakis and the Baronies more broadly.

BEAT 11: THE WHEEL TURNS

SCENE GOALS

- Tie up all remaining loose ends
- Give the PCs the opportunity to have a major impact on Baronic politics, potentially even on the relationships between houses
- Set up a satisfying conclusion to the narrative OR
- Leave one major dangling plot thread for continuing the narrative in future missions

In this beat, the PCs face the consequences of their actions and we discover how the Baronies respond to the attack on the College.

These scenes also act as a denouement, with final secrets being revealed and a conclusion that either neatly wraps up the narrative or leaves open the potential for a continued story.

The structure of this beat assumes that the PCs have succeeded and are still alive, though this may not be the case (particularly if the PCs fought in **Combat 8B**). Even if the PCs made a heroic sacrifice or are otherwise dead, it is still worth playing through parts of this beat to show the consequences of their actions and how they mitigated the damage – both physically and politically.

Ideally, you should allow the players of dead characters to participate in these scenes in some way: perhaps clones of their characters were created, or they can take on the role of various NPCs (perhaps ones related to their former PC's background or sponsor, or investigators from the BUC or Baronic Intelligence). Base the specifics on how final you want those deaths to have been, and whether you intend to continue the narrative beyond the events of this mission series.

The most pressing issue for the PCs as they collect themselves in the aftermath of the attack is likely to be the BUC troops securing the area and attempting to arrest them. Not only are they still wanted as a result of the prior accusations against them, but they are now at the center of a fresh attack against the College itself. When the security forces catch up with them, surviving students and faculty (particularly those who are **Friendly** with the PCs) will come to their defense, having seen the PCs save the day first hand.

The PCs have one last opportunity to gather any clues before the BUC begins its investigation. If they care to examine wrecks or interrogate any captured pilots they may be able to gather some useful pieces of information that they can use to solidify their understanding of events and make a case during the inevitable debrief. If you plan to continue the narrative beyond the events of this mission series, you might ask them to make skill checks to see what they can uncover; otherwise, you can simply give them any missing pieces of information.

The debrief comes swiftly, as once again the PCs are dragged before officers of the BUC and Baronic Intelligence (perhaps meeting **Lady Diana** again). It is here that the PCs can shake off the previous accusations against them – a fairly trivial matter now – particularly if they implicate Praya in the attack on the College, as her testimony was central to propping up the earlier accusations. As with the previous debrief, this is the PCs' opportunity to share everything they have learned and frame the attack in one way or another, influencing Baronic politics once more.

This time, however, the debriefing is unlikely to be confined to the military and intelligence services – such a public attack at the heart of Throne Karrakis might see the PCs hauled up as witnesses in front of the Ignoble House or perhaps even the Baronic Council, at a meeting convened by Prime Baron Karra-Bem and featuring Stonelord Hyderad-Cannamos (Praya's father) as representative of the House of Stone. How the PCs handle themselves in these scenes could have far-reaching consequences for the Baronies as a whole, and you can use this to give significant weight to their actions and words beyond simply saving lives.

EXTENDING THE SCENE

During the political circus created around the attacks and the likelihood of the PCs rapidly acquiring celebrity status, it might be helpful to ground the PCs using their existing relationships. There might also be other narrative arcs you (or the players) want to resolve, depending on how the PCs have interacted with their fellow students.

A good way to extend the denouement and deal with the remaining loose ends is to play out small scenes with students and faculty – particularly those who are **Friendly** or close to it. These scenes do not need to be lengthy, but you should give your players the opportunity to engage with the NPCs who are most important to them.

WRAPPING UP AND NEXT STEPS

CHANGING THE WORLD

The attack on the College and its repercussions will, for better or worse, have a significant impact on the political climate of Karrakis and the Concern.

The future in which the attack succeeded and the PCs perished is the darkest. In that future, the House of Stone and the House of Sand successfully goad the Baronies into war against their political enemies. If the Ungratefals were blamed for the attack, a ground invasion of Sanjak begins, intended to destroy the Ungrateful leadership and return Sanjak to the House of Stone – much to the dismay of Union and Republican-leaning elements across the Baronies. If Harrison Armory was blamed for the attack, war comes quickly to the Interest with strikes against the Armory on New Madrassa and beyond sparking a flame that ignites the entire Dawnline Shore.

If the PCs survived, perhaps some of the worst consequences can be avoided – evidence presented against House Cannamos and House Laurent might perhaps be enough to undermine their leadership and reduce the support they enjoy. War still comes, but it is a war machine lacking full-throated support, and one that might be stopped by diplomacy or revolution.

The future in which the attack failed but the PCs died is a complex and tumultuous one. Many lives are saved and perhaps the PCs are even regarded as heroes for their efforts. The shock of the attack pushes the Baronial Council and Ignoble House onto a war footing, and House Cannamos and House Laurent both to the forefront of political power, but not with the momentum to seek immediate retribution against their imagined enemies – though when it comes, and eventually it will, that war will be bitterly fought.

The future in which the PCs both succeeded in preventing the attack and lived is the brightest of all futures. House Cannamos and House Laurent are disgraced, though to the frustration of their enemies they are not entirely unseated. The Stonelord and the House of Sand rush to pin the blame on “wayward children” and other underlings “acting without authorization”, but their political ambitions are blunted and the scandal tarnishing the names of two powerful Hagiographic houses becomes an endless supply of ammunition for Republican elements seeking reform.

