DUNE

ADVENTURES IN THE IMPERIUM



POWER AND PAWNS

THE EMPEROR'S COURT









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- THE EMPEROR'S COURT -

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Introduction

"The concept of progress acts as a protective mechanism to shield us from the terrors of the future."
–from "Collected Sayings of Muad'Dib" by the Princess Irulan

The Golden Lion Throne has been the center of the Known Universe for thousands of years. An unassailable power that none dare to challenge alone, backed by the fearsome reputation of the deadly Sardaukar. This is the heart of the Imperium, where even the slightest decision can affect the destinies of whole worlds.

In this center of power is a whirlwind of courtiers, entertainers, flunkies, and supplicants, all trying to carve out a small piece of influence for themselves. Many are nobles who will never inherit the rulership of their House, who seek to gain a powerbase of their own. Court appointments might be gained at the pleasure of the Emperor, ranging from recognition as an artist, to the responsibility for some trinket of the Emperor's Imperial Jewels. Such titles are often effectively empty, being a duty to stand by the Emperor at certain times or to pass him a particular ritual item. But these hollow titles grant a position that a clever courtier can use to gain power. After all, anything that places you close to the Emperor, even for a few moments, offers the opportunity to gain his ear.

Sometimes the most innocuous of these positions can grant great influence in the right hands. The person who introduces supplicants to the Throne Room may not sound important, but if they refuse to make an introduction, the Emperor will never hear that plea. Even if a position lacks power, just the addition of the word 'Imperial' to a title grants the Emperor's seal of approval. Few dare to challenge the throne, so few will risk offending the Emperor by disrespecting the agents of the throne. Those who are on the Emperor's business cannot be challenged except in the gravest of circumstances. As a result, an association to the throne allows a way to avoid the complex politics between the Houses. Those with Imperial responsibility are left to their own devices, the results of their labor kept between them and the Emperor.

While the Emperor's word is law, he is still bound by the complex politics of his own court. Here, the most powerful and skilled people in the Imperium seek the leverage they need to use the throne as a fulcrum in their own schemes. Deals must be made, reputations taken into account, alliances built, and treachery carefully managed. While there is power in the Landsraad, it is still just an advisory committee; only the Emperor's word can truly affect change. But for the Emperor to go against the combined wishes of the Landsraad or the Guild can be dangerous too.

Unfortunately, gaining the Emperor's favor is extremely difficult. For a start, there is a long queue of supplicants looking to do the same. While it may not be literal, there is a careful order that must be navigated for those who wish to see the Emperor. Who is more important and who has the most Imperial favor are usually more relevant than who asked for an audience first. Trying to 'jump the queue' is a dangerous game too; those who do will earn the enmity of those they displace. However, those who don't push themselves forward are often doomed to never see the front of the line.

How each person is allowed to meet the Emperor also needs to be appropriate to their position. For the ruler of a House to get a public audience is often somewhat unfitting. It suggests that they have had to wait their turn like any other supplicant or that they are desperate enough to have their problems aired in public. Those with real power usually ask to dine or have a private drink with the Emperor. That said, sometimes a public audience is a good way to shame those who have offended the Emperor, by making them beg for what they need in public. However, a public request can put the Emperor on the spot if his refusal has consequences he is unwilling to accept.

So, the voice of the Imperial Court echoes out across more than a thousand worlds, and it must be obeyed. But it can also be coerced and manipulated if the right pressure is applied. However, care must be taken. While such a tactic may get the desired outcome, it is also a good way to make powerful enemies.

OUTSIDERS

There are those who stand outside the politics of Imperium yet manage to remain a vital part of it. House Vernius, from its machine planet of Ix, builds more and more complex technology that skirts the edges of Butlerian proscriptions. The biologists of the Tleilaxu, a twisted cult of science, develop Face Dancers and twisted Mentats to order for an Imperium that scorns them as enthusiastically as it hankers for their products. The honorable Swordmasters of Ginaz, arguably the greatest fighters in the Known Universe, teach their skills to those who can survive their training. The Suk Medical School, the most advanced medical training facility ever built, conditions its graduates so they may never betray their charges.

These outsiders weave plots of their own, all the while claiming to want no part of the Imperium. Each weaves subtle threads between the Houses and the throne so they might benefit from the protection they offer yet stay apart from its governance. To do this, they have all developed abilities, technology, or skills that cannot be matched or duplicated by any other. They work hard to maintain their highly specialized monopolies, for without them they have no power to refuse the edicts of the throne.

Intertwined with all these politics is the beating heart of the Imperium, the wealth generated and controlled by CHOAM. Here the vast wealth of a million worlds is divided between those who have shares in the interstellar trading community. While there is power in politics and rulership, it is wealth that controls the universe. Spice is the most valuable asset to this trade, yet Houses have amassed untold fortunes with the simplest products. Trade in expensive commodities might be lucrative, but cheap products that are used by the entire Known Universe can bring unimaginable wealth. The board of directors of CHOAM claims and apportions the spoils of the most lucrative assets. But with each director often being the leader of their own House, no decision is ever made without weighing their self-interest.

With **Pawns and Power: The Emperor's Court Sourcebook**, you can move your game to the next level of play. Where the player characters were once the elite agents of their House, now they can be the rulers of their House, or even something greater. This sourcebook offers detail on enhancing political games and playing the characters that give the orders rather than those who carry them out. Where before, your characters might have spoken for their rulers, now they can become those rulers. Even those not directly ruling the House might take on the roles of the ruler's most trusted advisors, perhaps even guiding the House from the shadows.

To help the gamemaster develop higher level campaigns, we offer a host of new rules and expansions. There are new drives and a reputation system, as well as a deeper look at intrigue conflicts and creating political games.

This sourcebook also looks outside the standard arena of the Imperium to include a wealth of new character options. These include character types that have complex loyalties or who have skills and abilities beyond those of the usual starting characters. Now you can play as deadly Sardaukar, cunning Face Dancers, or expert Ginaz Swordmasters. We take a look at a variety of advanced characters and offer in-depth rules for including them in a campaign.

We also present rules for using these outsider characters in campaigns not based around Houses and their agents. You might run a campaign set among the Sardaukar or the Bene Tleilax, or one spanning worlds as directors of CHOAM, with each character having a House of their own. You could even run a campaign set in the Imperial Court itself, with each character carving out a powerbase beyond that of a directorship or control of a House.

Now is the opportunity to seize power over not just a planet but whole systems, and even the Imperium itself. But beware, for just as there is dominion beyond your wildest dreams, so might your ambition hold the seeds of the utter destruction of you, your House, and even your very name.



Sourcebook Overview

Chapter 1 – The Imperial Throne

This chapter takes a more detailed look at the power of the Emperor and Kaitain, the homeworld of House Corrino. We detail life at court and in the Imperial Palace, how to get invited, and how to survive amidst the courtiers and manipulators that flock around the throne. We also take a deeper dive into the Imperial Sardaukar and their history, skills, and culture, as well as detailing how to use them in your own campaigns



Chapter 2 – The Outsiders

Not every faction has its sights on the power of the throne and the Landsraad. In this chapter, we detail the four powerful factions who insist they take no part in Imperial politics: Ix, Ginaz, the Tleilaxu, and the Suk Medical School. We look at the history, agenda, and abilities of each faction, adding new character types and expanding the options for existing ones. We also detail how these factions maintain their position outside the usual hierarchies of the Imperium and, in some cases, how they navigate the very edges of Butlerian edicts.



Chapter 3 – Society

Politics is a social game, and those who cannot make alliances and manipulate their peers are doomed to failure. Here we look at intrigues and politics: how to use them as a player, and how to run campaigns that feature them, as a gamemaster. This section introduces new rules for your character's reputation, a vital asset for those who want to lead others. We also offer new drives that can replace the usual ones to further develop your character's goals.



Chapter 4 – Controlling Your House

Not every character is content with serving their House, even as one of its elite agents. This chapter is for those who crave the power to control the vast resources of a noble House. We look at how the player character group can become the rulers of a House and what they can do with such wealth and resources. For those who want power but are content to follow, we also take another look at the House roles and detail how player characters can assume them.



Chapter 5 – Secrets of the Imperium

The more powerful the faction, the more closely it keeps its secrets. This chapter is for the gamemaster, and it reveals the darkest mysteries of the Imperium around the Guild, Tleilaxu, and CHOAM. Here we look at the mysterious Guild Navigators, how the Tleilaxu develop their perverse creations, and what secret agendas lie at the heart of CHOAM among its directors.

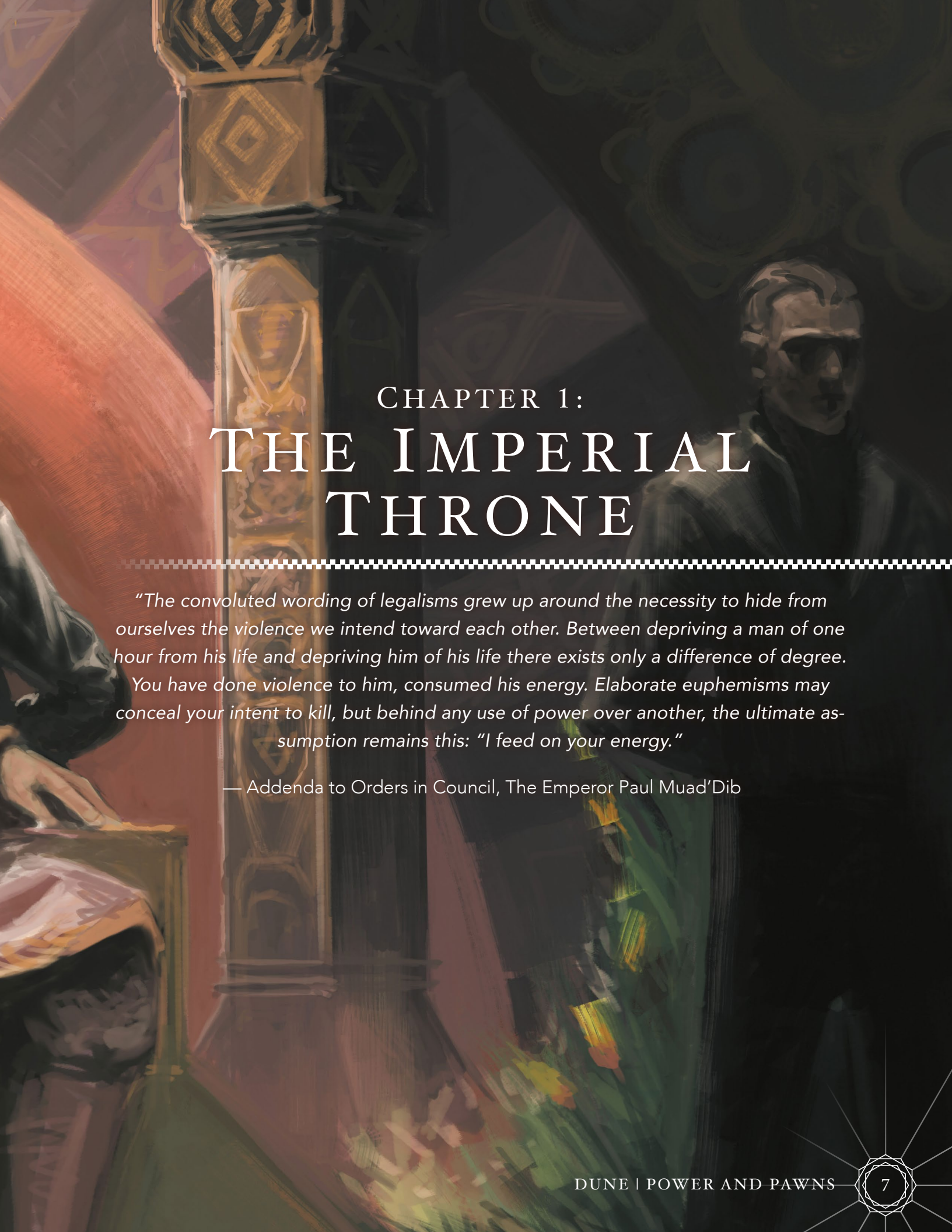


Chapter 6 – Blood and Riches

We complete the book with an adventure that takes the player characters across the Imperium in an effort to stop an interstellar war. House Thorvald and House Novebruns have begun a dispute over mining rights that has escalated into a kanly vendetta. As their rivalry grows, other Houses begin to take sides and become drawn into the dispute. The Emperor assigns the player characters' House to arbitrate the disagreement and bring peace. But does the Emperor really trust the player characters' judgment, or is he just putting them in an impossible position in order to see them fall, too?







Chapter 1: The Imperial Throne

"The convoluted wording of legalisms grew up around the necessity to hide from ourselves the violence we intend toward each other. Between depriving a man of one hour from his life and depriving him of his life there exists only a difference of degree. You have done violence to him, consumed his energy. Elaborate euphemisms may conceal your intent to kill, but behind any use of power over another, the ultimate assumption remains this: "I feed on your energy."

— Addenda to Orders in Council, The Emperor Paul Muad'Dib

The Imperial Court

The head of House Corrino has occupied the Golden Lion Throne for more than 10,000 standard years. The Emperor holds more power than any other individual in the Known Universe. This power is balanced by that of the Landsraad. At various points in the history of the Imperium, the Emperor has been in a position to over-rule the combined might of the Major and Minor Houses, and at other times, the Emperor has been regularly overruled by powerful factions within the Landsraad. It is important to remember CHOAM, the Spacing Guild, and the Sisterhood also hold great sway over the balance of power. A strong Emperor can run the Known Universe according to their will, a weak Emperor is at the mercy of other powers. Weak Emperors, in fact, invite swift removal, and as there is no fair means of removing an Emperor, this means assassination. Fortunate is the Emperor who meets with an indisputably natural death.

The Landsraad can do little without Imperial ratification. Declaring a House renegade, for instance, requires the agreement of both the Landsraad and the Emperor. Imperial ratification is necessary in order to appoint a Judge of the Change. In theory, in the Landsraad Council, the Emperor is first among equals. In practice, there are strict limits to what the Landsraad can achieve without the Emperor's seal on their paperwork.

The High Council of the Landsraad is an exception to the rule of Imperial domination. The Emperor has no seat upon the High Council, which consists of several heads of the Great Houses. There is much the High Council can achieve, but the fly in the ointment is that few of their decisions and deliberations can come to fruition without the Emperor's signature. Some Emperors have historically worked closely with the High Council, treating them almost as personal advisors; others have been in constant contention with the High Council. While some checks and balances are beneficial to the smooth governance of the Known Universe, having the Emperor and the High Council constantly at each other's throats is disruptive, though the ensuing chaos may create unforeseen opportunities for an ambitious and politically astute House.

Life at Court

There are two distinct worlds on the Imperial capital: the ruling class, and those who cater to their every whim. No matter one's social standing, Kaitain is a dangerous place. Death, deceit, espionage, and betrayal are all part of life here.

At first glance, the planet seems idyllic. It radiates cleanliness, striking architecture, and luxury. However, everything and everyone that makes Kaitain function for the powerful elite are pushed out of sight when not attending to aristocratic needs. The workers live outside the extravagant cities, disappearing to their own humble, unobtrusive districts and faraway towns as soon as their shifts are done.

The Noble Sphere

For the members of the Landsraad, Kaitain is an exercise in contradictions. Bouquets of exotic, fragrant blossoms adorn every dining table, while poison snoopers hang ominously overhead. The delicate flavors of the most expensive liqueurs delight every palate, competing with the sour taste of suspicious fear. Whale-fur garments kiss the skin of the nobility, even as the risk of betrayal at every turn raises goosebumps.

Every luxury is available to the aristocracy, but the price? Endless, perpetual paranoia. The intense and constant plays for power mean that everyone is a friend for the right price ... until a better offer comes along.

THE SARTORIAL FEUD

Tastes change rapidly on Kaitain. A week or even a day off the capital planet leads to outdated fashions and social obsolescence. Keeping at the forefront of the latest trend is no easy task. Two particular Houses Minor of House Corrino, House Rhukaen and House Vermillion, focus their efforts on leading the trends in Kaitain couture.

House Rhukaen has buyers all over the Known Universe, hunting down the rarest materials to craft the finest new looks. Twinkling moon opals from the far reaches of the Imperium will grace the necklines of their gowns one day, and musical bells made from shells found deep in the waters of Caladan's oceans hang from the cuffs of their clothes the next.

House Vermillion, on the other hand, integrates biological and technological solutions into their designs. Their clothes have been known to literally bloom throughout the day. Other times, they integrate shigawire reels throughout their dress, projecting beautiful images on and around them.

By driving what is chic throughout the entire Imperium, these Houses Minor can affect the economies and trade of various planets, depending on the trends they set. Their sartorial supremacy gives them surprising power and influence over other Houses, especially those that want to avoid dowdy reputations and becoming irrelevant within the Landsraad.

THE SOCIAL CLUBS

With select, privileged members from only the most aristocratic or affluent families, Kaitain's social clubs are excellent places for the Imperium's elite to meet and mingle. Some clubs cater to Houses Major. Others accept only members from Houses Minor. The Kazoku Society limits its membership to those related directly to House Corrino.

The clubs often have dining halls, plush sitting rooms, space for various gambling games, and tasting rooms for food, drink, and recreational consumables from across the Known Universe. Many deals, alliances, contracts, and rivalries have come out of Kaitain's social clubs. Though they appear recreational, the social clubs are not without political peril.

Positions and Ranks at Court

Most Emperors have reserved the highest positions at court for members of their own immediate family and the next tier down for lesser members of House Corrino. It would, however, be a foolish Emperor who failed to hand out some important positions to the nominees of other Great Houses, though these can never be in a position of absolute trust, as they are bound to report back to their masters.

One example is House Leman, a minor house under Corrino sway, which provides scribes and visual artists to the court. Their calligraphy is second to none in the Known Universe. Some also serve in administrative roles as they train Corrino children in the control, as well as the production, of documents. Those talented in the ways of bureaucracy and in the drafting of decrees can rise high in the Emperor's service. Achieving this, however, requires more than mere ability. No matter how able a courtier, if no one becomes aware of their ability, they cannot gain advancement.

Every House wants to have one of its members at court, as it is vital to know what mood the Emperor is in and what he is planning. Many Houses send their most talented artists to audition for a place at court, and a wise Emperor takes care to commission artwork from a wide variety of Houses. That said, very few artists from outside House Corrino achieve permanent positions at court. Troupes of traveling players, dancers, and musicians visit Kaitain for short seasons to present their work. The more prominent among them are treated as

honored guests of the Emperor and, should their works prove pleasing, reap rich rewards in terms of gifts and favors. A talented painter from a Minor House might receive an invitation to court to make a portrait of the Emperor, his spouse, his children, or a beloved courtier. Usually, however, the Emperor expects them to leave when their work is done.

Many Emperors have chosen trusted advisors from outside their own House, though they are usually related by blood to some degree. A good example is Count Hasimir Fenring, who has the Emperor's ear and finds frequent employment on secret business for the Emperor. Most Houses send envoys and courtiers to Kaitain, and some may gain the Emperor's trust and friendship, though the shadow of suspicion hangs over most of them who are, the Emperor assumes, reporting back whenever they find time and opportunity.