Of course, these are just some of the futures divined by the augurs of the Xenoglossary; perhaps the Passions have other plans...

CONTINUING THE STORY

You might choose to convey the outcomes above via an epilogue, but there is an alternative: continuing the story and exploring what happens next in play.

There are many directions the narrative can take, though most importantly you will need to decide what happens to the PCs. Here are some options for how the story might proceed – assuming that the PCs survived:

- Lord Hesketh or Lady Diana recruit the PCs for Baronial Intelligence, seeing a great deal of promise and an opportunity to put a leash on the rogue Hagiographic houses.
- The PCs are contacted by Union’s Department of Justice and Human Rights with a request to help bring those responsible for attempted (or actual) mass murder to justice.
- The PCs choose to go it alone, unhappy with the way that House Cannamos and House Laurent evaded repercussions for their actions, seeking truth, justice, or revenge.
- Returning to the College, the PCs are hailed as heroes, but face ever-greater political peril as paranoia and infighting amongst the nobility and those in power rises to unprecedented levels.
- The PCs leave the College and perhaps Baronial high society altogether, forming a Free Company – a Karrakin mercenary group specializing in mech combat.
- The PCs are sent to war. Either to Sanjak, after being recruited by Republicans to stop the House of Stone and bring an end to the blockade; or to the Dawnline Shore, where they are called to fight Harrison Armory and its proxies in a bitter and drawn out cold war that might flare hot at any moment.



SECTION 4: APPENDICES



APPENDIX I: PLAYER OPTIONS	96
APPENDIX II: NEW MECHS	99
TARAXACUM	100
HECATONCHEIRES	102
TAGETES	104

APPENDIX III: NEW BONDS	106
THE FIREBRAND	106
THE CELEBRANT	108
THE KNAVE	110

APPENDIX I: PLAYER OPTIONS

BACKGROUNDS

Noble Heir

Example triggers: Lead or Inspire, Pull Rank, Read a Situation, Take Control

Through an accident of birth or the result of political cunning you are set to inherit, and bear the weight of great expectations. What relationship do you have with your noble house? What do the people around you expect of you? How does that constrain you?

Karrakin noble houses are hotbeds of political infighting. Who did you have to step over to gain or retain your position? Who supports you? Who seeks to usurp you? Why?

Second Choice

Example triggers: Charm, Invent or Create, Survive, Word on the Street

An entire industry exists to salve the existential ennui of young Karrakin nobility through travel and exchange programs with Earth, Ras Shamra, and beyond. Where else in the galaxy have you been? What strange sights have you seen? Who have you met? How has this affected your relationship with Karrakin society?

You benefit from great privilege, but have comparatively little responsibility. What is your relationship with your fellow nobles? With power? With your own privilege?

Company Squire

Example triggers: Assault, Get a Hold of Something, Hack or Fix, Spot

The traditional path to becoming a kavalieri is to learn from more experienced pilots as part of their support staff. Who did you squire for? How did they treat you? What were your responsibilities? What did you learn from them?

The Great Companies system is a political structure unto itself. Did you squire for a noble house company or a mercenary Free Company? Have you seen combat with them? How has your company influenced you?

Pankrati

Example triggers: Apply Fists to Faces, Charm, Get Somewhere Quickly, Show Off

The mech combat sport of pankration mekani produces a great number of the BUC's most talented pilots. What is your record in competitive matches? Which formats were your specialty? What motivated you to train for real combat? What did you find difficult about the transition?

Talented pankrati frequently achieve great renown across the Concern and beyond. Do you have fans? How do they see you? Do you indulge your celebrity status?

Young Buck

Example triggers: Assault, Blow Something Up, Patch, Stay Cool

The BUC celebrates its "young bucks", the talented soldiers who rise through the ranks as a result of skill and dedication. How did you join the BUC, and what was your role? What led to your meteoric rise? What obstacles have you faced, and how did you overcome them?

Tours with the BUC range from quiet peacekeeping missions, through to hot wars on distant planets. Where were you deployed, and what did you do there? How has that experience shaped you? What is your relationship with war? With your fellow soldiers? With the people you helped, or hurt?

GEAR ARMOR

The following **PERSONAL ARMOR** is available to all pilots as pilot gear starting at **LL0**, and can be selected instead of a hardsuit (see *Lancer*, pg. 110).

Personal Kinetic Shielding

Personal Armor, Shield

BONUS	+0 HP	Armor	0	
EVASION	10	E-DEF	10	SPEED 4

Kinetic shields are a common choice for personal defense among Karrakin nobles. Despite lacking features considered vital by most pilots, such as strength-augmentation, mech interface components, and protection against environmental hazards, shields have a few notable advantages over hardsuits. Most importantly, their generator packs are compact and easily concealed, enabling discreet use and providing protection with minimal impact on the user's fashion choices.

While this armor is active, you cannot make ranged attacks. When you are hit by a ranged weapon, reduce the damage by **1d6**. If the damage is not reduced to zero, the shield burns out and is unusable until the next **REST** or **FULL REPAIR**.

EXOTIC GEAR

The following pieces of **EXOTIC GEAR** can be acquired by PCs during the mission series. Some can be recovered from downed opponents, while others are gifted to the PCs by **Friendly** NPCs (see p. 37).