There are many circles at court, with the innermost circle comprising only those in whom the Emperor has absolute trust. This often consists of the Emperor himself and no other, as many Emperors in the past have been assassinated by cousins, brothers, spouses, concubines, lovers, and even their own children. Usually, however, these blood relatives, along with trusted advisors, make up the inner circle at court. The next circle includes other members of House Corrino, their trusted employees, concubines, and slaves, along with such visiting artists and entertainers who are currently in favor. Beside them are those who manage the administrators, cooks, architects, gardeners, and builders. All people in this circle have been through a grueling interview process, including checks by the Emperor's Truthsayer. All enjoy some degree of trust, though the wise Emperor trusts no one absolutely.

Members of the third circle are what the public and visitors to court are most likely to see — hordes of hopeful petitioners, hangers-on, and would-be courtiers, all vying for the Emperor's attention. A team of House Corrino majordomos are busily employed in keeping these individuals in order. Some of the majordomos can be persuaded to ensure their 'sponsor' jumps the queue to get an interview with the Emperor himself or, perhaps, one of the Emperor's advisors competent enough to act on the Emperor's behalf. Everyone at court, after all, is susceptible to bribery, threat, and blackmail, just like everyone else in the Known Universe.

An array of courtiers and members of the entourage who have eked out their own place and position at court can be found in this third circle, in addition to some people who actually do some work. For the most part, these are people who have started doing something helpful, such as announcing guests, and have turned this favor into a title. In time, this title becomes a permanent position, and one that might be hotly competed over or passed down a family line. It is important to note that the people doing these jobs are not servants, but nobles. They are usually low-ranking ones who might never inherit, but they are nobles, nonetheless. This means the jobs they do are never taxing and few take up much of their day, but they will insist they are an essential, vital, and noble part of Imperial tradition.

The jobs themselves cover a wide variety of positions and always have a glamorous title to make them sound very important. Each title can be considered a trait, and some characters might have as many as three, although most have only one. In general, men serve the Emperor and women serve the Empress, but this is by no means set in stone. The following are some examples of such titles:

- **Master of the Goblet –** hands the Emperor his first drink at dinner.
- **Master of the Robes –** helps the Emperor into his jacket each morning.
- **Lord of the Bedchamber –** ushers out all the servants and turns out the lights when the Emperor goes to bed (and is often charged with finding him a bed partner).
- **Master of the Revels –** is responsible for organizing official court events.
- **Lord of the Toast –** announces who the company will drink to in the Emperor's name at formal dinners.
- **Lady of the Bedchamber –** turns down the Emperor's bedsheets and, in some cases, has been expected to stay the night.
- **Lady of the Mirror –** helps advise the Empress on her makeup and wardrobe.
- **Mistress of the Bell –** orders the servants to rise and begin the palace day.
- **Mistress of the Bedchamber –** serves the Empress in the same way as the Lord of the Bedchamber serves the Emperor.
- **Keeper of the Jewels –** is responsible for handing the Emperor one of the emblems of office on formal events. There is a separate keeper for each of the crown jewels.
- **Royal Beast Master –** ensures any and all of the Emperor's pets are fed and watered (although servants do all the actual work).

The importance of these positions really depends on the Emperor, and many have revoked such titles on the spot when they find them annoying. However, the more of these titles there are, the grander and more glamorous the court appears, and so most Emperors maintain the system. The importance of such positions depends on the incumbent, and some have gained great power and leverage, while others have been little more than flunkies.

Navigating Courtly Life

Anyone who wants to achieve anything in the Imperium might decide to attend court in order to get the Emperor's support for an endeavor. If the Emperor supports a project, it is more than halfway to coming to fruition and can bring great honor and glory to the individual and the House proposing it. The problem is getting the Emperor's ear.

The easiest way is via the High Council of the Landsraad. If you are, yourself, the head of one of the Great Houses, or if you have the support of such a person, there is a chance the High Council will support your project (assuming it's good enough) and present it to the Emperor on your behalf. They could even put it on the agenda for a general meeting of the Landsraad Council, which is bound to bring it to Imperial attention since the High Council produces the agenda in consultation with the Emperor. In some cases, the High Council arranges for a petitioner to present their idea to the Emperor in person. This is no guarantee of success, but it does get the petitioner over the first few hurdles.

In the absence of this support, the petitioner must endure a soul-destroying process of presenting the proposal to a series of increasingly senior clerks, administrators, courtiers, and advisors, any one of whom could take offense or decide to block the progress of the project for no discernable reason. The petitioner must appease every one of these officials one way or another if the petition is to come to the attention of the Emperor. Just to make the process even more frustrating, petitioners often feel they are going round and round in circles as one bureaucrat refers them to another who sends them back to the first one. This is inefficient but inherent in bureaucracies where each incumbent guards their own position with as much jealousy and care as any head of House or noble.

Jumping through all these bureaucratic hoops can take some time, even if the petitioner is able to persuade the High Council to take up their cause. This waiting time, though frustrating, need not be wasted. The food and drink, the décor, and the amusements available to noble petitioners at court are incomparable, and most find time passes pleasantly enough, provided they have sufficient funds to support themselves in an environment where everyone seems to be after their solaris. On top of this, presence at court provides a perfect opportunity to make new allies, settle old scores, and indulge in all forms of social competition and intrigue. Many nobles attend court purely for these reasons, even if they have no petition to put forward.

Serving the Aristocracy

Those who work for and carry out the wishes of the noble Houses are far from immune to the plots and schemes taking place around them. A savvy individual dances through the politics to avoid getting on the wrong sides of the various Houses and individual members of the Landsraad. The temptations of extravagant rewards or the fear of dire threats can easily make a member of the servant class turn on their employer. Dodging the various political and social plays of the upper classes without making oneself a target is exhausting, relentless work.

PANEM ET CIRCENSES (BREAD AND CIRCUSES)

'Bread and circuses' is a concept and strategy from the ancient ancestral world of Old Terra that helped the ruling elite keep their people quiet and outwardly content. Many Houses Minor on Kaitain take the idea to heart. They encourage food and fun for the working classes to keep them complacent and to maintain the illusion of a prosperous, utopian Imperium ... on the capital planet, at least.

Some of House Corrino's Houses Minor focus on keeping much of the ugliness of the universe hidden from view. It's not that pain, suffering, and poverty don't exist on Kaitain, but the Houses often cover it up or move the victims off-planet and out of sight, as opposed to solving any underlying issues.

ESPAR LEMAN

Espar is a very minor noble who works as a clerk in the Imperial Palace. He is bored to tears recording minor agreements among Minor Houses and minor nobles, and he believes he is destined for greater things. He is ambitious and will stop at nothing in order to gain promotion. He holds a great deal of blackmail material over clerks and even management in his line of work, and he is always on the lookout for more. He offers to arrange introductions for any visiting noble who can provide more blackmail material or otherwise improve his promotion prospects. He can't actually deliver very much, but he can give characters valuable clues as to who, in the higher ranks of bureaucracy, might be susceptible to blackmail and where they may find opportunities to collect their own material.

EMPORIUM BARITH

Tucked out of sight, in the outskirts of Corrinth where the capital city's workers live, the aromas of Caladan chowder and other simple fare drift through a modest marketplace. Simple storefronts display affordable clothing and supplies. The goods sold here are basic and functional, and they lack the opulence found elsewhere on the planet. Recorded music, as opposed to the live performances in the aristocratic luxury shops, pipes through audio systems. On Kaitain, this marketplace stands out *because* it is so ordinary, on this planet of excess.

Emporium Barith is where Corrinth's working-class people shop. Upon entering the massive building that houses the myriad of stores, there's a shift in the very air. The people going about their business here have a vanishingly small chance of running into a noble and only have to worry about each other, so, while still wary, they can let their guard down just a little. Friends call out to each other. The taverns have a lively, unhindered atmosphere, as opposed to the stiff composure and self-control felt anywhere the nobles might frequent.

Celebrations and Festivals

On Kaitain, it seems there's always some kind of holiday, festival, or celebration happening. Beautiful displays of light and sound sparkle in the sky on many nights. Sounds of chatter and laughter from the many feasts float through the air. The stink of exotic animals brought in for gladiatorial fights, traditional displays, or slaughter, depending on the event, is a frequent occurrence.

Those looking to curry favor with the Padishah Emperor often organize celebrations of the Golden Lion Throne. Feasts in honor of House Corrino, gladiatorial games featuring competitors from all over the Known Universe, and festivals focusing on everything from the Emperor's anniversary on the throne to his least-favorite pet's date of birth are common on Kaitain. They are rarely successful in catching the Emperor's eye or goodwill, though.

THE FEAST OF CORRIN

House Corrino flaunts its power and wealth with an extravagant dinner marking the anniversary of the Battle of Corrin, and it is one of *the* social events of the year. Invitations are coveted. Snubs are politically and socially devastating. To possess the best and most fashionable ingredients of the year and supply the Imperial chefs is a lucrative, enviable, powerful position, and planets and Houses aggressively compete for the privilege. Wars of Assassins have been fought for less.

HOLY DAYS OF THE ORANGE CATHOLIC FAITH

Throughout the year, followers of the Orange Catholic Bible mark several holidays. The celebrations may include eschewing all technology, fasting, feasting, giving gifts, or honoring the dead. Of course, on Kaitain, every day of religious observance becomes a way for the aristocracy to cement a reputation, show off wealth, or make a play for power.

THE NEW YEAR

Many in the Imperium celebrate each New Year with quiet reflection. Those who are more devout also avoid using any kind of technology as one year turns into the next. Kaitain's observation of this solemn holiday turns into a competition of stylish and farcical displays of austerity. The nobles wear understated fashions made of only the finest materials. The 'simple' meals that they share with an exclusive list of invitees consist of the most expensive ingredients from across the Known Universe.

LYOCAN'S BASILICA

On the edge of Corrinth stands a small, ancient basilica. On every major holiday, the distinct aroma of Galacian incense emanates from its doors, accompanied by the murmurs of quiet prayers. This beautiful church caters to those who want a private place to observe their faith or to meet without prying eyes. The massive cathedral in the center of the city is where those who wish to be seen attend services. But those who attend the basilica often overhear secrets and schemes ...

BUTLERIAN REMEMBRANCE

Across the Imperium, and throughout the year, the citizens of the Known Universe commemorate events from the Great Revolt. These range in tone from celebratory to somber. Nowhere are these celebrations more extravagant or elaborate than on the capital planet of Kaitain.

CELEBRATING THE REBELLION OF IX

Kaitain celebrates the 177 B.G. Rebellion of Ix with a culinary competition to make the best pastries, known as Hecate's Asteroids. The sweet, delicate, beautifully decorated tarts are one of the highlights of the holiday. The Houses source the most exquisite ingredients from around the Imperium and recruit the best chefs for the Hecate's Asteroid contest.

BUTLER COMMONS

In a quiet, out-of-the-way corner of Corrinth is a small square covered by a beautiful pergola with fragrant blooming vines. Chimes hang from the trellises and sing a haunting melody with each breeze. Statues of famous Butlers stand at each corner.

Staying at Court

The court of the Golden Lion Throne is one of indulgence and lavish excess. Delicacies grace the table at every meal. Elegant, expensive, exclusive perfumes distilled from the forest orchids of Ecaz pump through the air-filtration systems of the Imperial Opal Palace. Every physical want and desire is catered to. At the court of the Padishah Emperor, it is easy to find fantastic food, the most current fashions, and only the most sophisticated entertainment.

As opulent and civilized as the Padishah Emperor's home planet seems, it is also savage in its own way. Illicit meetings between allies, and sometimes even enemies, further schemes that might topple Houses of the Landsraad. Truthsayers working for the Emperor, or the occasional influential House, stalk the court's halls, throwing various plots into chaos at every turn. Wars of Assassins play out at meals, in Corrinth's alleyways, and even in the Emperor's own palace. The entire Imperium runs on blood spilled through politics.

The Imperial Opal Palace, and Corrinth at large, suffer from their contradictions. Aristocratic refinement battles with the nobles' barbarism. Distrust and suspicion spoil the hedonistic decadence. Court is the place for big political moves, and many aristocrats arrange extended visits to make their attempts. Whether those actions result in a new accumulation of power or a painful, undignified death is impossible to say until the die is cast.

THEATRICAL EVENTS

Courtly life often revolves around the various concerts, plays, and dance performances presented to the Emperor. This makes them highly social affairs, with nobles donning the latest styles, sporting the newest fragrance from distant planets, and using the freshest jargon to participate in the delicate social dance of the Imperium's elite.

The most influential aristocrats have boxes and seats at all the best theaters and arenas. It is critical to not only know what is popular with the tastemakers on Kaitain but to also be seen at the various events while at court. Enjoying the actual performances is a much lower priority than making an appearance and getting spotted by the right people in the right circles. Preparing for these social events is time consuming and expensive, and it begins long before a visiting aristocrat sets foot on Kaitain.

THE EMPEROR'S GARDENS

Lush manicured gardens sprawl over the grounds of the Imperial Opal Palace and all over Corrinth City. Many nobles strike bargains between themselves here among the fragrant blooms and serene fogwood wind chimes. The gardens have seen chance meetings, unthinkable negotiations, and even the occasional duel.

Plans to disrupt trade to entire systems, nefarious strategies to destroy ancient Landsraad alliances, and conspiracies to enact revenge are just some of the machinations coming out of the beautiful labyrinthine twists and turns of the gardens of Kaitain.

Strolling through the carefully maintained flora of any garden is a gamble. There is a chance that one may come across the representative of an influential House and have an opportunity to win them over, giving a new advantage to their own House. On the other hand, one may come across a tryst, a transaction, or even a murder they weren't supposed to see.

The jewel in the Emperor's gardens is the Contemplation Tea House. This large building is decorated with colorful woodcut flowers, plum trees, and mythical animals on the walls. Its open-plan design allows birds to fly freely through, and well-fed peacocks strut about the lawn. The waiting staff all have special uniforms with a distinctive angular cut and cuffs that are large enough to serve as pockets. Small bells hang all over the uniforms, adding a sound like windchimes as they move around the tea house. Access to the tea house is only granted by the invitation of the Emperor and is regarded as a great honor.



Getting the Attention of the Emperor

Many members of the Landsraad are desperate to meet with the Golden Lion Throne. They believe it will help them amass power, destroy their rivals, or convince the Emperor to give them a CHOAM directorship. The Emperor can do all of that, making his attention incredibly lucrative ... or catastrophic. He can use his influence and resources to lift a House to new heights or to target a House, forcing it to go renegade or annihilating it completely.

Still, the risk is worth it for many. Contacting the Emperor through the official channels is slow and bureaucratic, and it requires specialized knowledge of how elaborate protocol and procedures function on Kaitain. There are, however, other ways to catch the Emperor's eye.

Climbing the social ladder by attending the right parties and most prestigious events can eventually result in a chance meeting with the Emperor, or even an invitation to see him, *if* one has managed to intrigue him enough. Becoming a concubine or marrying into the upper echelons of the aristocracy is another way of increasing the odds of directly interacting with the leader of the Known Universe.

Shaking up the Landsraad from a sociopolitical perspective can also increase one's clout enough to convince the Emperor to take notice. This, however, is quite the gamble. He might be impressed by big moves. He also might want to remove anyone or any House that seems to be accumulating too much sway with the other nobles.

Other members of the Landsraad, however, are also trying to do the same thing and have no qualms about sabotaging rivals, enemies, friends, or even family to ensure they are the ones to draw the Emperor's attention instead.

THE SOCIAL SEASON ON KAITAIN

Though the Houses send representatives to Kaitain all throughout the year, the unofficial social seasons revolve around the Feast of Corrin, meetings of the Landsraad, and some of the other more exciting holidays. The Imperial Opal Palace becomes crowded with guests. Houses Major and Minor often have their own suites or residences on the capital planet as well.

Ships jostle for room in the skies above and the space around Kaitain. The hum of shuttles going from massive Heighliners to the planet's surface is unending.

During this time, every breath on the streets of Corrinth City is heady with the costly colognes the masses of aristocrats wear. The speed at which the popular fashions change increases dramatically as the nobles try to one-up each other every hour of every day. Merchants who bring luxury fabrics and accessories to Kaitain stand to make exorbitant amounts of money.

House Bojalari is usually tasked with the administrative side of things at such times, ensuring that the planet has enough resources to accommodate the massive influx of temporary residents at any given time. During the social seasons, they import vast amounts of food and supplies, as Kaitain cannot support such a massive population explosion on its own.

PARTIES AND EVENTS

Some Houses have armies of attendants and servants who follow the latest popular media, make sure to get into contact with the most sought-after performers, train the House's tracking animals to hunt the right prey, and understand the rules to the various games the aristocrats play among themselves.

It's not unusual for the sound of peculiar instruments from distant planets to pipe through a House's accommodations on Kaitain, as it is often the more esoteric performances that become new sensations among the nobles. At the same time, aromas from the kitchens clash with each other as cooks and chefs try to keep up with the latest culinary craze. Those nobles looking to make an impression rely on their kitchen staff to learn about the newest liquors and cuisines, so they can appear knowledgeable at the next gathering of note.

Dinners, dances, private concerts, hunting parties, and other functions are frequent events put on by various Houses. Attending the right ones and maintaining social visibility is critical for becoming a true player in the Landsraad. Houses often make use of their Mentats to calculate where to appear, who to rebuff, and even how to acquire the most exclusive invitations. To become fashionable, celebrated, and well received takes careful manipulation, the occasional assassination, and no small amount of luck.

House Jongleur

One of the most famous and renowned Minor Houses of the Imperium is House Jongleur, known for its members' incredible skill as performers. This Minor House serves House Taligari and is little more than the acting school it is famous for. Jongleur students not only study the techniques of performance but also train to use their voices in a similar way to the Bene Gesserit. While this vocal technique is not as accomplished as that of the Sisterhood, it does allow a Jongleur performer to inspire certain emotions in their audience. House Jongleur keeps the details of this skill secret, as any House would, but the Bene Gesserit and the Tleilaxu have long showed particular interest in uncovering it.

Once they have graduated, House Jongleur performers can either stay with the House or find service elsewhere. Most stay with the House, as this offers the best career opportunities as a performer. However, a few find service in other Houses where their skills might not just be used on the stage.

PLAYING A JONGLEUR

Because their skills require a deep level of formal training, Jongleurs are considered a new faction. As a character cannot have more than one faction template, there cannot be any Fremen/Jongleurs or Guild Agent/Jongleurs etc. It is possible the Bene Gesserit has secretly developed similar skills, so the gamemaster might allow a Sister to learn Jongleur exclusive talents. Jongleurs can be freelance agents but can also pledge their loyalty to a House. House Jongleur does not take this as a betrayal as long as they do not share their training secrets.



JONGLEUR FACTION TEMPLATE

"I would give my soul to play the part of Raphael Corrino. I feel I was ... born to play him." –Tyros Reffa

Additional Trait: Jongleur

Suggested Archetypes: Courtier, Empath, Envoy, Steward

Mandatory Talent: Project Emotion

Jongleurs must also take a focus in at least one of the following: Acting, Acrobatics, Dance, Disguise, Etiquette, Empathy, Grace, Music, Physical Empathy, Self Control.

NEW TALENTS

PROJECT EMOTION (JONGLEUR TALENT)

By pitching your voice at just the right level, you can inspire a broad emotional state in an audience. This can only apply to simple emotions like sadness, happiness, or anger, and these feelings don't consume the audience. However, not everyone thinks to control their feelings if they get out of hand.

This ability gives, to anyone who can hear the Jongleur speak, an emotional trait of the Jongleur's choice for the remainder of the scene. This trait must be the same for all the people affected by this talent. The affected targets only feel a moderate amount of this emotion and can shake it off with an Average (D1) **Discipline** test, if they think to do so. The Jongleur can apply this talent into normal speech so it is not obvious it is being used.

TARGETED EMOTION (JONGLEUR TALENT)

Your skills to affect peoples' feelings can be focused to affect a single individual with a more-powerful emotion. This power can incite rage or love, pushing people to do things they might not otherwise consider.

This ability only works on a single target who must be engaged in conversation with the Jongleur for a few minutes. At the end of this time, the target gains an emotional trait of the Jongleur's choosing, but it must be a strong emotion such as rage, love, pride, etc. The Jongleur might use this trait to allow them to make a test to persuade the target to perform some sort of action, such as attack an enemy or pledge their love to a paramour. The trait is removed at the end of the scene, but if the target is aware they are being manipulated, they may shake off the feeling and remove the trait with a Daunting (D3) **Discipline** test.

House Corrino

"THE CENTER WILL HOLD"



Banners and Arms

Colors: Gold and Scarlet
Crest: Lion

Overview

House Traits: Imperial, Wealthy

PRIMARY DOMAINS

Farming (Produce) Forestry: Military (Workers) The Sardaukar terror troops are the most feared fighters in the Imperium.

SECONDARY DOMAINS

Several minor domains are either directly controlled by the House or managed on their behalf by another House who tithe a portion of the profits. This is often referred to as the 'Lion's Share', as it is often larger than it might usually be.

Homeworld

Kaitain (Alpha Piscium 6).See following pages.

Other Holdings: Salusa Secundus (Gamma Waiping 3) – Imperial prison planet. Several other small planets and moons across the Known Universe, managed by loyal Minor Houses.

Military Power

House Corrino controls the Sardaukar, who are the most able soldiers in the Known Universe. The Landsraad believe it is impossible to beat the Sardaukar on the field of battle unless all the other Houses join together against Corrino — and there is little prospect of that happening. Although dependent on the Guild for transportation, no one doubts House Corrino holds military superiority over all other Houses in the Imperium.

Population and Lifestyle

House Corrino has ruled the Imperium from the Golden Lion Throne for more than ten thousand standard years. As such, even the lowliest members of the House, those who serve the House, and even those who happen to live on Corrino holdings, consider themselves superior to everyone around them. They are natural-born rulers and expect to receive the respect their position demands.

It would be wrong to assume there is no poverty among the Corrinos, but however poor an individual might be, they are proud and unashamed to demand their due from their inferiors or, for that matter, from those they look up to. Corrinos believe it is important to keep up appearances, so they offer charity and solaris to the poor who, in turn, are expected to appear respectable in all circumstances. Everyone on Corrino holdings must show a good face in public. No one must ever suspect the Emperor's House lacks for anything.

Nobilis Familia

Padishah Emperor Shaddam Corrino IV is currently the head of his House. He was married to Anirul, who died in 10,176 A.G., and he subsequently married Aricatha. He has no sons, which some attribute to his first wife's Bene Gesserit affiliation. He has five daughters, all of whom have received at least some Bene Gesserit training. Irulan, princess and the heiress apparent, is the oldest. Irulan is a studious and observant young woman, and many Corrino believe she has a great future in front of her. Chalice and Wensicia are the Emperor's middle daughters. While Chalice shows promise, Wensicia is the more ambitious and asks probing questions of visitors to the palace, when she can. Josifa and Rugi, the two youngest, are still very young, and it is hard to tell what they may become.

The Bene Gesserit show great interest in all five young women, especially Josifa, whose talents they nurture with care. With their background and noble breeding, there is no doubt all five daughters will go far. Every House hopes to secure a marriage with one of them to press a step closer to the throne. Perhaps one of them will, someday, even sit upon the Golden Lion Throne, though Shaddam Corrino IV himself often bemoans his lack of sons. He still has time to beget one.

History

House Corrino originated after the battle of Corrino in 88 B.G. Faykan Butler changed his name to Corrino to honor the battle and declared himself Padishah Emperor. Since then, House Corrino has held the Imperium in the palm of its hand, ruling from the Golden Lion Throne for over 10,000 standard years. Shaddam Corrino IV is the eighty-first member of his House to occupy the throne. Histories of his predecessors, lovingly crafted by scribes and bookbinders of House Leman, can be found in the stacks of the Ishaq Hall of Magnificent Documents, alongside handwritten personal diaries of those preceding Emperors who kept them. These documents are sufficient to keep students of history occupied for the length of their days.

Salusa Secundus, once a pleasant planet, is the original home of House Corrino. In the second millennium, during the reign of Padishah Emperor Hassik Corrino III, House Tantor attacked the Corrino homeworld using nuclear weapons. Since then, Salusa Secundus has been a nuclear wasteland. After declaring House Tantor renegade, Hassik III moved the Imperial headquarters to the paradise planet, Kaitain, which is now the Corrino homeworld in all but name, such is the dominance the House holds over the whole of the Known Universe. Hassik III undertook an ambitious building program, including many of the structures which have become landmarks in the capital today.

Salusa Secundus is now a prison planet, a fitting place to incarcerate enemies of the Imperium. Members and staff of House Corrino know they are seriously out of favor when they are assigned there as managers or guards. Some, but not all, are recalled to Kaitain with a change of Emperor or when the occupant of the Golden Lion Throne decides they have learned their lesson. Salusa Secundus also secretly serves as a training ground for the Sardaukar, where they are made strong by the exceptionally harsh environment it offers.

Recently, according to some, House Corrino seems to be losing its grip. Shaddam IV has moved in a number of ways some believe to be unwise. The Great Spice Wars did not improve his popularity or his standing in the Landsraad. His threats to destroy Arrakis, the only source of the spice, did not go down well with the Spacing Guild, the Sisterhood, or CHOAM. There have been rumors Shaddam himself was partly responsible for removing his own father, Elrood IX, by means of chaumas, though this has never been proven and is dangerous to speak.

Prominent Minor Houses

HOUSE LEMAN
An artistic House whose members are known for their brilliant calligraphy. They transcribe Imperial decrees for the records, and they send them out with messengers to impress the recipient. They often work as couriers, delivering their beautifully written missives in person.

HOUSE VEROND
A farming house that supplies basic produce to Kaitain. As well as maintaining agriculture on Kaitain, it produces excellent cooks, many of whom work in the Imperial kitchens.

HOUSE BOJALARI
A political house that sends many elegant courtiers to the Corrinos. They also hire themselves out to other Major Houses, never failing to report back.

HOUSE RHUKAEN AND HOUSE VERMILLION (SEE P. 9)
Are the leaders in Imperial fashion and set most of the clothing trends on Kaitain.

Agenda

House Corrino has always ruled to maintain the status quo, a plan that suits it, the Bene Gesserit, and the Guild very well. Its agenda involves keeping control of the Imperium, mostly by the ability to bestow and remove titles and position and by the threat of the Sardaukar.

The current ruler, Shaddam Corrino IV, has a complex agenda, and some believe he may be overreaching his ability. Many point to the debacle that was the Emperor's Great Spice War. No one (except, possibly, Hasimir Fenring) is absolutely certain of his motivation for this conflict. In truth, it was partly to reduce the importance of spice from Arrakis because Shaddam was hoping to develop an artificial correlate. The Emperor has always denied any involvement in this project and there is no proof of his participation in it. He also partially started the war from jealousy at the popularity and increasing power of Duke Leto Atreides, once his close friend but now perceived as a rival.

The Emperor would have destroyed Arrakis entirely had it not been for the intervention of the Spacing Guild, who refused point-blank to carry any of Shaddam's forces unless he called off the attack. Shaddam had little choice in the matter.

House Corrino's recent history is not precisely glorious, and it is desperate to regain its reputation as a solid pillar of the triad of power, power this Emperor has no wish to share with the Landsraad, the Spacing Guild, or CHOAM. Shaddam can be rash and overconfident in his own power and abilities. Right now, he desperately needs to reestablish his personal reputation among the Great Houses, who, it seems, are no longer according him the respect due to the occupant of the Golden Lion Throne.

In 10,191 A.G., House Corrino hands control of Arrakis over to House Atreides, displacing the Harkonnens, who have held control of the planet since 10,153 A.G.. Once the Atreides are in place on Arrakis but before they have fully found their feet, the Emperor secretly plans for the Harkonnens to invade the planet, backed up by the Emperor's own Sardaukar.

Kaitain

Star System: Alpha Waiping

Moons: Four

Habitable: Class IV

Noble House: Corrino

Primary Export: Imperial government

Population: Primarily in large cities and some in smaller settlements.

Languages: Galach

Locations of Interest: Contemplation Tea House, Corrinth City, Golden Rivers, and the Suk School of Medicine (see also **Dune Core Rulebook**, p. 78)

Known for its amazing architecture, perfect climate, and of course the fact that it is the seat of the Empire, Kaitain can easily overwhelm new visitors. It is a place of grandeur and portentous behavior and, beneath it all, secrets, shady dealings, and bureaucratic corruption — in other words, the daily life of Imperial politics.

Much of the grandeur of Kaitain is due to excessive spending on the part of Hassik Corrino III, the Emperor when the Imperial seat was moved to the planet. When members of the Landsraad began building their own lavish facilities and monuments as they settled into the new throneworld, Hassik spent vast sums on public works and buildings to avoid the appearance of having been outdone. Within a generation, Kaitain transformed from an unassuming Corrino world into a showcase of Imperial architecture, cultural sites, and extravagance.

Kaitain's urban development was carefully planned and executed, incorporating ornamental gardens, artificial waterfalls, and tree-lined boulevards among the towering skyscrapers, museums, and monuments. Even the planet's climate is strictly controlled, with the help of weather-control satellites and a dedicated team of climate technicians. As a result, Kaitain's days see clear blue skies, and the nights are full of stars and moons and occasional on-demand auroras.

The people of Kaitain enjoy the magnificence of their home and the fact that one can barely find a moment without seeing grand statuary and paintings, hearing the tinkle of chime kites, or smelling perfumes that evoke the memory of a distant planet. They also delight in the pomp and circumstance of attending balls, dances, plays, and every other sort of social event, where they can see and be seen by the people who run the Imperium. Kaitain has been called the hurricane's eye of politics, and it attracts the people to whom that is important. Visitors, on the other hand, can easily find all of this overwhelming.



ARCHITECTURE

Kaitain's grand, ostentatious architecture is unrivaled in the Imperium. Though the planet boasts a variety of styles from numerous planetary origins, the archetype of the Imperial Kaitain style is immense but slender metal-and-glass buildings that appear almost unstable due to their vast height and elegance. Buildings on Kaitain commonly feature soothing colorful exteriors, polished floors, bejeweled roofs or wall inlays, and sometimes stained-glass windows. Many feature terrace gardens, and there is no view that cannot take in flowers and trees in any direction, despite the amount of buildings.

Crystal-paved boulevards and promenades illuminated by prismatic lights and lined with coral arches, sculptures, and tiered fountains lead visitors to governmental facilities, museums, theatres, embassies, apartments, and more. Despite the overwhelming size of many buildings here, Kaitain's architects ensured that the important voices of nobles, couriers, and even clerks and hangers-on can be clearly heard, with the assistance of amplifiers that can transmit a speaker's voice and transmit it so everyone can hear ... or amplify only selected voices, given the proper incentive.

WEATHER

The weather is usually warm on Kaitain, and the climate is usually temperate. This is not by chance. It is the work of a fleet of weather-control satellites that manipulate the flow of warm and cool air masses all over the planet. Imperial weather control not only keeps the skies clear and pleasant, it controls every aspect of the day's weather in minute detail. If a region of farmland needs rain, weather control makes it happen. And if the Emperor is hosting a special event and wants a light breeze of a specific temperature and a rainbow in the background, weather control makes that happen too.

As a result of this awesome level of climate control, Kaitain rarely sees unpleasant weather. The planet has become known for its perfect cloudless skies. Storms are rare on Kaitain, and at night the Emperor can even custom order the appearance of shimmering curtains of pastel auroras, achieved by using the satellites to ionize rare gases. Any planetologists who point out the possible long-term environmental dangers of using quite excessive brute force to tailor the weather find themselves without a job — at best. But those who understand the science quietly whisper that the planet might not be able to take much more stress.

POINTS OF INTEREST

CORRINTH CITY

Kaitain's capital city is Corrinth City, the home of the Imperial Opal Palace, the Landsraad assembly hall known as the Hall of Oratory, and many other famous sites. Corrinth has the greatest percentage of governmental buildings on the planet, but it is by no means limited to such facilities; many of Kaitain's best museums, performance art centers, and other cultural sites are located in the city.

Corrinth's central promenade displays the grandeur of the city for people on their way between the palace, the numerous embassies, the varied shopping attractions, and other popular destinations. The banners of Houses Major and Minor hang overhead from the towering buildings, especially the scarlet and gold of House Corrino. Even the skies are decorated here, as the tops of buildings serve as anchors for melodious chime kites and for the prismatic ribbons that flutter in the gentle wind and cast rainbows onto the polished stone boulevards below.

Bureaucrats, couriers, and nobles wearing the latest colorful (and expensive) fashions scurry through the city on their missions of utmost importance, occasionally taking time to stop at a street vendor for food, drink, or souvenirs. Imperial soldiers, too, are frequently busy in the city, both within and without the palace grounds, marching with their colorful banners, their uniforms always impeccable.

While it occupies nearly a continent, Corrinth City is always slowly expanding, because it is the most important city in the Known Universe. As such it is also the most expensive place to live. New buildings must conform to strict laws about aesthetics, construction, and level of opulence. While most of the city is populated by clerks, servants, and bureaucrats in tight but not cramped accommodations, many nobles live or rent accommodation here, depending on the demands of Landsraad meetings.

THE OPAL (IMPERIAL) PALACE

The centerpiece of Corrinth city is the vast Imperial Palace. It dominates the view in any direction and often elicits gasps from those who see it for the first time. It is the home of the Emperor and, despite its overwhelming size, remains a private residence. It contains the private rooms and offices of the Emperor and his entire household, in opulent luxury. The only official business carried out here is in the cavernous throne room, when supplicants wish to address the Golden Lion Throne.

The building is also full of function rooms, ballrooms, dining rooms, and other lavish appointments. The Emperor hosts many gatherings and parties throughout the year, so the palace is rarely very empty. In many ways, the palace is the center of the Known Universe. While it plays host to innumerable events and occasions (with or without the Emperor), it is also a place of Imperial rule and governance. It forms the center of Kaitain society and is the source of the will of the Emperor.

Underneath the Opal Palace, and taking up nearly the same area, is the Imperial Necropolis. The past Emperors and the lords and ladies of House Corrino are found here in grand but silent corridors and elegant carved tombs. Each year the caverns are dug further to accommodate the honored dead of House Corrino. The Landsraad Hall of Oratory

The Landsraad Hall of Oratory (see **The Great Game**, p. 12) is the only building to challenge the Imperial Palace for size and opulence. This huge edifice is centered on the main assembly hall, which offers a comfortable seat for every ruler of every House in the Landsraad. It is the most daunting audience in the Known Universe for anyone making a speech from its central podium, although it is rarely full. Outside the great hall is an array of function rooms, meeting areas, and offices to see to the business of running the Known Universe. An army of scribes document and detail all the decisions so, once signed by the Emperor, these decrees can be sent out across the Imperium.

IMPERIAL-LANDSRAAD COMMONS

Within view of the Landsraad Hall of Oratory stands a large oval-shaped area known as the Imperial-Landsraad Commons. The commons serves as a transitional area, an oasis in the center of bustling commerce and governmental activity. It is a place for nobles to rest and talk in a less formal setting. As a result, sometimes more secret deals are done here than in the Hall of Oratory.

The most notable feature of the area is the grand fountain at its center, standing a hundred meters tall and shaped like a spiral nebula, featuring cleverly crafted cutouts and inlaid images of stars, planets, and other bodies that jet perfumed water in rainbow colors. Some of the massive surrounding buildings display frescoes and murals showing scenes of nature and the achievements of the Imperium. One of the primary benefactors of the commons was Vutier Corrino II, Shaddam IV's great-grandfather, a patron of the arts.

HASSIK III CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

The most prestigious stage on Kaitain is the Hassik III Center for the Performing Arts. The building itself is an enormous column-studded construction fitted with prismatic windows and the most advanced acoustic enhancements. Any seat allows an audience member to hear the performance perfectly, down to the faintest onstage whisper. After it was completed under Hassik III's reign, the first production to grace spectators was *Conquest of the Machines,* an opera detailing (and some say overplaying) the Corrino part in the Battle of Corrin. While the Hassik III Center tends to feature plays, operas, and ballet, it also draws the biggest creative talents in the Imperium. Every performer hopes one day to stand on its stage.

Given that the Emperor is often in attendance, it is also the place to be seen by those in society. The lobby is at balcony level and is a great vantage for watching everyone who is anyone in Imperial society as they enjoy wine and gossip. Most of the circle balconies are divided into large private boxes, which are often taken by groups of Bene Gesserit or noble families and are equipped with tiny poison snoopers during events.

As with many other venues on Kaitain, the center caters to the Emperor. Veined-marble arches with flanking fire-fountains mark a special, private entrance reserved for him and his retinue. Blue flames set ablaze arcs of perfumed oils while residual droplets collect in reflecting pools below. Polished stairs lead to a spacious Imperial box where a custom-designed wing seat awaits the Emperor. The seat has been specially crafted with smaller proportions to make the Emperor appear more powerful. It is also the closest seat to the stage, and by tradition, the performers wait until the Emperor nods before they begin their production.

IMPERIAL PRISON

Though the primary prison facility of the Empire is the entire planet of Salusa Secundus — which was also the former throneworld of the Empire, before it was devastated by atomics — sometimes an Emperor needs to keep his enemies close enough to reach them easily. This is why, in addition to the Landsraad Prison elsewhere in the city, Corrinth also maintains the Imperial Prison of Kaitain.

The entrance to the large gray stone structure of the prison is reached by boat, via a labyrinth of canals full of dead ends and bordered by high thorn hedges. 'Traitor's Gate', the entrance is called, and it is decorated with the bloody-yet-preserved heads of four executed prisoners placed on high poles. The heads are hollowed out and fitted with glowglobes, and they shine down like pale jack-o-lanterns on all who enter the prison.

Unlike the Landsraad Prison, the Imperial Prison puts little effort toward the comfort of its inmates. The rooms and corridors are damp and dark and stink of mold and rot. Prisoners' cells are small and just as dank, with stone floors and containment fields to secure the inmates. From time to time, screams echo through the halls — are they coming from the Emperor's infamous torture chambers, or are they recordings intended to engender fear?

THE IMPERIAL ZOO

The zoo on Kaitain is known for its exotic animals and elegantly maintained habitats. A vast team of landscape designers work hard to keep every habitat looking like it has been left to nature, making the area a 'wilderness park' as much as a zoo. While there are cages with forcefield bars, the animals are well fed and cared for and so are rarely ferocious. The zoo contains

tufted saber-bears, ecadroghes, D-wolves, and Laza tigers, among many other animals. There are also water habitats, most notably for Buzzell dolphins who are trained to perform a number of tricks for visitors.

Among the many different types of lions on display are the famous Harmonthep lions. However, they can also be regularly seen elsewhere on Kaitain, as they are used extensively as draft animals, in no small part due to their regal appearance. These enormous beasts have creamy or golden fur and wide paws with saberlike claws. The ones that pull Imperial coaches are well-trained and even perform a few tricks such as kneeling and roaring on command. They often wear shoes of superlight alloys and some have jewels braided through their manes.