ADDITIONAL TAG: 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 or carry up to two pieces of gear with the **EXOTIC GEAR** tag at a time, but can own any number of pieces with the tag. This tag is originally from *No Room for a Wallflower* (p. 10).

EXOTIC PILOT WEAPONS

Monofilament Rapier

Melee Pilot Weapon, AP, Exotic Gear, Unique [⌘1][2⚔]

A field-supported monofilament blade of Smith-Shimano design capable of slicing through armor, shielding, and other weapons with ease. These swords are banned in formal duels, but remain the weapon of choice for those who value efficiency above decorum.

The Wolf's Blades

Melee Pilot Weapon, Sidearm, Exotic Gear, Unique [⌘1][1⚔]

These strangely weighted hardlight knives were stolen from a feared pirate. Without proper training, they are as dangerous to their user as to their target.

EXOTIC PILOT GEAR

The Blue Blood of Pangloss

Gear, Exotic Gear, Limited 1, Unique, Quick Action

A legendary medicinal liquid created by the Order Xenoglossia. The Blue Blood of Pangloss grants precognitive visions to its users, an ability that augurs spend a lifetime learning to use to its full potential. Extended use causes sterility and a strange blue tint to the lips, tongue, and extremities.

Expend a charge to gain strange and unpredictable insights into the future. These visions grant you **+1 ACCURACY** on all skill checks for the rest of this scene when acting on the information they reveal, and may have additional effects at GM discretion.

The Blue Blood of Pangloss is impossible to reproduce without access to specific Begi flora and the secret distillation techniques of the Xenoglossary. Unless a PC has both of these, it can only ever be acquired as a limited-use reserve (at extraordinary cost). Those who steal or abuse the Blue Blood often find themselves the targets of the Stygos Grammaton.

EXOTIC GEAR

Champion's Favor

1 SP, Shield, Exotic Gear, Unique

At the start of your turn, gain **1 OVERSHIELD**.

These mech-scale golden laurels granted to pankration mekani champions house a small but sophisticated shield generator. The shield provides both protection and a distinctively colored visual shimmer, referred to as a champion's "aura" or "halo".

By default, the aura created by Lady Kiriona's **CHAMPION'S FAVOR** is golden yellow, but this color can be changed during a **FULL REPAIR**.

Entangled Co-Consciousness Rig

3 SP, AI, Exotic Gear, Unique

Your mech gains the **AI** tag and **Champions, Guide My Hands**. This system is not an NHP and cannot enter cascade.

Additionally, if a hostile character or a **structure damage check** would cause you to become **STUNNED**, you may instead turn control of your mech over to its **ENTANGLED CO-CONSCIOUSNESS RIG**. If you do, you do not become **STUNNED**, but you cannot pick the controls back up or turn over control to any other **AI** on your next turn.

House Montmorency carried one of the most impressive win streaks ever seen under the glittering skies of Ispahsalar into the Kreoss, scoring victory after victory until an elite team of Sand-men gave their lives to extract the secret of their exceptional performance.

NeuroLink interfaces fitted with custom paracausal entanglement systems connected each of House Montmorency's pilots together, allowing them to draw on each other's expertise and even subconscious reactions to gain an edge in combat. Once the mystery was revealed, rules committees were encouraged to rule against the use of these systems in the House Games. Other competitions followed suit, and the minor house's dominance finally came to an end.

Champions, Guide My Hands

1/scene, when you make an attack, you may choose not to roll, instead treating your attack as if you had rolled a **10** on the **d20**. If this attack hits, it automatically becomes a **critical hit**.

"Sometimes I see them when I dream. Don't tell anyone, will you? It's like they're with me somehow, even after I jack out. I know it's not how the link works. It's more like... echoes, memories, only they're of things you never did, places you never were, battles you never fought.

"Maybe somewhere out there, one of them dreams of the golden fields - running through them and dancing and laughing like we used to, back before we were called to fight."

- Lady Karida, to her sister Zuleika

APPENDIX II: NEW MECHS

The following variant **FRAMES** can be taken at rank II of their respective licenses instead of the base **FRAME**. They can also be acquired as **EXOTIC GEAR** during this mission series.

The Variant **FRAMES** are:

- **RKF TARAXACUM** (*Support*): **IPS-N LANCASTER** Variant **FRAME**. Gifted by Lord Castor or Lord Tomas at **Friendly**.
- **HORUS HECATONCHEIRES** (*Striker/Controller*). **HORUS BALOR** Variant **FRAME**. Gifted by Stablemaster Imani or Lord Aloysius at **Friendly**.
- **RKF TAGETES** (*Artillery*). **HA SHERMAN** Variant **FRAME**. Gifted by Underbaron Iphianassa or Captain Hedros at **Friendly**.





ROYAL KARRAKIN FOUNDRIES

TARAXACUM

Support
Lancaster Variant Frame

Those who examine the House of Remembrance's push to colonize its holdings in the Dawnline Shore often highlight the parallels between Crossland's extensive rainforests and a mythologised Arrudyen past, as well as the political pressure on the Liberal house from its Republican-leaning elements. Less often examined is the pervasive cultural impact of the industry that has been built – almost from scratch – to support the house's colonial goals.

The Taraxacum has become almost synonymous in popular omnivids with the pioneer spirit of the colonial effort. The image of a heavy mech effortlessly lifting gear, vehicles, industrial equipment, and even prefabricated building components into and above the thick canopies is a symbol of Arrudyen power in distant lands. Moreover, the Taraxacum is a capable military frame prized by Karrakin commanders across the Dawnline Shore both as a mobility multiplier, and for its performance as an airborne early warning and surveillance platform in support of ground operations.

CORE STATS

Size: 2

Armor: 1

HULL

HP: 6

Repair Cap: 4

AGILITY

Evasion: 10

Speed: 6

Save Target: 10

Sensors: 15

SYSTEMS

E-Defense: 8

Tech Attack: +1

SP: 8

ENGINEERING

Heat Cap: 8

TRAITS

ROC SUPERLIFTER FLIGHT SYSTEM

The Taraxacum may **hover** when it moves. As long as it is only carrying objects or allied characters, it may ignore restrictions on carrying caused by **flight**.

At the end of any of the Taraxacum's turns in which it uses this trait, it takes heat equal to 1+ the total **SIZE** of objects and characters it is carrying.

RELAY COUPLING

When the Taraxacum targets an allied character within **SENSORS** with a **system** or **tech action**, they may use the Taraxacum's **SENSORS** and **line of sight** for tech actions until the start of its next turn.

MOUNTS

MAIN/AUX
MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

CROSSLAND-PATTERN SURVEY SENSORS

Initial Taraxacum design drafts called for a highly sensitive, custom-printed sensor suite. Unfortunately, a litany of design flaws forced engineers on Crossland to fit the first prototypes with existing sensor modules meant for high-altitude survey drones.

Test pilots immediately took a shine to the replacement sensors despite their significant power draw, referring to them as "God's eyes". Their ability to resolve terrain through even the thickest vegetation massively simplified wilderness navigation and landing, while tuning them to pick up specific emission bands conferred an obvious combat advantage in high-density environments.

PRECISION FIX

When you **SCAN** a character, it cannot benefit from cover or being **INVISIBLE** until the end of your next turn.

Omnispectrum Sensor Burst

Active (1CP), Quick Action, Efficient

SCAN all hostile characters within and below a **BURST 4** area. You may apply **LOCK ON** to any characters **SCANNED** this way.





HORUS

HECATONCHEIRES

Striker/Controller
Balor Variant Frame

Officially, the Hecatoncheires does not exist. Baronie Intelligence denies the domestication of liturgicode seeds recovered from the Blanca Desert after the Maw's defeat on Khayradin, and instead the Hecatoncheires is described as a local variant HORUS pattern group. The chassis is most frequently encountered in the hands of Company Centimane, whose status as a Free Company (and the occasional appearance of the pattern group elsewhere) lends a thin veneer of plausibility to the official story.

On Free Sanjak, the Hecatoncheires is a weapon of terror, a nightmare given form from haze and smoke. Revolutionary fire-teams have been known to trek through tropical jungles and the monsoon rains for days, losing members one by one as they are stalked by something just out of sight. Beneath the waters of Ludra's beach paradises, it is said a monster lurks – tearing apart coastal communities and ships alike. In the deep tunnels, apocryphal tales persist of a thick gray cloud that sweeps through and leaves nothing but dust in its wake.

Meanwhile, a deep-cover DoJ/HR operation working with support from the House of Dust has been trying to unearth solid evidence directly tying the Hecatoncheires to Baronie authorities – a link that might be leveraged to rally the Republican cause and finally ease pressure on Sanjak.

CORE STATS

Size: 1/2

Armor: 0

HULL

HP: 6

Repair Cap: 3

AGILITY

Evasion: 10

Speed: 5

Save Target: 10

Sensors: 10

SYSTEMS

E-Defense: 10

Tech Attack: +1

SP: 6

ENGINEERING

Heat Cap: 5

TRAITS

DISPERSED PROFILE

When the Hecatoncheires is in **soft cover**, ranged attackers receive **+2 DIFFICULTY** instead of **+1 DIFFICULTY**.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

The Hecatoncheires can always **HIDE** in areas of **soft cover**, regardless of **engagement** or enemy traits and systems.

PANOPTES TARGETING

The Hecatoncheires' **SMART** weapons ignore the **INVISIBLE** status of characters within **SENSORS**.