While there are places outside the city for hunting, lions are never the prey. No House would dare hunt the symbol of the Imperial House for sport.

ISHAQ HALL OF MAGNIFICENT DOCUMENTS
Designed and commissioned by Emperor Ishaq XV millennia ago, the once glorious Hall of Magnificent Documents has since been overshadowed by the grandeur of the newer constructions that crowd around it. Despite its fading eminence, the old museum of records still has value as a storehouse of constitutional documents, journals of past emperors, a copy of the Guild Charter, and even what is purported to be the original Great Convention treaty, the cornerstone of Imperial civilization. The senior curator welcomes visitors of all kinds to the echoing corridors of the museum, most commonly students, teachers, and historians.

TIPPING POINT
This is the colloquial name for an unoccupied and distant area of the planet that courtly life has yet to reach. It is one of the plainer parts of the planet and has little suitable land for farming or building. It is a place of rain and occasional storms as well as wild temperature fluctuations. The weather-control technicians use this part of the planet to balance the forces they hold in check and release some of the pent-up stress on the environment. No one outside the science team knows the reason for its odd weather, and the technicians dread the day anyone decides to build anywhere near here.



BODYGUARD

DRIVE		STATEMENT
DUTY:	7	I will protect my charge.
FAITH:	5	
JUSTICE:	5	
POWER:	6	
TRUTH:	5	

SKILL		FOCUSES
BATTLE:	7	Evasive Action, Unarmed Combat
COMMUNICATE:	4	
DISCIPLINE:	5	
MOVE:	6	Unobtrusive
UNDERSTAND:	5	

Traits: Fighter, Observant

TALENTS

- **Constantly Watching:** Whenever the bodyguard attempts a skill test to detect danger or hidden enemies, they reduce the difficulty by 2, to a minimum of 0. In addition, once per scene, when an enemy chooses to keep the initiative, they can increase the cost to do so by +2.
- Rapid Recovery: Once per scene, at the start of their turn, the bodyguard may add +2 to Momentum in order to remove a complication which represents an injury. In addition, they may pay the same to avoid injury one additional time during a conflict.

Assets: Defensive Shield, Kindjal, Maula Pistol

Scanning every room, eyeing every person who comes near, and trying to remain unobtrusive, bodyguards are an ever-present sight at any gathering of Landsraad members.

These people were often soldiers, assassins, spies, and warriors in a previous life. Now, they serve a House, using their skills and willing to put their own lives on the line to protect their charges.

Out of necessity, these are some of the few people truly trusted by the aristocracy.

EXAMPLE BODYGUARDS

- **Jayse Siazon** was raised on Salusa Secundus, and managed to stow away in one of the supply ships. While an excellent fighter, he feared he would not be accepted as a Sardaukar and so made his escape. He has the skills of an elite warrior but must do what he can to avoid drawing attention to himself. If his true past was known, he would be executed upon discovery.
- **Sanada Rhoh** trained in one of the best assassin academies run by House Spinnette on Draemh. Now she uses her expertise to gather, and protect, Landsraad secrets for House Ningale. She looks average and unintimidating, which has proved both useful in her work and a surprise for those who mistake her for an easy target.
- **Fen Koulsoumi** is a formidable fighter who learned their trade as a gladiator until they bought their way out. They now make a lot of solaris for their work as a bodyguard. They can also afford to be picky about who employs them, and they never work for those who support gladiatorial games.



SCENARIO HOOK

- **Leander Scaros**, the young heir of a noble House, has walked into a trap while visiting a tiny, exclusive club on Kaitain. His bodyguard, Ko, needs to figure out a way to get them out of the club alive and off the planet. She'll need all the allies she can find ... and she's willing to pay handsomely for the help.

Confidante

Drive		Statement
Duty:	5	
Faith:	6	
Justice:	5	
Power:	5	
Truth:	7	A secret is sacred and dangerous.

Skill		Focuses
Battle:	4	
Communicate:	7	Inspiration, Listening
Discipline:	6	Composure
Move:	5	
Understand:	5	

Traits: Domestic Servant, Loyal

Talents

- Passive Scrutiny: When the confidante enters a scene, they may ask one question of the players as if they'd spent Momentum/Threat to obtain information.

Assets: Cone of Silence, Aristocratic Contacts, Household Goods

They wear simple uniforms, lack highborn accents, and don't smell of expensive perfume, but they wield a surprising amount of power.

From the groundskeepers to the Warmaster, these are the people who work for a House and have earned the trust of those in power. Often loyal to a fault, these people act as advisors and counselors. However, some confidantes have been known to be spies or even assassins. Trusting anyone is a risky thing for any noble.

If it becomes known that an individual knows a noble's secrets, rivals and enemies will target them. It is in a confidante's best interests to protect themselves and the intelligence they have with the utmost discretion.

Example Confidante

- **Tarren Lilt** is the valet to the ruler of House Maros and, as such, they overhear much of what's happening in the Imperium, especially since House Maros caters to the elite of the elite with their Maros Deer venison.
- **Jannezea Tir** is the personal pilot and driver for the heir to one of the most influential Houses in the Landsraad. Jannezea is both an employee and a friend. She happily gives grounded, practical advice.
- **Quill Adafir** is the housekeeper for a wealthy, well-connected merchant. Quill sees and hears everything that goes on ... and takes out the trash, literally and figuratively. As a result, he has insights into upcoming trends and power shifts within the Landsraad.



Scenario Hooks

- Delara is the personal secretary to Byron, heir to a powerful House, and she's looking for someone to help Byron disappear. He wants to leave the aristocracy to be with the man he loves (an assistant cook that his parents would never approve of), and Delara wishes to help him.

Scheming Noble

Drive		Statement
Duty:	5	
Faith:	5	
Justice:	5	
Power:	7	Ambition is rewarded.
Truth:	6	

Skill		Focuses
Battle:	4	
Communicate:	6	Deception
Discipline:	5	
Move:	5	
Understand:	7	House Politics, Imperial Politics

Traits: Aristocracy, Ambitious

Talents

- **Subtle Words**: When a noble attempts a **Communicate** test, and they buy one or more dice by spending Threat, they may create a new trait for free on the character they have spoken to, which reflects their influence upon their thoughts or mood.

Assets: Blackmail Materials, Recording Devices, Luxury Goods for Bribes

Those from the aristocracy conspire against each other constantly. There is always someone swooping in to try to take advantage of every shift in power, spread salacious gossip that could tear down a rival House, or enact a treacherous plan.

Devious and duplicitous, these nobles are clever, driven, and paranoid. Tangling with one may very well result in regret, while working with one could be hugely rewarding.

There's a reason they say, "Never trust a noble."

Example Scheming Nobles

- **Bhaslien Verkulk** is the thirteenth child of Marchioness Verkulk and is very unlikely to inherit, well, anything. He is determined to change that. Whether he succeeds his mother in leading House Verkulk or manages to take over another House either completely works for him. He's not picky; he's just power-hungry.
- **Declan Wieven** is the power behind his House, which has had a deadly rivalry with another House for centuries. Both have a long and complex history that makes it hard to truly determine who was originally at fault. Declan has decided to destroy his enemy completely. He is forming a plan to force the rival House into going rogue. Now, he just needs the right allies.
- **Shirri Faan** is the eligible eldest child of her House, which specializes in manufacturing high-quality Holtzman field generators that are used throughout the Imperium. Competitors want to either dismantle the House or control its manufacturing expertise. Shirri is using her unmarried status, and the lure of inheriting the leadership of the House as her spouse, to draw out her House's enemies and ruin them before they can do the same to her House.

Scenario Hook

- The heir to a House is looking for any kind of leverage they can use to discredit a rival House and ruin its reputation within the Landsraad. They're willing to provide a hefty purse of solaris or one of their House's small luxury shuttles (that they're famous for) in exchange for anything from information on tawdry affairs to the reason their enemy gets special, secret privileges from the Guild.



SOCIALITE

DRIVE		STATEMENT
DUTY:	5	
FAITH:	7	I believe most strongly in myself.
JUSTICE:	5	
POWER:	6	
TRUTH:	5	

SKILL		FOCUSES
BATTLE:	4	
COMMUNICATE:	7	Charm, Listening
DISCIPLINE:	5	
MOVE:	5	
UNDERSTAND:	6	Imperial Politics

Traits: Wealthy, Fashionable

TALENTS

- **Hidden Motives**: When an opponent fails an **Understand** or **Communicate** test against a socialite, the socialite may immediately create a trait which reflects a mistaken belief the target has about them.

Their jewelry chimes and their clothes whisper of wealth with every movement. With more solaris than sense, socialites are reckless, indulgent, and entitled. They battle their boredom by making up rivalries with each other, pushing their children to accomplish more than their peers' offspring, providing the rarest delicacies at dinner parties, documenting the most outrageous adventures, and chasing the most expensive trends they can find.

Though they often have a deep understanding of the social hierarchy and political ins and outs of the aristocracy, they rarely if ever use their knowledge for good. In the past, socialites have irreparably damaged ecosystems, plundered cultural sites, ruined Houses, dismantled societies, and upended the social order, all for their own amusement.

Within the Imperium, socialites are both useless and incredibly dangerous.

Assets: Social Network, Extensive Wardrobe, Personal Ornithopter, Rare Wine Collection

EXAMPLE SOCIALITE

- **Telrec March** is a distant family member of a wealthy House. He will never rule, but he has plenty of money and a glut of time, which he spends sponsoring competitors in any races or gladiatorial fights he can find. Whether these competitions are official or underground doesn't matter to him.
- **Irene Hona** will inherit her House, but before then, she intends to live as freely and lavishly as possible. She travels the Imperium as a wealthy tourist who wants adrenaline-pumping adventure without any real danger. She's also willing to pay, and risk others' lives, to make it happen.
- **Savria** Knot's wife is a successful and prosperous merchant who sells the intoxicating honeyed snails of Fawjiwn VI. But Savria is very jealous of her wife's success, and so she spends all her time attending and throwing extravagant parties in exotic locations throughout the Known Universe, just to spend her wife's money out of spite.



SCENARIO HOOK

- To outshine his peers, socialite Casper wants one of the vicious crocodiles from Niem XVIII as the main course for his next dinner party. It's a risky venture on a perilous planet, but Casper has the solaris to make it worthwhile.

Weak Noble

Drive		Statement
Duty:	5	
Faith:	6	
Justice:	5	
Power:	7	I want it, and I deserve it.
Truth:	5	

Skill		Focuses
Battle:	7	Dirty Fighting, Sneak Attacks
Communicate:	5	
Discipline:	5	
Move:	6	Unobtrusive
Understand:	4	

Traits: Aristocrat, Overwhelmed

Talents

- **Cautious (Communicate)**: When the noble attempts a test using **Communicate**, and they buy additional d20s by spending Momentum/Threat, they may reroll a single d20 in that dice pool.

Assets: Defensive Shield, Bodyguards, Slip-Tip

The Landsraad is a savage, brutal society. Nobles come into power, play the game, spend their money in the right places, and make their moves. But sometimes, instead of elevating their Houses, they expose their vulnerabilities: their utter incompetence in the critical arenas of diplomacy and politics. This is especially dangerous when the noble in question doesn't realize their own limitations.

Not all nobles can scheme, plot, and duel with the best of them. Unfortunately, many who can't, believe they can. These weak nobles live their lives with targets on their backs. The smart ones become desperate, searching for experienced advisors. The unwise ones forge ahead, often digging their own graves. And when other Houses smell weakness, they strike like the predators they are. This is how Houses fall.

Example Weak Noble

- **Freya Wargrom's** House was a rising star within the Landsraad, until Freya became the ruler. She is sure that she can turn things around and her House will once again wield immense power at any moment. But she is overly optimistic and overestimates her own abilities.
- **Trev Hillever**, the consort of his House's ruler, fancies himself a schemer. He plots and plans with a single-minded, unrelenting energy — and spends the solaris to match. None of his machinations have come close to succeeding, however.
- **Girard Earl** rules a House that, over the centuries, has had leaders who follow a very nontraditional and controversial branch of the Orange Catholic faith. It has made them a lot of enemies. Girard is following in his predecessors' footprints with their fanatical zeal and abrasive personality.



Scenario Hook

- Ennio, the new ruler of a wealthy, mining-focused House, is an incompetent fool. His sister, Liviana, is searching for someone to either trick him into making the right decisions or remove him from power altogether. The stakes are too high to leave him in charge if he can't be controlled.

The Sardaukar

The Sardaukar are the most feared warriors in the Known Universe. These superb fighters are the lethal whip with which the Padishah Emperor punishes those who dare oppose him. The mere threat of their deployment looms over the Houses of the Landsraad. For thousands of years the Sardaukar have been the ultimate display of Imperial power, and the very mention of their name has been sufficient to stymie rebellions and the plots of jealous nobles. From the Imperial prison planet of Salusa Secundus, the Sardaukar are trained, quartered, and sent out into the universe at the behest of the Emperor and only the Emperor. Their lives are a dichotomy of spartan training and indulgent pleasure as a reward for their service.

Salusa Secundus

The precise origins of the Sardaukar are a mystery to most, perhaps even to themselves. What is known is that the Sardaukar corps arose in the generations after Salusa Secundus was ravaged by atomic weapons, forcing House Corrino to move the Imperial throne to Kaitain. Emperor Hassik Corrino III chose to view the decimated planet as a boon, investing in it as a planetwide prison. Salusa Secundus had previously been a lush planet with vibrant seasons and numerous biomes, but it was now reduced to little more than wasteland, scourged by extreme and unpredictable weather events, with dangerously irradiated soil. Only the hardiest flora and fauna survived, and over the ensuing generations they would slowly evolve to match the brutal conditions that now prevailed.

Salusa Secundus's population now consisted entirely of prisoners and their guards. Those condemned to a lifetime of imprisonment on the planet were victims of the Emperor's cruelty. Only those who had committed the most heinous treasons (or gained the Emperor's darkest enmity for some other reason) were sent to Salusa Secundus. It is generally believed that a death sentence was a more merciful fate than to languish and die by inches in the brutal environment of the prison planet.

Over the generations, the population of the penal colony became hardened and adapted to the challenges of their lives. Prisoner uprisings occurred that were barely put down by the guards, and often only after the Emperor had deployed significant reinforcements from off-world. The fighting prowess of those able to survive on Salusa Secundus was second to none, a fact that the Padishah Emperors of House Corrino came to recognize. Though never spoken openly, some outside House Corrino came to suspect the truth: that the Imperial house was utilizing the harsh conditions of their prison planet as a training ground for their troops.



In the present, Salusa Secundus still functions as a prison planet for the most dangerous criminals of the Imperium, but it is indeed also the training ground and home of the Sardaukar. The planet bears a single noteworthy city, Zimia, home to the world's sole spaceport. Smaller surface fortresses and prison facilities dot the wastes. However, the majority of the Sardaukar barracks and facilities are subterranean, hidden deep beneath the surface to avoid the lingering radiation and catastrophic storms that wrack the planet's surface.

Sardaukar Induction and Training

As far as most residents of the Imperium are concerned, the Sardaukar are simply elite troops garnered from soldiers raised by the Imperial levy. The Landsraad is discouraged from inquiring too deeply into the affairs of the Imperial army, and most nobles are content to consider it a closed matter. In truth, the Sardaukar are mainly drawn from two pools: the prison population of Salusa Secundus, and the offspring of those already within the corps.

Generations ago, the rulers of House Corrino became aware that life on Salusa Secundus left those prisoners who survived hardened, vicious, and increasingly difficult to control. Precisely when and how the Corrinos began to forge their prisoners into soldiers is information lost to the mists of time. However, it certainly began several thousand years in the past.

The mortality rate among new prisoners on Salusa Secundus is a brutal 60 percent, with most succumbing to the unimaginably harsh conditions or the hands of the guards or of other inmates. Those prisoners who survive a few years of grueling labor and fights are conditioned physically and mentally by their struggles. This is the stock from which the Sardaukar corps fills its ranks.

When the guards, themselves Sardaukar, deem a prisoner ready, that individual is pulled from their routine without ceremony. Bound and hooded, the initiate is taken to a place of special ceremony in the wastes. There, that prisoner and others taken at the same time are unhooded and forced to kneel. Before them, on a dais, a burseg (commanding officer) of the Sardaukar looks down, while behind each prisoner stands another Sardaukar, blade unsheathed. The burseg tells the prisoners that they have been offered a choice of reprieve or mercy. If they choose reprieve, then a life of endless duty in the Emperor's service will begin, a life of suffering and privation. If



they choose the Emperor's mercy, they will be granted a swift death. The prisoners must choose immediately. Any who hesitate or ask for mercy are immediately beheaded by the Sardaukar at their backs. The burseg reads a passage derived from the Orange Catholic Bible, altered to emphasize the rewards of undying loyalty to the Emperor, while the Sardaukar before him mark each of their prisoners' foreheads with a mixture of crematory ashes and blood drawn from whichever prisoners were just executed. The newly initiated are then taken to the barracks and training complexes beneath the surface of the planet. They will spend much of the next few years of their lives here, should they survive the grueling training regimen.

Sardaukar training is punishing in the extreme. Initiates are drilled endlessly in every type of combat and portable weapons training, with an emphasis on personal combat utilizing personal shields and swords. They will be forced to survive alone or in small groups on the hostile surface of Salusa Secundus for weeks at a time. And all the while, they are subjected to intense rhetorical indoctrination. Sardaukar are told, over and over, that they are without peer, that their only master is the Emperor, and that their service to him is a holy trust described in a specially prepared version of the Orange Catholic Bible. Personal religious interpretation is discouraged by the bursegs who oversee indoctrination, and while the fervor of the Sardaukar corps is intense, their relationship with religion remains abstract, with the true object of their adoration being the Emperor himself.

During their years of training, infighting and even murder is not discouraged by the corps. Sardaukar training occasionally pits initiates against one another in bloody duels. Those caught murdering a fellow initiate will be whipped within an inch of their lives, but ultimately the corps considers this one of the myriad methods by which only the most fearsome and cunning warriors will become full Sardaukar. One in three of them will die during their training. The recruits are indoctrinated to the understanding that being Sardaukar ais the highest honor anyone can attain. There are simply Sardaukar, the Emperor, and those who are not worthy to be Sardaukar. As a result, while they are constantly pitched in duels to the death during training, once they have attained the rank of Sardaukar, they rarely fight their comrades.

Those who survive training graduate in a ceremony in which they ritually take the life of a prisoner of Salusa Secundus, the blood drained into a communal basin and blessed by a presiding burseg who welcomes them into the elite league of the Sardaukar, the Emperor's blades. Those who fail to reach the standard required of a Sardaukar are sacrificed in one of many secret blood rituals carried out almost continually.



Rank and its privileges

There are only two officer grades among the Sardaukar: bashar and burseg, although experience is recognized as an unofficial marker of rank between soldiers. Bashars lead units as field commanders, whereas the higher ranking bursegs act as generals, in a more strategic command role. The best Sardaukar can confidently expect to be promoted to bashar sooner or later, but few ever become bursegs.

Bursegs oversee the deployment of whole legions and rarely engage in personal combat, though they are still peerless fighters, should the need arise. The bursegs also enjoy expanded privileges as reward for their duties. In recent years, Shaddam IV has greatly expanded the ranks of the bursegs to further ensure the loyalty of the Sardaukar to the throne.

Between deployments, the Sardaukar enjoy the rewards of their service. While they live spartan lives by most measures, they are also afforded occasional recreations that would make the most jaded nobles of the Landsraad green with envy. Pleasure palaces riddle the subterranean complexes of Salusa Secundus, and almost any interest or vice is made available to the Sardaukar seeking recreation, provided it does not impede their combat prowess or potentially confuse their loyalties. The bursegs and other high-ranking soldiers are even granted their own expansive living quarters, often living lives of extreme opulence between deployments.

The Sardaukar see no contradiction in these pleasures compared to the austerity of their upbringing and training. They believe that by proving themselves Sardaukar they have earned the right to any pleasure they wish. But if they wish to continue enjoying them, they must remain worthy of the name Sardaukar.

Born unto death

Not all Sardaukar are drawn from the prison stock of Salusa Secundus. The Sardaukar often take spouses among the pleasure servants provided for them and the children of these unions are raised from birth to serve. The environment of Salusa Secundus is so harsh that more than half of the children born on the planet die before age eleven. Taught from infancy to use cruelty and terror to weaken their opponents, these children are instructed in personal combat and small-unit tactics from as soon as they can walk.

Early indoctrination of Salusa Secundus's children has the added benefit of creating fanatical Imperial loyalists willing to use their ferocity and near-suicidal disregard for personal safety in defense of the Emperor. It's no surprise that the majority of the burseg leadership comes from these warriors.

Life among the Sardaukar

Fully inducted Sardaukar are assigned to a unit within a battalion, within a legion. Their unit often, but not always, includes their co-trainees. From this moment on, their drills and training decrease moderately, and they may find themselves moved to active duty.

Sardaukar typically first see deployment as part of a force sent to pacify a military threat to the Imperial House, or more commonly, in support of a House in control of an asset critical to the throne's power. The Emperor never makes his forces available casually, and their very presence is a potent reminder of the price of his displeasure. Typically, a small number of Sardaukar will be deployed in support of a larger force drawn from the greater Imperial army or from the standing military of another Great House of the Landsraad. Even the presence of a single unit can turn the tide of a battle, and sometimes just the rumor that Sardaukar are present can be enough for an enemy force to seek parley or surrender.

If unleashed, the Sardaukar are typically utilized as fearsome shock troops, dropping on suspensors from aerial transports or other rapid mobile deployment platforms from which they seek to cut out the heart of the enemy's best troops or decapitate their command section, sometimes literally. They may also be utilized as saboteurs or guerrilla combatants, softening an enemy force thorough the application of terror tactics. In any conflict, the sheer brutality and lethal skill of the Sardaukar ensure a quick victory, and they have never been defeated as a force unto themselves.

Deployed Sardaukar are always under the command of at least a bashar, if not a burseg. Individuals of burseg rank or higher are sometimes attached to allied forces as military advisors and, on occasion, as bodyguards for high-ranking individuals. Only officers of bashar rank or higher are considered sufficiently indoctrinated and personally skilled enough for these more sensitive assignments and the political ramifications that may ensue.

When deployed alongside other troops, the Sardaukar almost invariably take strategic command. Typically, the Sardaukar will bivouac separately from allied troops, and commanders will dissuade their own troops from fraternizing with the Emperor's killers. The Sardaukar contempt for allied warriors is notorious; they think nothing of utilizing such forces as cannon fodder or in sacrificial feint maneuvers. Sardaukar who feel that allied troops have not shown them proper respect have been known to make their displeasure known, with lethal results. Sardaukar consider anyone other than themselves (except the Emperor) to be no better than cattle. Any relationship a Sardaukar makes outside their comrades is

more like that with a pet than a peer. It is this contempt that allows them to visit utter brutality on their enemies and care nothing for any allied non-Sardaukar troops who fall beside them.

All Sardaukar are experts in an astonishing array of combat techniques and associated military skills, but some are singled out for specialist training. Reconnaissance, long-term insurgency, and assassination are all specialties that the corps often requires. Many times, training in such specialties is accompanied by promotion to the rank of bashar or even burseg, especially for those Sardaukar chosen to take on duties relating to indoctrination and spirituality among their cohorts. The rare older soldiers who do not fall in battle often become a form of priest and teacher to pass their skills and indoctrination to the next generation. Most fight until they die, or they request suicide missions so they may die in the active service of the Emperor.

Officers are tutored in indoctrination with an edition of the Orange Catholic Bible that has been specially prepared for the Sardaukar. This revised edition serves to shape the Sardaukar into what amounts to a cult, with the Emperor as their object of worship. For millennia, the religious fervor of the Sardaukar was a powerful motivating factor, but in more recent times, they have taken a more pragmatic approach to their service. Sardaukar spirituality still shapes their lives, but more in its form than its spirit. The shared rituals of the corps strengthen bonds, but their spirituality is increasingly hollow and their motivations have grown more materialistic. Some members of House Corrino have noted this degeneration with concern, but the Sardaukar are still such fearsome and undefeated warriors that these concerns have not been taken seriously.

Sardaukar Player Characters

The Sardaukar are the most elite soldiers in the Known Universe and it's only natural that some players may want to portray them, brutal though they are. All Sardaukar are unwaveringly loyal to the Emperor, and their dedication to their Sardaukar comrades borders on religious zealotry. A Sardaukar character in a mixed group may be there as a military advisor or bodyguard but also as the eyes of the Emperor. Sardaukar characters will likely be held at arm's length by others, a state of affairs that suits these peerless soldiers just fine. However, while they may only be loyal to the Emperor, if the Emperor commands them to serve another for some time, they will give their lives if need be. They will never knowingly act against House Corrino though.

Campaigns featuring all Sardaukar characters are likely to be focused on military endeavors and make for high action stories full of combat, infiltration, and violence. Any player wanting to portray a Sardaukar should double-check with their gamemaster, ensuring that their character concepts are suitable for the game they are running.



Sardaukar Faction Template

"One day the Emperor will send a legion or two of his Sardaukar down here onto Giedi Prime and that'll be the end to the Baron Vladimir Harkonnen."
– Piter de Vries

All Sardaukar are warriors. Despite what other roles they may play in the service of the Emperor, each of them is first and foremost a killer. Whether born into the army as a native of Salusa Secundus or pressed into service from that planet's penal colonies, every Sardaukar is a peerless warrior utterly devoted to their comrades in arms and their master, the Padishah Emperor. Both male and female Sardaukar are trained, tested, and treated equally in every way, with no concessions made for gender. The organization is a ruthless meritocracy. Those who survive will be trained in the manner that will make best use of their talents, whether as lethal shock troopers, infiltrators, or fighting officers. Sardaukar rarely leave the company of their legions, but at times they may be posted by Imperial decree to provide military counsel for one of the Great Houses, or they may act as bodyguards for individuals whom the Emperor favors.

- **Additional Trait:** Sardaukar
- **Suggested Archetypes:** Commander, Duelist, Protector, Scout, Sergeant, Strategist, Tactician, Warrior
- **Mandatory Talents:** Unquestionable Loyalty (House Corrino only). Sardaukar characters may never take the Dual Fealty talent.

New Talents

The following talents are available to Sardaukar characters, but some are also available to Fremen characters, with the gamemaster's permission.

BLOOD RITUAL (SARDAUKAR TALENT)

The blood of your enemies grants you power over them. To anoint yourself with their blood when you have defeated them will make you victorious in your next fight.

If you spend an action to anoint yourself with the blood of an enemy you have killed in this scene, you gain 2 Momentum/Threat.

FANATIC KILLER (SARDAUKAR OR FREMEN TALENT)

Specializing in close-quarter combat, you are an astonishingly efficient killer. Even as you land mortal blows, you are pivoting into position to make your next strike.

Sardaukar doctrine stresses the importance of never resting on success but instead moving inexorably toward the next victory. You gain 1 Momentum each time you attack a foe you have not yet engaged with in this scene.

FEARSOME SPECTACLE (SARDAUKAR TALENT)

The tactics and strikes preferred by the Sardaukar are not merely efficient, they are calculated to sow terror among those who would stand against the will of the Emperor. Those who witness a Sardaukar assault and live remember the shocking violence for the rest of their lives.

If a Sardaukar defeats an enemy, the next attack action taken against that Sardaukar in the current scene automatically fails. If the Sardaukar is an NPC, this also generates 2 Threat.

HIDDEN BLADE (SARDAUKAR TALENT)

Sardaukar are never unarmed. Anything can be a weapon in their hands, no matter how small.

You may spend an action to create a blade asset (for yourself only) in any circumstance, without the need for a test of Momentum/Threat spend.

KILLER REPUTATION (SARDAUKAR TALENT)

Your Sardaukar reputation casts a long shadow over all the people of the Known Universe. Few are brave enough to take up arms against you or those under your protection. The presence of a single Sardaukar is often sufficient to thwart an assassination attempt or subdue an entire crowd.

You may substitute your **Battle** skill in place of **Communicate** or **Discipline** when attempting to dissuade someone from making an attack on you or those under your immediate protection.

LOYAL UNTO DEATH (SARDAUKAR TALENT)

The Sardaukar do not accept defeat; even in death, they prevail. You are prepared to give up your own life at a moment's notice in order to thwart the enemies of the Emperor.

If you are defeated in melee combat, you may make a single strike against your attacker to attempt to defeat them as well. Regardless of the results of this attack, you not only remain defeated but become unconscious and will die if not given medical attention before the end of the scene.

MILITARY COUNSELOR (SARDAUKAR TALENT)

The bashars and bursegs of the Sardaukar are peerless commanders. Having overseen multiple campaigns on behalf of the corps, they are veteran experts in virtually every type of combat known to humanity. Whether overseeing small-unit insurgencies or planetary invasions, they have experienced virtually any kind of combat imaginable.

If you (or those you advise) take the time to consider a plan of attack or defense in an upcoming Duel, Skirmish, or Warfare conflict, you may move one asset to an adjacent zone before the first round begins, without making a test.

SACRIFICE (SARDAUKAR TALENT)

As a Sardaukar, only you are worth sparing in any battle. The rest are simply pawns to be used to gain victory. By sacrificing them, you might gain advantage against your enemies.

You may give any allied non-Sardaukar a 'Wounded' trait during a physical conflict to gain 2 Momentum/Threat. You are not necessarily making an attack but maneuvering an ally into a position where they will get hurt, to grant you an advantage. The same ally cannot be targeted again with this talent for the rest of the scene.

SILENT ATTACK (SARDAUKAR OR FREMEN TALENT)

You move like the wind and strike in silence. Few enemies who fail to see you approach survive your first strike.

If your target is unaware of you, then your initial attack dice pool is 3d20 rather than 2d20 for your first attack.

STRIKE FROM THE SHADOWS (SARDAUKAR OR FREMEN TALENT)

You are as silent as the night and adept at flanking your enemies and ambushing them.

If you are making a stealth test with the express purpose of getting close to a target to make an attack, the Difficulty is reduced by 1.

Using Sardaukar Characters

Sardaukar present unique challenges both to portray as characters and for a gamemaster to integrate into a campaign. If you wish to play a Sardaukar, be sure your gamemaster will allow them as an option. These zealous soldiers can be played in pure Sardaukar campaigns or integrated into more diverse groups, depending on the nature of your campaign.

The Emperor's Killers

A campaign composed entirely of Sardaukar characters offers a very different way to play. In such a campaign, the characters might be the hand-picked members of an elite unit, chosen to carry out an extraordinarily dangerous mission on behalf of the Emperor. Each character might be a specialist with a skill set of specific use to their mission, with one character representing the bashar leading the squad. The campaign might begin with the characters summoned from their barracks to a briefing in which they learn the nature of their mission. The nature of their mission might involve organizing an insurgency, carrying out reconnaissance duties, or even a political assassination. Their superior officer gives them whatever information is deemed necessary (which may well be less than enough to please the characters), informs them of the rules of engagement, makes available certain equipment and weapons, and arranges Guild travel if need be. Once briefed, it will fall to the characters to achieve victory, knowing full well that it would be better to die than return in defeat.

Alternately, the characters might be the upper echelon of the Sardaukar, officers of burseg rank or higher who have been tasked to oversee a vast military campaign on behalf of the Imperial throne. In this type of campaign, the characters might engage in less personal combat in place of making vast strategic decisions taking place across an entire planet or even multiple worlds. The characters would engage in combat on the largest scale, utilizing whole armies as game pieces. This type of play would be further complicated by the need for the Sardaukar to work with or oversee regular troops drawn from the Imperial army or allied Houses. The characters would need to ensure that their military aims are achieved while engaging in a degree of political engagement with their allies. And as always, the Emperor expects a flawless victory to be delivered by his finest warriors.

Detached Service

Sardaukar are sometimes utilized as bodyguards and military advisors on detached service, situations which allow for them to be integrated into more typical types of campaigns. Sardaukar chosen for such duties will first be subjected to ruthless loyalty tests, ensuring that only the most unquestionably faithful will serve far from the eyes and ears of their comrades.

Nobles or other members of the loftiest classes of the Imperium who are also high in the Emperor's esteem might be granted a Sardaukar bodyguard in certain circumstances. Sometimes, this might be done to counter a specific threat, but it can also be done to simply show that an individual is favored by the throne. In some cases it is done to remind the individual that the Emperor is watching them. In any case, a Sardaukar would be assigned to protect this individual from harm, no matter the personal cost. These bodyguards are ruthless in the extreme and will carry out their mission without regard for the safety and security of anyone but their ward. Such a bodyguard has no true loyalty to the individual whom they protect but is simply carrying out the Emperor's will (and will kill their charge in a heartbeat if the Emperor commands it). In some cases, a Sardaukar bodyguard may come into conflict with other members of a noble's entourage. The Master of Spies of a House is unlikely to appreciate the intrusion of an outsider, particularly an outsider who they can safely assume will report all they see and hear to the Imperial throne when their duty is complete. A noble can trust their physical safety without question to their Sardaukar bodyguard, but not their secrets.

In some cases, a Sardaukar officer may be attached to the retinue of a House to serve as a military advisor. This scenario is most common when the Emperor wishes to see a House succeed in a military endeavor without committing his own soldiers or becoming too overtly involved in a politically treacherous situation. These bursegs are chosen not just for their strategic acumen and personal loyalty but also for their wits and cunning. In many ways Sardaukar advisors are political appointments backed by their formidable reputations. Nobles may secretly wish they had never been 'gifted' such an advisor to their council, knowing full well that the Sardaukar's presence is meant as a grim reminder of the Emperor's own power and political interests.





Chapter 2:
The Outsiders

Here lies a toppled god –
His fall was not a small one.
We did but build his pedestal,
A narrow and a tall one.

— Tleilaxu Epigram

Ix

The ninth world in the Alkalurops star system, the planet Ix is a place of technological wonder and well-protected secrets. Devastated during the Butlerian Jihad, the people of Ix went underground, where they spent centuries developing ever-advancing technology. Over time, the devastated surface has recovered, though 90 percent of all Ixians still live in their underground cities and settlements.

Home to House Vernius, Ix was also the site of its fall during the reign of Elrood Corrino IX. Incensed that Vernius technological advances were undercutting Imperial profits, the Emperor secretly backed a Bene Tleilax invasion, shifting control of Ix from House Vernius to the mysterious Tleilaxu. After House Vernius was reinstated, a new Technocrat Council gradually developed to assist the earl in running the planet. However, the council has gradually gained more and more power in recent years, turning the current earl, Bronso Vernius, into largely a figurehead.

While not in control of the Technocrat Council, the Tleilaxu have quietly gained a great degree of influence. This has enabled them to steer many of the technological developments on Ix. The addition of Tleilaxu science has allowed some impressive leaps in technology in recent years and made Ix a powerful force in Imperial politics. Everyone from the Emperor to simple merchants covet Ixian technology, though some wonder if Ixian ingenuity at times steps over the clear technological limits set by the Butlerian Edicts.

Technology and the Butlerian Edicts

After the great conflict known as the Butlerian Jihad, lasting prohibitions and limitations were put in place for technological development. The chief focus of these limits is defined by the Orange Catholic Bible, which states, "*Thou shalt not make a machine in the likeness of a human mind.*" This edict not only has doomed Houses and individuals who seek to revive the Thinking Machine, it also gave rise to the development of Mentats.

What constitutes a Thinking Machine is a product of politics, science, and religion. Pure artificial intelligence is obviously forbidden, but so too are any 'smart' technologies that draw the animosity of the Mentats, Bene Gesserit, or numerous other powerful groups. These developments may or may not be purely Thinking Machines, but something in their construction worries or frustrates those in power. Thus, a practice drone bolted in place in a palace training room might be acceptable, even if its circuits contain some rudimentary pattern-recognition technology. However, a humanoid robot is likely to offend, even if it's a purely remote-controlled device. It is important to remember that Butlerian Edicts are fueled not only by Imperial law but by religious dedication, making feelings and belief as important a factor as the letter of the law.

The practical fluidity in the Butlerian Edicts means that researchers and inventors must step very carefully with their creations. If a work contains forbidden technology, it may make its creator an outcast and criminal if the wrong people decide it's a threat. Conversely, with enough powerful patrons and allies, one can develop various questionable technologies and depend on enthusiastic defense of their inventions — for as long as those alliances hold.

Since the Jihad, Ixian technology has focused on non-Thinking Machines and advanced mechanical constructs, all lacking dangerous artificial intelligence. In addition, under the Tleilaxu influence, biological sciences have added to the Ixian technological dominance. On the surface, these developments are wondrous, even life-changing, but always within the confines of the old laws. At least, officially.

RULES MADE TO BE BENT

At times during history, cabals or overambitious inventors among the Ixians have sought to bend the Butlerian restrictions. Despite their dangers, machines that accomplish more with less human direction are valuable, and that value leads to increased influence and power for those who create them. The most famous example of such forbidden research comes during the fall of House Vernius, when the Tleilaxu claimed Vernius was conducting extensive research into Thinking Machines. This incident justified the Tleilaxu invasion, despite being almost impossible to confirm due to the secretive nature of Ixian society. However, it remains the most well-known (if unproven) example of such violations.

While there are many eyes watching Ix for signs of breaking Butlerian Edicts, the usefulness of their technology allows them to skirt the letter of the law. Many people are willing to give them the 'benefit of the doubt' as long as the Ixians continue to profess their dedication to the rules. However, their devices still feel a little tainted and many people avoid them entirely, to be on the safe side. While this concern is common, people are not as repulsed by Ixian devices as they are by those of the secretive Tleilaxu. As such, the Tleilaxu influence on Ix allows the Tleilaxu a more palatable avenue to deliver their technology into the marketplaces of the Imperium.

Gamemasters may create their own technological conspiracies, heresies, and illegal projects for player characters to investigate, prevent, or even acquire and exploit. Just remember the prohibitions on artificial intelligence exist for a reason: humanity suffered much under the yoke of its former mechanical masters.

The Government of Ix

While most planets are ruled by a single House Major, Ix is very different. Several different layers of government and rulership have changed the political landscape of the planet and left many different factions vying for absolute power.

HOUSE VERNIUS

The ruling House of Ix has seen varying fortunes throughout its history. In its early days, House Vernius rebuilt Ix to become a political and technological power, and it rose to become one of the most influential and respected of the Great Houses. Then, after falling out with the Emperor and making enemies of the Tleilaxu, it was forced to go renegade. Eventually restoring its status, the House under the reign of Shaddam IV and beyond lost much of its power, with its heads becoming puppets of the Technocrat Council. For more detail on House Vernius, see **The Great Game**, p. 62–63.