MOUNTS

MAIN
MOUNT

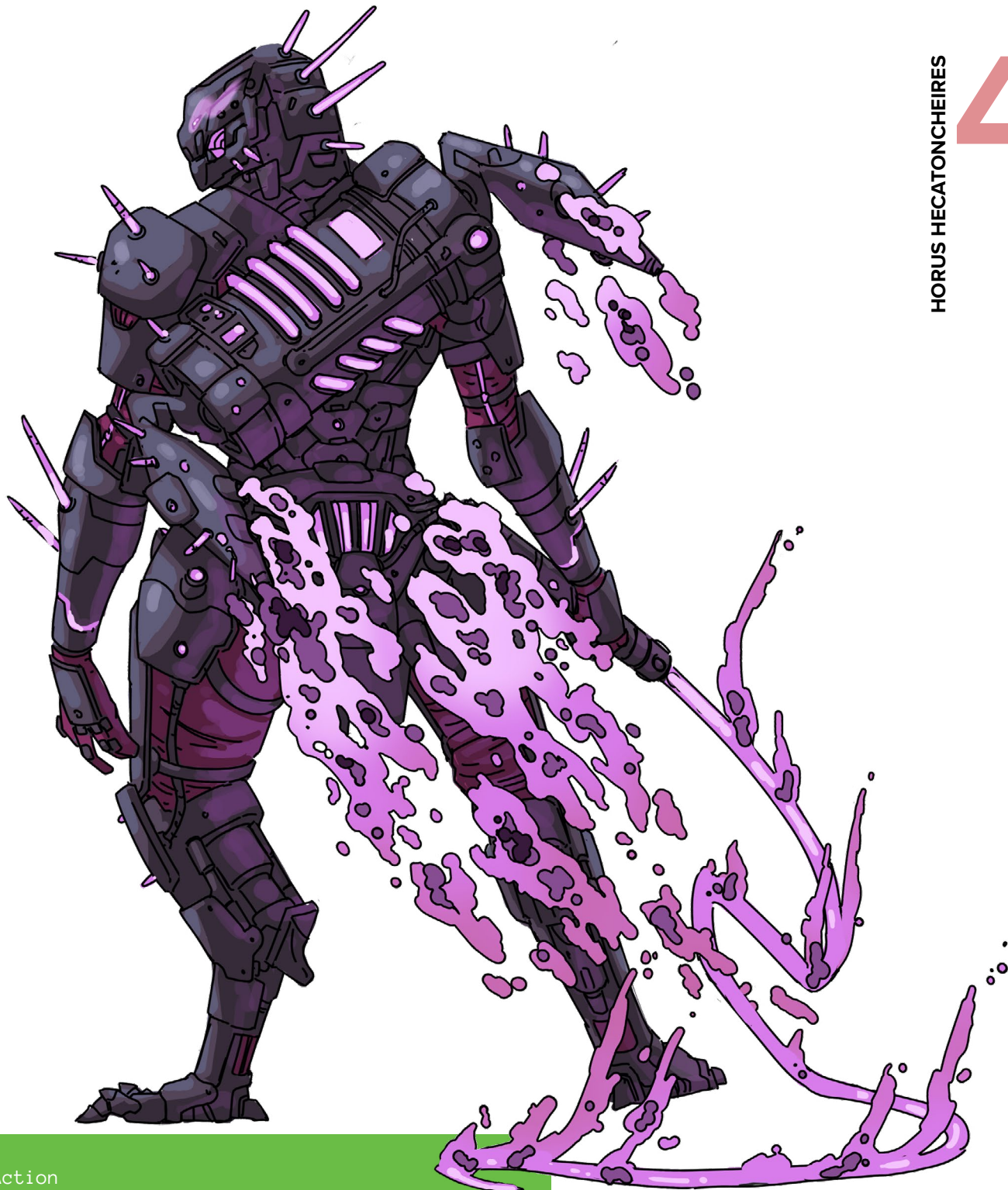
HEAVY
MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

MYRIOS LONG-LEASH DIRECTED GREYWASH

Hard lessons were learned from the downfall of the Maw, harder even than those learned from the invisible, unstoppable consumption of Bo. From those lessons came visceral terror, perfected. Long-leash technology allows greywash swarms to operate persistently apart from their hives and draw power from alternative sources while remaining under failsafe control of their operator.

This operational safety comes as little comfort to the victims of MYRIOS swarms, however, as the swarms specialize in eating away at their targets in hideous acts of consumption barely tempered by their controllers' instructions.



Razor Hive

Drone, Quick Action

Deploy a **razor swarm** to a valid **BLAST 1** area within **SENSORS** that contains no hostile characters. Razor swarms count as **DRONES** for the purposes of your and your allies' systems, talents, traits, and so on, but are otherwise treated as zones on the battlefield. They do not obstruct movement or cause **engagement**, and hostile characters cannot affect them in any way.

You may only have a single razor swarm deployed at any one time. The razor swarm persists until the end of the scene or until recalled or redeployed as a **quick action**.

Razor swarms provide **soft cover** to allied characters that are at least partially within their area. Hostile characters that start their turn at least partially within the area or move into it for the first time in a round take **2 Burn**.

Enrage Swarm

Active (1CP), Quick Action, Efficient

Each hostile character in one or more areas created by your **DRONES** takes **4 Burn**.



ROYAL KARRAKIN FOUNDRIES

TAGETES

Artillery
Sherman Variant Frame

The Tagetes was the product of a collaboration between the Karrakin Cavalry College – whose kavalieres demanded a high-performance line mech that could outmatch and outrange the now-ubiquitous Sherman Mk I across extended engagements – and a collective of top Ispahsalari designers, celebrated for the performance of their work in the House Games.

The initial production models exceeded performance benchmarks, but suffered from a host of practical issues that only became apparent in the field. It was only after extensive field-testing in the deserts of Tilimsan that the Tagetes truly found its footing, as design revisions from the highly regarded Fusilier variant quickly fed back into the mainline chassis – which is now in mass production at fabrication plants across both the Concern and the Interest.

CORE STATS

Size: 1
Armor: 1

HULL

HP: 8
Repair Cap: 4

AGILITY

Evasion: 7
Speed: 3

Save Target: 10
Sensors: 8

SYSTEMS

E-Defense: 8
Tech Attack: -1
SP: 5

ENGINEERING

Heat Cap: 8

TRAITS

FUSILIER

When you install a ranged weapon on the **Tagetes** (or during a **FULL REPAIR**), you may change its weapon type to **RIFLE**. Weapons with their type changed in this way gain **OVERKILL**.

RANK DISCIPLINE

While adjacent to an allied mech, the **Tagetes** gains **+1 ACCURACY** on all skill checks and saves.

ETERANE CONSTRUCTION

When you **STABILIZE**, you may choose one of the following in addition to other options:

- Reload all **LOADING** weapons.
- Clear any **burn** currently affecting your mech.
- Clear a condition that wasn't caused by one of your own systems, talents, etc.
- Clear an adjacent allied character's condition that wasn't caused by one of their own systems, talents, etc.

MOUNTS

FLEX
MOUNT

MAIN
MOUNT

HEAVY
MOUNT

CORE SYSTEM

CHORAK SKIRMISH GEAR

Tilimsan is a harsh proving ground for any mech. Baking heat, scouring sand, dry lightning, and treacherous terrain are challenge enough for designers, but Company Tempeste's technical requirements are just as uncompromising as the landscape. Popular rumor has it that one headstrong Ispahsalari artisan who refused to integrate the company's after-market modifications on aesthetic grounds simply never returned from the desert.

TEMPESTE SYNCHRONIZED LONG SCOPE

You can attack with **RIFLES** as though they had **+5 RANGE**, as long as **LOCK ON** is consumed during the attack.

SANDSTORM Heat Dispersal System

Active (1CP), Efficient

When you **STABILIZE**, you may activate this system to create a stationary **BURST 2** zone of **soft cover** that lasts until the end of your next turn. While benefiting from this **soft cover**, you and allied characters may clear **1d3+1 heat** as a **protocol**.



APPENDIX III: NEW BONDS

The **bonds** in this section are designed for use with the optional rules on p. 86–107 of *Field Guide to the Karrakin Trade Baronies*. These rules and the bonds presented here are not necessary to play this mission series; however, if you are using the optional rules, you can present these new bonds as alternative options to your players when they reach **LL1**.

The **Firebrand**, the **Celebrant**, the **Knave**, and the **Seneschal** represent four of the hundreds of minor Passions beyond those universally revered across the Concern. Though they are not as prominent as the major Passions, each is formally recognised by the Order Xenoglossia and incorporated into official readings. Those bonded to minor Passions may find their influences particularly important in their lives or even reject them all the more vehemently.

THE FIREBRAND

MAJOR IDEALS

I addressed challenges with charisma, iconoclasm, or dedication.

I expressed my heritage, background, or beliefs through my actions.

I struggled with issues from my burdens or background.

MINOR IDEALS (PICK ONE EACH SESSION)

I successfully challenged a long-held or foundational idea.

I stood up for what was right despite great risk.

I inspired others to revolutionary action.

I fought even when the challenge seemed insurmountable.

What gives you your powers?

An unshakeable conviction or faith, the support and solidarity of your comrades, the vivid memory of those you could not save.

What do you fight for?

Freedom for the enslaved and indentured, justice for the mistreated and the downtrodden, an end to the established order, a better world for those who come after.



BOND POWERS (8 XP)**STRENGTH IN CONVICTION****1/SESSION**

When you openly declare your cause for all to hear, take **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect on your next skill check against a person who heard you.

SOLIDARITY

When you push yourself to help an ally with a skill check, they gain **+2 ACCURACY** rather than **+1**.

THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP**1/SESSION**

Name an allied or friendly NPC. As long as it is plausible for them to do so, that NPC shows up to help for the rest of the scene and the GM chooses one:

- They suffer harm or personal cost to do so.
- They send someone else in their place.
- They bring trouble with them.
- They won't help you like this again until you do them a favor.

TENACITY

When you push yourself to reroll a skill check, you may take an additional Stress. If you do, gain **+1 ACCURACY**.

WEIGHT OF THE WORLD**1/SESSION**

When you encounter someone who is imprisoned or oppressed, or who has suffered a great injustice, you may gain a **burden**. Until the **burden** is healed, you gain **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect on all checks to help or aid them.

VETERAN POWER

If you have two or more powers from this bond, you can choose a power from any other bond instead of one from this bond when you would gain a power. You can do this twice.

BOON OF REBELLION

At the end of each session, if you can describe how someone struggled against the established order, do so. Give someone who participated in that struggle **1 XP**.

FUCK YOU

When you **break**, you may take one last action before you lose control. Gain **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect on this action.

ICONOCLAST

You have increased effect when taking action against an entrenched institution, tradition, or long-held belief.

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONG**1/SESSION**

When you successfully convince someone to join your side, each of your allies who witnessed the conversion clears **1 STRESS**.

INSPIRING LEADER

When you roll in downtime for an organization you created (*Lancer*, p. 55), you may roll an additional d20 and choose the highest for the final result.

RAISE THE BANNER**1/SESSION**

When you fly a flag, openly display an emblem, or prominently graffiti a symbol or slogan associated with your cause, you can attempt to provoke an enemy to act against you. The GM chooses one:

- Their response is hasty, or they make a mistake.
- Their response rallies more people to your cause.
- They do not respond immediately, but you gain increased effect on actions against them until they do.

MASTER POWER

You may only gain this power if you've taken four powers from this bond, including the **Veteran Power**.

DO YOU HEAR THE PEOPLE SING**1/SESSION**

When you speak to a sympathetic crowd, you can inspire them to action. Name a cause or goal, and choose one:

- The crowd backs you up, lending you **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect on all actions to achieve your cause or goal for the rest of the session while they are with you.
- The crowd is inspired to action, and for the rest of the session they will attempt to achieve your cause or goal on their own initiative. At the end of the session (or when narratively appropriate), the GM describes what the crowd has achieved and the consequences of their actions.