THE TECHNOCRAT COUNCIL

While officially ruled by a controlling House like the majority of other Imperial worlds, Ix possesses other administrative and political bodies, limiting the power of its ruling House. Various influential technological groups, inventor cabals, and research conglomerates form the Technocrat Council. This political entity may not possess the ability to utterly depose their ruling House, but it severely limits the House's power. Those who displease or embarrass the Council find themselves relegated to the position of figurehead at best, or lackey at worst. Agents of the Technocrats and the nobility often work both with and against each other, protecting the world from outside interference while investigating their peers for any advantage their masters can exploit.

THE CONFEDERACY OF IX

Since the ousting of their former House and the rise of Tleilaxu control, the government ofIx is sometimes referred to as the Confederacy of Ix. The Technocrat Council is at the head of this confederacy, so the term applies to the government as a whole and the 'support of their peers' that the council needs to rule effectively. This term suggests the planet's new rulers more completely embrace the idea of governance not solely by a ruling House but by an alliance of various groups. The details and structure of the confederacy are not generally known to outsiders, mainly because they change so often.

THE SECOND FALL OF HUMANITY

One of the reasons Leto II pursues the Golden Path of his visions is the glimpse he receives of the alternative. In this unrealized divergence, the Ixians develop self-improving hunter-seeker machines that eventually destroy humanity. While these events were ultimately prevented by the God Emperor, they illustrate the willingness of the Ixians to experiment with forbidden technology and the vast damage possible if they lose control of their creations. Unless prevented from exploring similar research avenues, who knows what dangers the Ixians could unleash on the Known Universe?

IXIAN PLAYER CHARACTERS

Players are free to create characters from Ixian agents of House Vernius in the same way as any other player character. However, it is rare for an Ixian to serve with another House without a special connection between the two, such as between Vernius and the Atreides. This means that while there is no Ixian faction template, such characters should be treated as faction characters in terms of loyalty, unless all the player characters are agents of House Vernius.

Ixian characters have the same range of abilities and skills as any other House agent, but they tend to have more focus on science and technology. They may even have a secret connection to the Tleilaxu. The gamemaster may also allow such characters access to special Ixian devices as assets.

This confederacy is made up of a selection of scientific cabals, many of which are heavily influenced by the Tleilaxu. The political power of any one cabal will rise or fall depending on the value and success of their current research. As well as the usual political manipulations of any government, many cabals are looking to disparage the research of their peers to gain more power.

Additionally, House Vernius and the Tleilaxu do their best to manipulate the politics of the confederacy for their own advantage. Interestingly, many of the Tleilaxu agents see Ix as a way to quietly distance themselves from the control of their Tleilaxu masters and build a new powerbase for themselves far from their reach. While Ix is currently controlled by a number of different factions, it is gradually forming a new identity of its own, containing a gestalt of them all. However, the exact details of the various factions and the current influence of the Tleilaxu are up to the gamemaster to decide depending on the needs of their campaign.

The Planet IX

Located in the Alkalurops system, the ninth planet, Ix, earned its name from the old Earth Roman numeral for 'nine'. It is a place dominated by technology and the production and development of new and existing machines.

Despite this focus, the surface of Ix is largely untouched by development; at first glance, the world seems like a natural paradise. Like so many first impressions, this reality is only superficial. Beneath the planet's surface, vast complexes of labs and factories work constantly to build and develop Ixian technology. Access to these underground areas is heavily monitored and highly restricted. This web of secrecy and security helps the Ixians maintain their dominance in the realms of manufacturing and technological development. Other planets, such as Ix's chief competitor Richese, manage to produce or develop impressive machines, but Ixian technological supremacy remains.

Most landmarks on Ix are found underground, with the main spaceport at Ixian Majorius being a noticeable exception.

IXIAN MAJORIUS

A stark contrast to the wilderness and small structures that dominate the surface, Ixian Majorius serves as the main and often only contact point for visitors. Hosting a large modern spaceport with ample facilities for visiting traders, dignitaries, and other travelers, the city is linked to the busy underground by well-patrolled and highly monitored transport lines — both private and public.

The general demeanor of the city can be summed up as "Welcome and enjoy, because this is as far as you're likely to get". The accommodations for visitors are quite luxurious, encouraging them to look no further for a place to stay. Technological wonders charm and entice visitors, especially those who come to purchase high-tech goods. However, the truly innovative or cutting-edge inventions remain guarded secrets in the caverns and tunnels below.

VERNII

The grand capital of Ix and its greatest underground metropolis, Vernii is built to reinforce the hierarchies of Ixian life. The nobility and other elevated groups live on the upper levels, always looking down on their subordinates who populate the lower regions.

Diamond pillars and other geological wonders serve as decoration and structure for the city. The effect is striking, with glittering columns holding rock ceilings and great carved walkways mixing with buildings built using technology seen nowhere else. The wonder of Vernii overcomes and surpasses any ennui from living so long underground, and its inhabitants are often dismissive of most surface settlements.

Travel is accomplished by a mixture of aerial transports, walkways, lifts, and tunnels, which allow movement throughout the city. High-security or wealthy areas are guarded and monitored to keep out interlopers and spies. Reaching the lowest levels of the city is intentionally difficult; these levels are for the lowest workers and most menial of laborers, not visitors or well-placed citizens.

GRAND PALAIS

The Grand Palais of Ix is the residence of the ruling House. Carved from subterranean rock and reinforced against attack, it is a vast fortress made to serve and protect the ruling house and its members' most valued attendants. Private transport tunnels allow for ready escape or unannounced exits if necessary. Built by House Vernius, the Grand Palais was temporarily left devastated and derelict during the Tleilaxu invasion and suboid (see p. 103) uprising. Now rebuilt, the only signs of past violence remain in the form of the occasional patched wall, cracked pillar, or other hint of conflict.

As an established home of a Great House, the Grand Palais is among the most secure and impressive structures in the Known Universe. While primarily meant as a home to the Vernius family, it sports everything expected in a palace, including a guest wing, numerous ballrooms, and a fortified tactical center for the earl and his staff. Though visitors are rare compared to similar palaces elsewhere, the Grand Palais could host the Emperor and be judged appropriate lodgings.

IXIAN SHIPYARDS

Controlled by House VaVar, the Ixian shipyards produce everything from Guild Heighliners to personal shuttlecraft. Allied with House Randal, which develops advanced ship circuitry, House VaVar is one of the most important and wealthy Minor Houses in the Landsraad. The main shipyard is situated on the largest moon, Caliburn, as a matter of practicality, though some supplementary facilities and factories operate on nearby artificial moons. It is still possible to construct a Heighliner in the great cavern under the Grand Palais as the Ixians always used to do, but the new shipyards have proved more efficient in coping with demand.

Despite the number of facilities in the moons, they appear uninhabited and empty to outsiders. As with Ix itself, all the work is done inside the moons, and there are no exterior facilities. Heighliners can leave these interiors using their Holtzman foldspace drives, but there are vast secret doors that can be opened, and disguised volcanoes and caves that grant access to the interior and allow other ships to leave the construction facilities.

OTHER PRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT FACILITIES

Great factories and laboratory complexes are found throughout Ix, all built beneath the surface. At first this was done to avoid the devastated Ixian surface, a casualty of the Butlerian Jihad. However, as time went on, subterranean development remained due to increased security and protection from outsiders. Life beneath the surface is strictly hierarchical, with valuable executives, researchers, and inventors receiving superior treatment and the lowest of the low, including the long-oppressed suboids, living in poverty in the deep dark.

MOONS OF IX

Hosting no natural satellites, Ix nevertheless has six moons: Caliburn, Gramr, Zulfiqar, Durendal, Harpe, and Asi. They are all artificial structures of great sophistication, but each is made to appear barren and natural from the outside. Each serves as home to some Minor House, research base, or other important facility, with the largest, Caliburn, being a hidden shipyard. Durendal is home to House Aldrick, a minor vassal of House Vernius devoted to developing security and surveillance technologies. The other moons' purposes are less clear, and the gamemaster is encouraged to place various secret projects and mysterious organizations tied to Ix on or beneath their surfaces.

DISTANT WORLDS

The rulers of Ix control territory beyond their world, most notably the distant world of the Petra system. They are used as research stations and the home of Minor House Randal which uses Petra II as a base of operations and Petra III for illicit research into forbidden topics, chief among them the creation of new Thinking Machines.

SUBOIDS

Much of menial labor and unsavory work on Ix is performed by the suboids, a class of poor genetically crafted humans whose will has been undermined and broken through centuries of conditioning and oppression. Briefly rising up (due to the influence of Face Dancer infiltrators) and helping overthrow their rulers during the Tleilaxu invasion, they were quickly pacified and returned to servitude by their new rulers once their purpose was served.

While generally human, centuries of toil beneath the surface have changed suboids. They tend toward grayish skin and little-to-no hair. They favor subterranean conditions; surface pressures and light make them uncomfortable. Most suboids are passive and possess muted emotions and decision-making capacity. That said, the suboids have rebelled against their masters in the past and could one day do so again.

Gamemasters using Ix in their campaign can decide how much the recent rebellion changed the suboids. The Tleilaxu may have lit a fuse when they manipulated the suboids into rebelling against House Vernius, or the centuries of oppressive conditioning might be too much for the suboids to overcome without additional assistance.

SUBOID PLAYER CHARACTERS

Suboids aren't usually suitable options for player characters. Their lives and capacity are too restricted to enjoy the freedom and flexibility of most adventurers, nobles, and House operatives. However, the gamemaster may allow their players to portray heroic, independent offshoots of the suboids if it suits their campaign. Just remember that such individuals are rare outsiders among their people and likely seen as dangerous liabilities by their Ixian superiors.

New Equipment and Technology

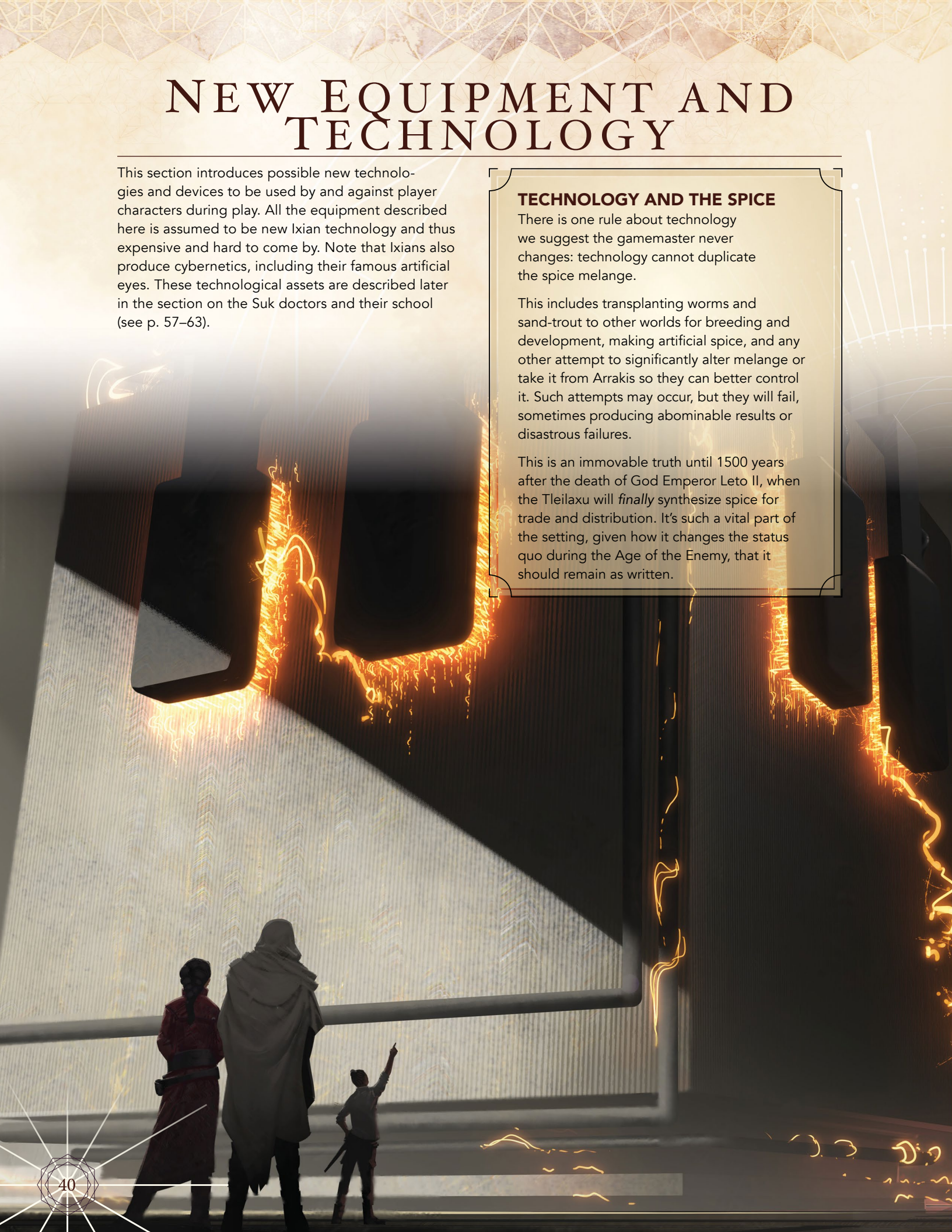
This section introduces possible new technologies and devices to be used by and against player characters during play. All the equipment described here is assumed to be new Ixian technology and thus expensive and hard to come by. Note that Ixians also produce cybernetics, including their famous artificial eyes. These technological assets are described later in the section on the Suk doctors and their school (see p. 57–63).

TECHNOLOGY AND THE SPICE

There is one rule about technology we suggest the gamemaster never changes: technology cannot duplicate the spice melange.

This includes transplanting worms and sand-trout to other worlds for breeding and development, making artificial spice, and any other attempt to significantly alter melange or take it from Arrakis so they can better control it. Such attempts may occur, but they will fail, sometimes producing abominable results or disastrous failures.

This is an immovable truth until 1500 years after the death of God Emperor Leto II, when the Tleilaxu will *finally* synthesize spice for trade and distribution. It's such a vital part of the setting, given how it changes the status quo during the Age of the Enemy, that it should remain as written.



ADVANCED HUNTER-SEEKER

While Thinking Machines are prohibited, the drive to create newer and better tools of espionage and assassination push some Ixian scientists to the edge of permissible development. The Advanced Hunter-Seeker is such a device, with better visual systems and a longer range than standard hunter-seekers. They also contain advanced biodetection systems developed from Tleilaxu technology. This helps them determine the difference between a statue and someone standing still. However, they still require an operator to make that judgment. This makes them a sought-after tool for assassins and counterassassins alike.

While a far cry from the self-improving weapons that will threaten humanity in one of the many divergent timelines prevented by Leto II's Golden Path, this weapon nevertheless represents the first steps toward that future. This would make their use and distribution of great interest to the line of Muad'Dib and others concerned with the creation of deadly Thinking Machines.

As an Asset: Even more effective than their older counterparts, Advanced Hunter-Seekers are better at targeting those standing still or otherwise avoiding detection by the device's limited sensors. However, these weapons still require an operator and ideally need to observe a target prior to use to get a biological signature.

Keywords: Remote-Operated, Stealthy, Self-Correcting

ADVANCED HEIGHLINER, IXIAN

Developed by House Vernius, this new model of Heighliner has been in use since the House's fall during the last days of Elrood Corrino IX. Capable of carrying larger loads more efficiently, these ships famously interfered with the Emperor's shipping profits and brought ultimate ruin to the then-rulers of Ix. However, progress marches on, and these ships — or those copied from their designs — have become more common sights in the Guild fleet.

Similar in many ways to other large interstellar transports, Ixian Advanced Heighliners carry 16 percent more cargo than other ships of their class. While this may not seem significant, Imperial taxation on space flight is on trips made instead of cargo hauled. The Ixian innovation is costing the throne untold revenue and makes these ships highly sought-after by the Spacing Guild.

As an Asset: To control an Advanced Heighliner carries the same struggles as acquiring any Heighliner: attracting the animosity of the Guild and being considered a criminal under Imperial law. However, some of these ships could have easily been 'lost' during the fall of House Vernius, and at the very least, the Guild would pay dearly to acquire them. Like other Heighliners, these ships require a Guild Navigator to operate.

Keywords: Efficient Carrier, FTL Travel, Immense, Navigator Pilot Required, Advanced Spacecraft

MOCKBIRD FIELD

Named for an ancient avian fabled to duplicate the songs of other birds, this variation on an Ixian Damper is still in early development. Instead of dampening or nullifying listening devices in a ten-meter area like a traditional damper, it instead alters conversations along various parameters. Those speaking within the field can have their voice and words changed so that all listening devices will pick up and record the false audio. Physical eavesdropping attempts are also thwarted, though anyone personally present can easily spot the device, that the apparent speakers are different in number, and other clues.

As an Asset: This device allows conversations to be simulated and altered. Detecting the deception is possible but not reliable; it takes a skilled individual with quality sound-monitoring equipment to pick up the telltale subsonic distortions the field gives off.

Keywords: Disguise, Privacy, Technological

SHIV, IXIAN

This specially designed assassin's blade is a disturbingly effective weapon. Made of a special organic crystal — a result of a failed experiment to simulate a Fremen crysknife — this short stiletto-like spike sports a simple handle. Unlike most knives, an Ixian Shiv is only useful for one strike, but in skilled hands, that is more than sufficient.

When a serious wound is delivered with the knife, the handle detaches, leaving the blade inside the wound. A special sealant on the handle also seals the entry wound, making it all but impossible to remove the blade. The crystalline blade then fragments and spreads, doing additional damage before it ultimately dissolves, leaving no trace. Without expert care, the victim will die from internal bleeding and trauma even if the initial strike is not fatal. Expensive, rare, and shunned even by some assassins as cruel and artless, the weapon nevertheless has its adherents and admirers.

As an Asset: This device turns a defeat involving the weapon into a deadly or permanently disabling one unless expert medical care is used to save the target. Detecting the cause of death is also difficult, requiring expert examination.

Keywords: Concealable, Melee Weapon, Disposable

SUBOID MYRMIDONS

Due to the cost and time involved in producing such a force, this asset is theoretical. However, such troopers could exist in some secret facility deep beneath the surface of Ix. By taking physically promising suboids and using advanced training methods to condition them for increased hostility and battlefield adaptability, the Ixians could create an expendable, obedient, and elite force of warriors. While lacking the lifelong development of the Fremen and Sardaukar, these Suboid Myrmidons would still function at a level at or beyond most Great House elite forces, at least in terms of strength if not skill. The addition of cybernetic or biotech augmentation and subliminal training methods would produce dangerous soldiers in a relatively short time.

Though this development is speculative, the Tleilaxu do possess sufficient data on which suboids responded well to their incitement campaigns during their invasion of Ix. These individuals, as well as their families and communities, could form the initial recruitment base for a hidden army of Suboid Myrmidons — taking their name from worker-ants turned elite warriors from Old Terramythology.

As an Asset: A force of Suboid Myrmidons would function much like any House's elite forces. Their unusual experience, muted emotions, and generations of conditioning for obedience and physical action would make them exceptional shock troops. However, without orders they would be bad at improvisation and tactical awareness.

Keywords: Melee Weapons, Subliminal Conditioning, Shock Troops, Shielded

Quality: 2 (3 with technological enhancement)

FACE MASQUE

Though a pale imitator of the powers of the infamous Face Dancers, this advanced sheath of morphogenic pseudo-flesh is based on Tleilaxu technology. It can be programmed to simulate a single individual's facial appearance. Seamlessly attaching to the wearer's face, the masque breathes and reacts as real human skin.