THE CELEBRANT



MAJOR IDEALS

I addressed challenges with enthusiasm, indulgence, or open-mindedness.

I expressed my heritage, background, or beliefs through my actions.

I struggled with issues from my burdens or background.

MINOR IDEALS (PICK ONE EACH SESSION)

I embraced something I did not fully understand.

I sought out and indulged in pleasurable experiences.

I showed someone a different side of themselves.

I managed to find joy in bleak circumstances.

What gives you your powers?

A cosmopolitan upbringing among many diverse cultures, a thrill-seeking drive that only grows when fed, a certain awareness of death and the temporary nature of existence.

What is your greatest pleasure?

Unique cuisines and street food from across the Diaspora, the fiery adrenaline high of combat, altered perception and otherworldly experiences, convincing someone to try something new.

BOND POWERS (8 XP)**UNINHIBITED****1/SESSION**

When you indulge in an activity that brings you great joy, you or an ally who joined you may fill in a segment of a **burden**.

INFECTIOUS ENTHUSIASM**1/SCENE**

When you convince an ally to try something new, they gain **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect on skill checks related to that experience or activity for the rest of the scene.

BREAK BREAD**1/SESSION**

When you share a meal or a drink with someone, choose a person you shared with and pick one:

- They clear **1 STRESS**.
- You gain **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect on social checks against them for the rest of the scene.

LIVE AND LEARN

When you fail a **RISKY** or **HEROIC** check, the next check you make using the same trigger gains **+1 ACCURACY**.

WHAT COULD GO WRONG?**2/SESSION**

When you or a willing ally makes a skill check, you may make that check **RISKY** (or make a **RISKY** check **HEROIC**). If you do, the person making the check gains **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect.

THE GOOD STUFF**1/SCENE**

You always have a ready supply of alcohol, smokes, or tasty snacks, with more than enough to share. Once per scene in a situation where this helps, gain **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect.

VETERAN POWER

If you have two or more powers from this bond, you can choose a power from any other bond instead of one from this bond when you would gain a power. You can do this twice.

BOON OF THE OPEN MIND

At the end of the session, describe how an experience changed or expanded your worldview. Give someone who shared that experience **1 XP**.

BAD INFLUENCE**1/SESSION**

You can convince a friendly NPC to take a risk against their better judgment. When you do, the GM chooses one:

- The consequences are severe.
- You take the consequences.
- They'll never do this again.

HOOK UP

You usually know how to get hold of things rare, expensive, or otherwise scarce; if you don't, you know who does. You can always ask the GM exactly what needs to be done to acquire a rare item, and have increased effect on all actions to do so.

FRIENDS IN STRANGE PLACES**1/SESSION**

When you visit a new location for the first time, you may declare that you know someone there. Give them a name, and describe how you know them; they might be an old colleague, a contact, or someone unexpected from your past. They'll be willing to talk to you, and maybe even help you – but they might need some convincing first.

COSMOPOLITAN

When you encounter a new culture, subculture, or society, ask one of the following questions and get a truthful answer from the GM:

- What does this group value?
- What does this group detest?
- How can I best blend in?

You or an ally of your choice gets **+1 ACCURACY** on their next skill check to act on the answer.

MASTER POWER

You may only gain this power if you've taken four powers from this bond, including the **Veteran Power**.

THE BEAUTIFUL LIFE**1/SESSION**

For the rest of the scene, you or an ally of your choice can defer the consequences of all skill checks. They all catch up to you at the end of the scene.

If deferred consequences would cause you to **break** one or more times, you are not removed from a scene but take **burdens** as usual.

THE KNAVE

MAJOR IDEALS

I addressed challenges with resolve, ruthlessness, or ambition.

I expressed my heritage, background, or beliefs through my actions.

I struggled with issues from my burdens or background.



MINOR IDEALS (PICK ONE EACH SESSION)

I set an impossible goal and achieved it anyway.

I humiliated or brought low a rival.

I took something important or irreplaceable for myself.

I paid the price for my ambition.

What gives you your powers?

An upbringing where you had to take what you needed to survive, an uncompromising mentor who taught you tough lessons, a heart hardened by betrayal or great injustice.

What would you give up to achieve your goals?

Your dignity, your safety, your principles, your reputation.

BOND POWERS (8 XP)

I'LL DO IT MYSELF**2/SESSION**

When an ally fails a skill check, you may attempt that check yourself using the same trigger. Your ally still takes any consequences from failing the check.

RUTHLESS**1/SESSION**

When you would take a consequence, you may instead choose a friendly NPC who is present in the scene. That NPC takes the consequence, and then becomes your enemy.

WHITE WHALE

Declare a nemesis (*a major antagonist, a powerful organization, an abstract concept*). When you score a significant victory over your nemesis, you and each ally who helped clear **1 STRESS**. When you defeat your nemesis for good, you or someone who helped you gains **1 XP**. You may only have a single nemesis at once, but may change your nemesis during downtime.

SHOOT FIRST**1/SESSION**

When you are tricked or double-crossed, describe how you prepared for this scenario and are able to turn it to your advantage. The GM picks one:

- You take the consequences, but gain **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect against your adversary for the rest of the scene.
- You are able to avoid the consequences, though your allies may not be so lucky.
- You get to act first.