The masque must be removed and its programming refreshed once every seventy-two hours. Otherwise, it begins to lose its morphogenic qualities and the disguise begins to degrade and 'slip'. This process only takes a few minutes, but the wearer is vulnerable to discovery during this period.

A Face Masque won't defeat full-body examinations or scanning based nonvisual detection.

As an Asset: This device allows a character to assume the guise of another for extended periods of time. If properly refreshed, this disguise could last indefinitely. Note: this only changes a person's face, not their entire body.

Keywords: Disguise, Infiltration, Technological

GAMEMASTERING TECHNOLOGY

It's natural that like most people in the Known Universe, player characters will want to get their hands on cutting-edge Ixian technology. Such devices can do amazing things. However, some pieces of technology risk disrupting play if overused. For example, an Advanced Hunter-Seeker makes an excellent tool to acquire for a difficult job, or a deadly obstacle to overcome with cunning and skill. However, if every assassination attempt reduces to 'get this advanced toy and win'? Things aren't so fun.

Advanced tech should be rare, making it feel special and unique. The gamemaster can use it to suggest an adversary is backed by influential forces or possesses ties to Ix directly. Player characters can connect rare tech to suspects and enemy agents, since not just anyone can acquire or use it. Player characters who get a chance to use such devices themselves can surprise their foes. This is all much harder if advanced technology is something anyone can just go pick up at the local market.

Gamemasters should consider these factors when introducing new technology. The Sardaukar often use a suspensor belt that lets covert operatives insert into areas from great heights by slowing and controlling their fall. It is a device that makes the Sardaukar all the more fearsome, capable of infiltrating fortresses and restricted areas with ease. But if everyone has them, it becomes the new normal, something everyone just expects to happen in the background.



The Tleilaxu

One of the most secretive groups in the Imperium is the Bene Tleilax, an order of biologists with an almost cultlike society. While many in the Imperium simply stay outside the usual politics of the Houses and Imperial Throne, the Bene Tleilax maintain very different social mores and their own culture. Many in the Imperium find this difference very concerning, even though most are unclear on what Tleilaxu culture actually is. Anything different and mysterious is easy to find frightening, however. Whatever the truth, anything different from the Imperium norms raises the possibility of breaking the rules and ethics of the Butlerian Jihad. However, this does not stop people purchasing the Tleilaxu's (often highly unethical) devices and products.

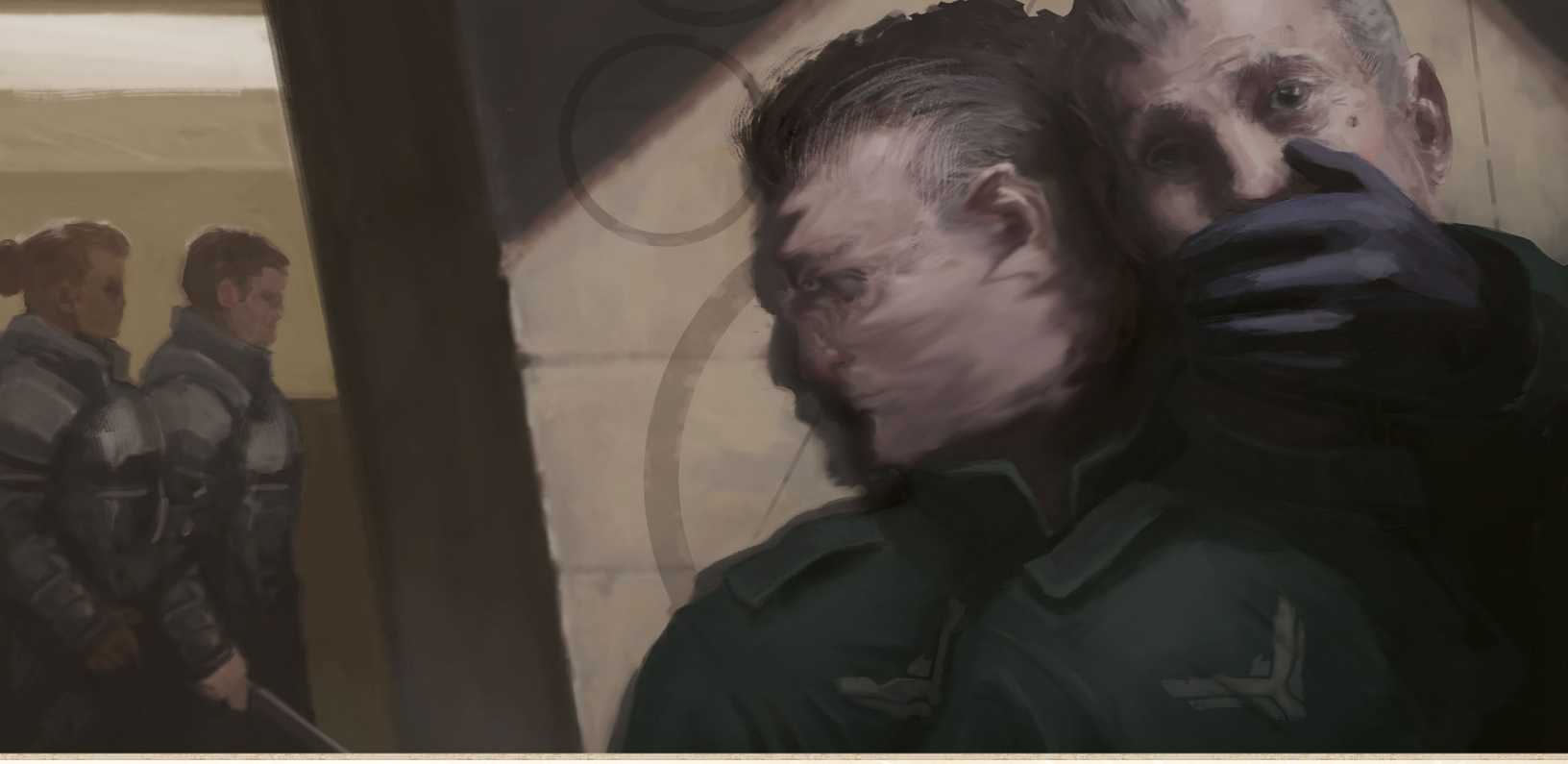
Tleilax and Bandalong

The Tleilaxu control only a single planet, Tleilax, and admit no outsiders as a general rule. A few people visit to arrange deals, although the Tleilaxu much prefer to operate on more of a 'mail order' basis. You tell them what you want, they tell you the price, and then they send it to you. The Tleilaxu tend to be unusual to negotiate with. They will quote a price as if it is set in stone, but if they think they will lose the sale, they are quick to offer a deal too low to ignore. However, such bargains often have a few minor strings attached.

Many people expect the planet Tleilax to be some sort of surreal horror of twisted vegetation and brutal industry, simply due to their understanding of the Tleilaxu themselves. But Tleilax is actually one of the more pleasant and natural planets in the Imperium. As the Bene Tleilax are researchers for the most part, they have little need for large-scale industry, and they do occasionally require natural products for their studies. So Tleilax is mostly farmland and managed parkland. As there is a small population, compared to most planets, the arable land required to feed them takes up comparatively little space. This means that large areas of the planet are left to go wild and are actually quite beautiful. However, there are a few more industrial areas, and the Tleilaxu often encourage pollution in some places, as it might provide new chemicals and environments for their experiments.

A very few rare individuals have been known to live on Tleilax for a while. Such 'guests' are usually only ever given access to very special and separate quarters in the capital city of Bandalong. They are not allowed to leave and mingle with the people of Tleilax in any way. It is more like being under house arrest rather than staying as a guest. Outsiders are made to feel so unwelcome that few stay unless they really have no other choice.





In the exceptionally rare case of a guest staying on Tleilax long-term, they are usually moved to the city of Thalidei. Anyone trusted enough to be moved here generally has a little more freedom than usual, but the fact that they are outsiders is underlined on a daily basis by the Tleilaxu, who only accept their presence on sufferance. Thalidei is a reasonably pleasant if plain city, with a vast walled industrial complex. The city rests on the shore of the huge lake where the complex discharges its waste. But rather than consider this an environmental disaster, the Tleilaxu think of it as a useful new habitat for biological research. Thalidei is also known, within the Tleilaxu, as the training ground of the twisted Mentats. As such, it has an impressive cloning facility. Most twisted Mentats are created to order, and because it takes years, they often create and train several of the same person so there is a ready replacement in case of misadventure.

The population of Tleilax is divided into two different castes that may as well be two different species. The ruling caste are the Tleilaxu Masters, who spend most of their time managing production facilities or performing experiments to advance Tleilaxu science. They are, at most, 10 percent of the population, but they hold all the power and wealth. Tleilaxu Masters have a very distinctive appearance, so different that many wonder if they are truly human at all. It is unclear if the Masters still breed in the conventional way or simply clone new Masters when the need arises. There are no female Tleilaxu Masters, leading many to assume the latter. However, there are stories of people being 'elevated' to Master status and undergoing physical changes to make them look the same, so they may pick gifted individuals from the populace and change them into Masters.

The ordinary folk of Tleilax live an oppressed but reasonably pleasant life. They are not brutalized like the people of Giedi Prime, for instance, and most are farmers, craftspeople, merchants, or traders of some form. While they cannot leave the planet or interact with outsiders, they generally lead quite pastoral lives that many lowborn in the Imperium might be jealous of. However, many are taken for use by the Tleilaxu Masters at random intervals. Human experimentation is considered perfectly acceptable by the Tleilaxu, and they practice it whenever the need arises on their own population. While some of the people of Tleilax manage to live to old age, most are taken for some sort of experiment at some point, without warning or appeal. Some return to their families if they are lucky; most do not. This is especially true of women, and they are taken far more regularly than the men, to the point where few outsiders ever see a woman on Tleilax. For all the apparent idyll of Tleilaxu life, the shadow of being taken for experimentation — or just parts — looms over everything the people do.

The capital city of Bandalong is where most of the Tleilaxu Masters live and carry out their work. The city is quite large, mainly as it is one of the few on the planet. A few other settlements exist but they are much smaller. Bandalong is a holy place to the Tleilaxu Masters, and so all want to live and work there. For all its importance, Bandalong is a plain and functional place, although not an unpleasant one. Everything has the feel of a laboratory, with clean empty spaces and functional architecture. All is neat and orderly, and the streets are kept clean and well-managed. Buildings are built as required and always for functional rather than aesthetic reasons. The Tleilaxu have no interest in architecture as an art form and much prefer their buildings to conform to a regular pattern. This can make traveling in Bandalong for outsiders (should any ever find themselves able to do so) very confusing. Unless you know the area well, every street and building looks the same, making it easy to get lost.

Bandalong contains all the things you'd expect in most cities, such as offices, trading and warehouse facilities, and a spaceport. But it is absent of any museums, theatres, or entertainment facilities. The Tleilaxu Masters entertain themselves with their work and leave the rest of the population to make their own entertainments. The city also lacks any real governmental infrastructure. There is no parliament, debate chamber, or senate, and certainly no facilities for elections.

The Tleilaxu are ruled by a single council of Masheikhs (see p. 48) who have only a single building to meet in. Tleilax is effectively governed by one rule: 'Do what the Masters tell you'. Between Tleilaxu Masters, the rules are more complex when their desires conflict, but in most cases seniority wins out unless the younger Master can prove to their peers that their experiments are more important.

Tleilaxu Religion

With the Tleilaxu focus on biology and research, it would be easy to assume they are ruled as a scientocracy; however, the Tleilaxu are actually a theocracy, because they consider their work to be a holy calling. The logistics of any public work and policy are usually designed around the needs of their research. However, the reason for everything they do is driven by their faith. The Tleilaxu Masters are often as much priests of science as they are scientists. While their faith is based in Zensunni practice, it has become almost unrecognizable from its foundation over the years.

Tleilaxu faith is absolute and inviolate as far as they are concerned. They consider their work to be holy and the capital city of Bandalong to be sacred. This is the root of their xenophobia; they consider all unbelievers (non-Tleilaxu or 'Powindah') to be simply unworthy to set foot on holy soil. While all the Tleilaxu Masters are dedicated to their faith, the devotion of the populace depends on the individual. However, no one will admit to anything but fervent piety, because to do otherwise is a capital offense.

The Tleilaxu faith is complex, melding science and religion. Those who can create life (such as with Ghola) often begin to think they have the same power as God, and so might rival God'sdivinity. But for all their arrogance, this is not the way of the Tleilaxu. Instead, they see God in science and see science as a way to worship and understand the divine.

Their reasoning is that if God can create life, then finding out how to create life is a way to get closer to God. To learn the mechanisms of creation is to learn the mechanisms of God. In this way they see the interaction of cells and biology to be driven by a form of language, the language of God. They believe, for instance, when a group of cells develop from embryo to fetus to baby, the cells are doing so because they hear the word of God. The Tleilaxu don't believe that these are literal words or that the cells are really listening to each other. But deep in the genetic code that drives the purpose of each cell, the instructions for life are laid out as God intends.

This means that as each Tleilaxu Master understands more of biology, they understand more of 'the language of God'. One day they will uncover the deepest secrets of biology, a code that drives the development and motives of all living things, and on that day they will meet God. Until then, the Tleilaxu are driven to understand every aspect of biological science. Their cause is a holy one, their science sacred, and their experiments ordained by God.

Of course, this all matters very little to the ordinary folk of Tleilax. They simply know they must do as they are told. Faith is a thing for the Masters, who are both the priests and adherents of this faith.

Face Dancers

Officially, Face Dancers are biologically crafted entertainers who mimic others as part of their performance. Their troupes delight audiences across the Imperium. They dance and perform, changing to mimic guests or celebrities to flatter, satirize, or both, for the enjoyment of the crowd. However, it was not long before someone realized that anyone who could create the perfect disguise could be a very effective spy or assassin. In fact, most believe this was the original intention, and this has made Face Dancers something of a metaphor for all the Tleilaxu. They appear to be one thing but are actually another, are not entirely human, and cannot be trusted to offer truth.

Face Dancers have the same control over their muscles and bodies as the Bene Gesserit and can change their features, body, and skin tone to mimic anyone, old or young, tall or short, male or female. They can even be functionally male or female in the most intimate of circumstances. However, they cannot conceive a child in any way, although they can appear pregnant. This incredible talent is scientific, not magical, and is based on incredible muscular and bodily control as well as a physical form capable of being adapted in a variety of ways. A Face Dancer can move fat deposits, expand muscles, and shift bones when mimicking a target. No human can learn this talent, because Face Dancers are made, not just trained. While they rarely assume it, Face Dancers do have a 'natural form', which is that of a soft-looking humanoid with little in the way of distinguishing features. When killed, their muscles tend to relax to reveal this shape. But some are able to lock themselves in place so there is no chance of them losing the form when sleeping, for instance. However, they can only change their body, not the clothes they are wearing, so they have to find the right clothing for a new form when required.

When infiltrating, a Face Dancer usually operates in one of two ways. Sometimes they will replace someone in a household who is already trusted. They usually kill the original but might keep them alive so they can interrogate them to improve their disguise. While taking the shape of a person is simple for the Face Dancer, mimicking mannerisms, speech patterns, and knowing what they should know is much harder. Face Dancers cannot steal memories. However, most Face Dancers enjoy studying someone they are to replace, then playing the role of a new person by inhabiting their lives as closely as possible.

While being replaced by a Face Dancer is a fear for many in the Imperium, it is done quite rarely. It is hard to do and requires a lot of work to initiate and maintain. As a result, most Face Dancers masquerade as people no one knows. They slip among the servants or guards with a good cover story of how they arrived. Because they are not trying to be anyone in particular, the cover is easier to maintain. In this way, they can gradually get close to a target or observe someone they are planning to replace.

The Bene Tleilax are the only faction capable of creating Face Dancers, so Face Dancers are exceptionally rare as player characters outside a Tleilaxu-based campaign. However, as products, a Face Dancer might be purchased or given to a noble House with the gamemaster's permission. The Tleilaxu might give one as a gift to a trusted ally, or to place a spy in the household. Given the secretive nature of the Tleilaxu, it is often hard to know which is true, and it is often both.

Whatever the case, the Face Dancer will ultimately be completely loyal to the Tleilaxu, whatever allegiance they have to a House. This loyalty is not only indoctrinated into them but is coded into their DNA. Face Dancers are always 'operated' by a Tleilaxu Master who they take orders from for their current mission. But the Master might remain in the background, even up to a whole planet away if the Face Dancer is on an extended mission or infiltrating.



Face Dancer Faction Template

"I warn you, a Face Dancer can move faster than you suspect. My knife can have both of these lives before you touch me." – Scytale, Face Dancer

- **Additional Trait:** Tleilaxu
- **Suggested Archetypes:** Athlete, Envoy, Infiltrator, Scout, Spy
- **Mandatory Talents:** Facedance, Muscular Conditioning

If a gamemaster allows a Face Dancer as a player character, it is usually best for the other player characters to be aware of their nature. The Face Dancer could be played as a spy infiltrating the player's House, or masquerading as a member of the House they have replaced. But this sort of game must be very carefully managed. It can quickly devolve into players just trying to uncover the Face Dancer rather than pursue the adventure. Such games almost always end with the Face Dancer being killed or having to leave the campaign when uncovered.

Talents

Copy (Face Dancer Talent)

You are adept at memorizing the mannerisms and body language of a single target. In this way you can convincingly replicate them.

If the Face Dancer is able to observe a target closely for a scene, they may make an Average (D1) **Understand** test to memorize their modes of speech and mannerisms. They can then assume their form and perfectly replace them. Only those who know the target well can attempt to detect the impersonation. This is an opposed test between their **Understand** and the Face Dancer's **Discipline**.

Facedance (Face Dancer Talent)

You were crafted by the Bene Tleilax before birth to be able to change your form and face.

At the start of a scene, you may choose to alter your form. You may make yourself taller or shorter, heavier or thinner, alter your skin color, your apparent age, or even whether you appear to be masculine or feminine (even to close scrutiny), in any combination. It is almost impossible for someone to determine who you truly are (barring extremely keen perceptions), though if you attempt to mimic someone specific and try to fool someone who knows that person well, they may attempt an **Understand** contest, opposed by your **Discipline**, to detect your deceit. Note that this only allows the Face Dancer to copy the form of a person, not their mannerisms (this requires the Copy Talent).

Innocent Form (Face Dancer Talent)

You are able to make yourself look so average you fade into the background, or so innocent and naïve you can't be a threat or a suspect.

You can take a form that is either unobtrusive or innocent looking (choose which upon taking the form). While in this form you reduce the Difficulty of stealth tests or tests to avoid being seen as suspicious (as appropriate). This Talent cannot be used when disguised as a specific person.

LIGHTNING REFLEXES (FACE DANCER OR BENE GESSERIT TALENT)

Your command of your muscles is so powerful you can move like lightning.

You may spend 1 Momentum to take your action first in any given round, regardless of the actual initiative order. If two characters have this ability, it is up to the gamemaster which goes first. Using this ability does not grant the character any more actions than they usually have.

LOCK FEATURES (FACE DANCER TALENT)

You have mastered a way to lock your muscles in one set form.

You can maintain the last form you took, even when unconscious or dead. You do not revert to the 'formless' appearance of a Face Dancer.

MUSCULAR CONDITIONING (FACE DANCER TALENT)

You have absolute control over your body. Every muscle and every nerve is under your control.