HEARTBREAKER**1/SESSION**

When you break something significant to another person (*a relationship, an object, hard-earned trust*), gain **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect on all rolls against that person for the rest of the scene.

VETERAN POWER

If you have two or more powers from this bond, you can choose a power from any other bond instead of one from this bond when you would gain a power. You can do this twice.

BOON OF TRIUMPH

At the end of the session, describe how you got what you wanted. Give someone who helped you **1 XP**.

OUT OF MY WAY**1/SESSION**

When someone blocks your path or prevents you from getting what you want, describe how you confront them. You gain **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect against them for the rest of the scene.

FROM HELL'S HEART

When you **break** and are removed from the scene, choose an NPC who is present; they are also removed.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

You may forgo clearing **STRESS** at the start of your downtime. If you do, gain **+1 ACCURACY** on the roll for your downtime action.

WHERE THERE'S A WILL**1/SESSION**

When you come across an impossible scenario or puzzle that seems to have no solution, describe your determined efforts to tackle it anyway. The GM chooses one:

- You uncover a solution, but it's extremely dangerous.
- You uncover a solution, but it requires something you don't have yet (*a specific person or object, a key piece of information, backing or influence*).
- You confirm that it is truly impossible and clear **2 Stress**.

BITE THE BULLET**2/SESSION**

When you fail a skill check, you may clear **2 segments** from any of your **burdens** to reroll it. You must keep the new result. Whether you succeed or fail, you take any consequences from the check.

MASTER POWER

You may only gain this power if you've taken four powers from this bond, including the **Veteran Power**.

DO OR DIE**1/SESSION**

When you make a **HEROIC** skill check, you succeed on a **10+**. If you succeed, you gain increased effect as you achieve your objective in spectacular fashion. If you fail, you suffer increased consequences as you crash and burn.

THE SENESCHAL

MAJOR IDEALS

I addressed challenges with honor, loyalty, or integrity.

I expressed my heritage, background, or beliefs through my actions.

I struggled with issues from my burdens or background.



MINOR IDEALS (PICK ONE EACH SESSION)

I spared or extended grace to a defeated opponent.

I stood by a friend or ally despite dire consequences.

I swore a solemn and unbreakable vow.

I made restitution to someone harmed by my actions.

What gives you your powers?

An ironclad personal code of honor, a family legacy stretching back centuries, the knowledge of your privilege and a sense of responsibility to those less fortunate.

What vow have you sworn?

To never allow an innocent to come to harm; to preserve the traditions and uphold the values of your culture; to repent for an unforgivable mistake; to stand by your friends and family, no matter the cost

BOND POWERS (8 XP)**STEADFAST ALLY****2/SESSION**

When you push yourself to help another character, you do not take **STRESS** unless they succeed. You still share in any consequences by helping.

STEWARDSHIP**1/SESSION**

When a group of people, organization, or object you are leading or protecting would take losses, damage, or other harm, you may instead take consequences (**minor**, **typical**, or **major**) in proportion to the harm they would suffer.

MY WORD IS MY BOND**2/SESSION**

When you make a solemn promise or swear that you will achieve a goal, take **1 STRESS**. When you fulfill that promise or achieve that goal, clear **2 STRESS**.

CLARION

When you speak the truth in full knowledge and without intent to deceive, everyone who hears you knows that what you are saying is true.

RESPONSIBILITY

When you discover that someone important to you (*a trusted friend, a family member, a mentor or student*) is in danger, your next skill check to help them this scene gains **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect.

ITS OWN REWARD**1/SESSION**

When you help or give to another character in a way that causes consequences for yourself, you may fill in a segment of a **burden**.

FORBEARANCE**1/SESSION**

When you offer forgiveness or freedom to a defeated enemy, the GM chooses one:

- They accept the consequences of defeat.
- They escape, vowing revenge against you and your allies. All allies present gain **1 XP**.

CHAMPION'S HEART**2/SESSION**

When you or an ally makes a skill check to help a vulnerable or powerless person, gain **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect.

THE BEST KIND OF CORRECT

You have a talent for dealing with institutions (*governmental, academic, military*) and navigating their bureaucracies. When dealing with or managing large organizations you instinctively understand their rules, and can always cut through red tape or get a meeting with the right person. In situations where this helps, gain **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect.

SHIVERS

When you enter a scene, you may take **2 Stress** to ask the GM whether someone present is planning to betray or cheat you and receive a truthful answer. This doesn't tell you who, or how.

VETERAN POWER

If you have two or more powers from this bond, you can choose a power from any other bond instead of one from this bond when you would gain a power. You can do this twice.

BOON OF INTEGRITY

At the end of the session, describe how someone else made the right choice despite personal cost. Give them **1 XP**.

MASTER POWER

You may only gain this power if you've taken four powers from this bond, including the **Veteran Power**.

DURENDAL, MY BRAND**1/SESSION**

You may give a name to a weapon, ship, or other object belonging to you or a willing ally. Once per session, the item's owner may invoke its name for **+1 ACCURACY** and increased effect on a relevant skill check. If the item is ever lost or damaged beyond repair, the item's owner gains a **burden**.

You can name multiple items, but a character may only own one named item at a time. If they acquire a second named item, the first loses this benefit.