Whenever you attempt a **Move** or **Discipline** test which relies on your control of your body, you may re-roll a single d20. You can perfectly control your breathing, heart rate, and your internal organs. This Talent is functionally identical to prana-bindu conditioning except it only applies to bodily function, muscle, and nerve control, not biochemistry control. It is not trained in the same way as the Bene Gesserit. It is considered a separate Talent and grants no access to other Bene Gesserit abilities.

THE RIGHT MOMENT (FACE DANCER TALENT)

With your disguise skills and your ability to understand a target's body language, you are adept at getting closer to them than most people allow. If that person is the target of an assassination, you can often find the perfect moment to strike.

If the Face Dancer is not under suspicion and is not considered a threat by anyone in the scene, they gain a bonus if they initiate a combat. For the first attack of any skirmish or assassination, if no one else has made an attack yet, they may roll a full dice pool (5d20) for no cost. However, this attack does not grant any Momentum.

UNOBTRUSIVE CHANGE (FACE DANCER TALENT)

When in a crowd, you are adept at making subtle and quick changes in your appearance to make yourself hard to follow or spot.

Trying to chase a Face Dancer with this Talent is one Difficulty level harder if they are in a reasonably crowded place.

Twisted Mentats

There are a few places where Mentats are trained for service to the Houses of the Landsraad, but only the Tleilaxu produce what are colloquially known as 'twisted Mentats'. While twisted Mentats are much rarer, they are not as rare as generally thought, and there is nothing to differentiate these two types of Mentat other than the way they plan and think.

Standard Mentat training instills a certain code of ethics in its students. Truth must become important to the Mentat so they do not allow themselves to be clouded by bad data. They need to tell and understand the truth to make sure they do not make mistakes. The Tleilaxu have found a way to train Mentats excluding this moral code without making them less efficient. This allows a twisted Mentat to understand how to use emotions like cruelty and deceit when constructing plans and offering advice. As such, only the more despicable Houses feel a need for such servants.

Some Houses consider twisted Mentats to be broken by their very nature, and most other Mentats feel their twisted peers must be faulty in some way. Any Mentat known to be twisted should have either 'Twisted Mentat' or 'Tleilaxu' as a trait. This will only apply with those who know them well, as few people can determine a Mentat's training without working with them.

The following Talents are available to Mentats, although some are reserved for twisted Mentats or non-twisted Mentats specifically. Any Mentat can use any Talent labeled 'Mentat Talent'.

CALCULATED DISTRESS (TWISTED MENTAT TALENT)

When you make plans, you are able to ensure they cause the most stress and upset to your target.

When a plan you are part of (usually with an Intrigue or Espionage conflict) is resolved, you may impose a negative emotional trait on one of your opponents to represent the stress you have caused them.

EXIT TRANCE (MENTAT TALENT)

You can enter a deep trance and disassociate your body and mind to avoid interrogation.

You give yourself a complex mental problem (such as calculating pi to a million digits) and give your mind over wholly to the task. You effectively enter a period of hibernation from which you cannot be woken. This lasts for a period of time that you set upon commencing the trance (as you can calculate how long the problem will take to solve). During this time, you are effectively unconscious and cannot be roused. While in this trance, your body still has the normal requirements in terms of sleep, food, air, etc.

MENTAL MAP (MENTAT TALENT)

You can keep in your mind the image of a map you have seen, while performing other functions.

If you have seen a map of the area you are in, you may call it to mind to gain the trait 'Knows the Area' for the current scene. Calling the map to mind costs an action.

NEVER FORGET A FACE (MENTAT TALENT)

You have made a study of the Houses of the Landsraad and know the leaders and powers of the Great Houses.

You may spend 1 Momentum to recognize any member of the ruling family of a noble House. You may even extrapolate for the age if the scion has not been seen recently in society. This ability grants no insight into family secrets but does allow you to remember who the person is, their position in the family, and their social reputation.

TRIUMPH OF REASON (NON-TWISTED MENTAT TALENT)

You are aware that emotion is not always a logical response, and you can conquer it.

If you are able to meditate for around twenty minutes, you may remove a single emotional trait you have, either permanently or for the next scene. This might completely remove negative traits like anger or fear, or briefly suppress other traits that may color your perceptions in a negotiation, etc.

TRUE AGENDA (MENTAT TALENT)

You are adept at collating what people say with their circumstances to gauge their true needs and desires.

When a negotiation opponent makes their initial statements, you may Obtain Information about their true intentions and needs (regardless of what they actually say they need) once for no cost.

Tleilaxu Masters

Behind everything the Tleilaxu do are the shadowy Tleilaxu Masters. For the most part, their plots involve advancing their twisted science and making sure they are left alone to do so. However, the Tleilaxu are not as isolationist as they appear. Secretly, they seek to control the Imperium. They are more patient and careful than most but are no less ambitious than the Harkonnens. As such, they produce all manner of devices and products they know people need, in order to get their hooks into the powerbrokers of the establishment.

Unfortunately for the Tleilaxu Masters, no one trusts them. Their lack of social graces and single-minded purpose make them very difficult to get along with. While they can be obsequious when they think it will get them what they want, most appear arrogant and disdainful of the Imperium. They can also be exceptionally spiteful when they feel they are wronged. When House Atreides was accused of firing on one of their ships in a Heighliner, they wanted the duke tortured to death, going as far as developing a machine to take his body apart in the slowest and most painful way they could devise. While the Tleilaxu thought this would help instill fear of their wrath in the Imperium, it only actually provoked disgust.

Above the Tleilaxu Masters are the Masheikhs, the council of nine Tleilaxu Masters who rule the Bene Tleilax. There are no votes or democratic elections to determine the Masheikhs. When one dies, they are replaced by a candidate the remaining eight feel is worthy. While the Masheikhs are no different from the other Tleilaxu Masters, their rule is absolute. Their decisions are final and their edicts carried out without question.

While some do pursue their own research, the Masheikhs are responsible for the direction and advancement of the Tleilaxu and their power. The Tleilaxu believe they are destined to rule the universe, as only they have the vision to understand the needs of God. To them, the Imperium is corrupt and in need of a guiding hand, and only the Tleilaxu's hand is good enough. However, the Masheikhs have no desire to wage direct war on the Imperium. Not only would they lose, but it would create too much bloodshed. They are shepherds, not butchers. They are aware they may need to control their eagerness for power and send more and more of their devices and products out to key positions across the Imperium before they are ready to make their move.

While they look different, Tleilaxu Masters are human in all important respects. A gamemaster may choose to allow them access to certain Face Dancer or even Mentat Talents, as some are known to augment themselves or are trained for certain purposes. Most, however, reserve their skills and talents to excel in biological research. Tleilaxu Masters are not suitable as player characters outside a Tleilaxu-based campaign due to their xenophobic nature. Even in a Tleilaxu campaign, they rarely leave their homeworld, conducting most of their affairs through their agents (usually the player characters) with architect play.

While the Tleilaxu can often seem generous, their gifts always come with a price. Dealing with the Tleilaxu always feels like giving up a part of your soul in some way. They are always happy to claim favors and offer their services for a bargain price. They do their best to wrap strings around those they meet so they can puppet them later. This might be done by calling in favors at difficult times, applying the gentlest of force when they have the greatest leverage, or making sure their products are so essential, none can do without them.

Sword Masters of Ginaz

While the sword, particularly the pulse-sword, is the primary weapon for which they take their name, Swordmasters are all-around masters of armed and unarmed combat — fist, kris, kindjal, and lasgun, excelling in all martial disciplines. They can train soldiers and lead skirmishes and great battles, and they have extensively studied small-unit tactics, army logistics and deployment, and even vehicular combat.

The **Dune Core Rulebook** (p. 34 and 62–63) addresses the Ginaz Swordmasters in some detail, and the following material expands upon those entries.

History of the Ginaz School

The ancient warlike culture of Ginaz had an almost cultlike aspect, and a leader among them, a mercenary named Zon-Noret, learned many combat and fighting techniques from the recovered combat cymek Chirox. But it would be his son, Jool-Noret, who used the combat mek to become the legendary Swordmaster of Ginaz.

Training in secret, Jool installed an adaptability algorithm module that allowed Chirox to go beyond its original combat programming, a module Jool forgot to remove when his father next faced the training mek. After a vigorous battle, Chirox accidentally struck a fatal blow. With his dying breath, Zon commanded his son to become the greatest warrior Ginaz had ever known.

As word spread of Jool-Noret's skill, pilgrims traveled to Ginaz in hopes of learning from the master. Claiming he was not yet fit to teach anyone, he instead invited the students to train with Chirox.

The machine's incredible strength and lightning-fast reflexes pushed the human students to their utmost, and these incredibly deadly Ginaz mercenaries joined the Butlerian Jihad, fighting the Thinking Machines by using their own techniques and disciplines. In the final years of the Jihad, this early cadre of warriors formed the Ginaz School, continuing their training and expanding it to matters of strategy and the logistics of mass combat, as well as all hand-to-hand and ranged weapons.



Ginaz

Star System: Ginaz system (in the Junagadh system, Richelieu sector)

Moons: One

Habitable: Class V

Noble House: House Ginaz (defunct), now ruled by the Council of Veterans

Primary Export: Hardwoods, chemicals, poisons, Swordmasters

Population: Relatively light, island-dwelling

Languages: Galach, Ginaz, Swordmaster battle language

Locations of Interest: Ecazi Palace, Ginaz Archipelagos (many), Ginaz Archives, Ginaz School Administration Facility, Ginaz Academy Island

OVERVIEW

Ginaz is covered almost entirely in water; only a tenth of the planet's surface is dry land, primarily comprising a series of large archipelagos — linked series of islands of various sizes, featuring mostly tropical jungles, rainforests, and agricultural plains. The general population of Ginaz depends on the oceans for sustenance through fishing and their fields for harvesting, but their social culture is uniquely shaped around their warrior tradition. The Ginaz School is central to the planet's economy and its continued existence, serving all Houses within the Landsraad equally and without bias.

HISTORY

Ginaz was first settled upon by a small group of people many centuries before the Guild. Originally mercenary soldiers, they formed a sort of warrior cult upon the planet and sold their services in return for coin. In 277 B.G., they discovered a crashed combat cymek later named 'Chirox', a Thinking Machine. They restored it and trained with it, studying its combat techniques and refining those methods to suit human capabilities. Later, using these very techniques, the Ginaz mercenaries volunteered to serve the Butlerian Jihad, using the machines' own combat skills against them.

As the war continued, Ginaz suffered mightily in 164 B.G. when an asteroid-ship containing the Titan Hecate crashed upon the planet's surface, causing catastrophic tsunamis and environmental destruction. Eventually, the surviving population recovered, strengthened by their experience, which became codified into a martial philosophy called simply the 'Ginaz Beliefs'.

Continuing their martial traditions, the Ginaz natives created a school of fighting arts to put their philosophy into practice, training warriors in all the various disciplines of combat, tactics, and strategy. Their academy became known as the Ginaz School, its finest achievement the Swordmaster, a superlative warrior considered to be the greatest in the fledgling Imperium.

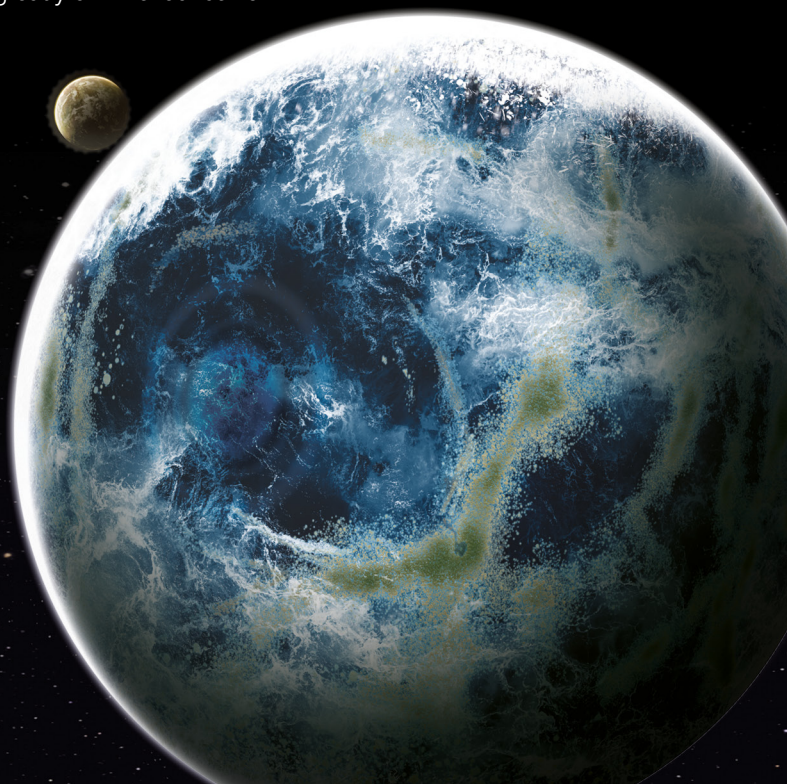
The folk of Ginazare are inextricably tied to the Ginaz School in the same fashion as the Spartans of Old Terra, and their culture is shaped and informed by this martial aspect. Most free people are expected to serve their culture, and warriors are expected to produce three children: one for each of the parents and one to be given up to childless families.

HOUSE GINAZ

A House Major whose origins stretched back to the foundation of the Imperium, House Ginaz was dedicated almost entirely to their school of training that bore their name. Its ancestral holding of Ginaz was given exclusively to its martial academy, and the House itself was fashioned along military lines, ruled by a Council of Veterans rather than a specific noble family.

House Ginaz was unfortunately caught up in a feud between House Moritani and House Ecaz, a close ally. When House Moritani attempted the assassination of the Ecaz heir while on Ginaz, considered neutral ground, House Ginaz expelled all Moritani students. In retaliation, Viscount Hundo Moritani launched a pre-emptive strike on Ginaz, destroying the Ginaz noble family entirely, and severely damaging the Ginaz School, killing hundreds of students.

The ensuing War of Assassins ended in House Moritani's destruction in 10,187 A.G. It devastated the Ginaz School to the degree that some considered the school all but defunct, although it continued to operate in a greatly diminished fashion.



The Ginaz School keeps comprehensive records of each of its graduates, including their personal information, training, aptitudes, fighting styles, idiosyncrasies, and achievements, tracking their exploits long after they leave the school. Thus, the school has amassed an invaluable record of martial accomplishment and military activities throughout the Imperium. These records are stored in a vast database, housed beneath the planet's surface in protective vaults.

After the near-annihilation of the school by House Moritani, the vaults remain intact and are used as the core by which the Ginaz School continues to train new cadets.

HOW THE GINAZ SWORDMASTERS ARE VIEWED

Throughout the Imperium, only the Emperor's Sardaukar command a reputation for martial excellence comparable to the Swordmasters of Ginaz. However, unlike those feared super-commandos, Ginaz Swordmasters are celebrated in song and legend, seen by many as dashing, larger-than-life heroes. Though the Ginaz School trains its students in all arts relating to defending a House and the noble family heading it, the school itself is relatively apolitical.

Most Houses of any size have at least one Swordmaster serving its ranks, and thus these deadly warriors are found in almost any House, regardless of its status within the Landsraad, save for those few Houses who have been denied their services.

Swordmaster Training

Becoming a Swordmaster of Ginaz is a goal unlike that of many of the other Great Schools in the Imperium. The Navigators and Mentats recruit from childhood, and entering as an adult is rare, and in many cases impossible, save for special circumstances. Even the Bene Gesserit and Suk Schools prefer to recruit from the very young, rarely bothering with adults whose paths are already set in life. But qualifying to become a Swordmaster and studying on Ginaz under the finest warriors in the Imperium is a goal almost any free person with sponsorship or means can attempt to achieve, diverting their own career to pursue that of martial excellence. It is always achievable ... if one has what it takes.

Levels of proficiency are ranked, with 0 representing a mere cadet and 10 representing the highest level of achievement. Upon reaching this landmark, a student is considered a graduate, a Swordmaster in title and in ability. They are the finest warriors in all the Imperium, greater and more competent even than the Emperor's feared Sardaukar, though far less numerous.

Swordmasters in Different Eras of Play

The Ginaz Swordmaster School was founded in the earliest era of Imperial history, in that great era that birthed the Spacing Guild, the Mentats, and other great schools. Thus, Swordmasters in eras prior to the Ascension of Muad'Dib exist and are largely unchanged for nearly 10,000 years, though the war-gear they specialize in has naturally evolved over the millennia.

- Butlerian Jihad: The school has not yet formed, and the Ginaz are an extremely powerful mercenary cult who are beginning to learn new techniques from Chirox.
- Reconstruction: The Ginaz has formed as a full school, studying the techniques taught by Chirox, and have begun to teach their abilities to others, for a price.
- The Imperium: By the year the **Dune Core Rulebook** is set, the Ginaz School has suffered near destruction in the War of Assassins against House Moritani. Its influence is considerably diminished as a result, and it is still in the process of recovery, if it will recover at all.
- The Ascension of Muad'Dib and Beyond: In the age of Emperor Paul Atreides' jihad, the Ginaz School is as superfluous as the Landsraad itself. By Leto II's reign, it is only remembered by the Duncan Idaho gholas, who train Leto II's personal guard in modified Swordmaster techniques.

Ginaz training, while initially derived from the techniques learned from the combat mek Chirox, also incorporates a variety of disciplines and martial codes from human history, particularly Old Terran traditions such as bushido and knightly chivalry. Swordmaster trainees are taught a form of three-stage combat meditation: *funestus*, *partus*, and *novellus*, which enable them to refocus continually during a battle, attaining a near-unconscious and continual state of deadly efficiency.

The sword is the center of much of their hand-to-hand training, beginning with wooden practice swords and graduating to sabers, longswords, epees, two-handed swords, and eventually to the pulse-sword that is their signature weapon (**Dune Core Rulebook**, p. 195). Many Swordmasters wear red bandanas upon their heads, a simple accessory traditionally denoting their status, while others of various traditions within the school present more outlandish and outdated fashions.

Ginaz Beliefs

The idiosyncratic philosophy practiced by the Ginaz and taught to their students reflects martial excellence as paramount.Every household upon the planet is affected to some degree by this philosophy, allowing the school to become central to their entire culture, even for those households not directly connected to it. Residents of Ginaz raise their children to become Swordmasters and provide children to families who cannot produce them.

The folk of Ginaz believe that each fallen warrior of the Ginaz tradition is reincarnated, born anew into another warrior-to-be. Graduates from the school each draw a coral disk from a basket. If they select a disk with an inscribed name of a fallen mercenary, that spirit lives on within them. However, if they reveal a blank disk, they are considered a new Swordmaster and after death will live on in another.

Ginaz Faction Archetypes

Due to their extraordinary combat prowess relative to other player characters, Ginaz-trained Swordmaster characters are not provided as beginning archetypes in the **Dune Core Rulebook**. Even as elite House agents go, they are exceptionally skilled, so are more suitable for an advanced campaign. The following rules address introducing one in play, whether created as a Ginaz student or a fully trained and combat-capable Swordmaster, or via the process by which an existing player character may pursue Ginaz School training and become a Swordmaster.

Ginaz Cadet Faction Template

There is no play with swords.
— Whitmore Bludd, Swordmaster

By any standard, merely qualifying to become enrolled at the Ginaz School would be honor enough for any family within the Landsraad, much less graduating from the school as a Swordmaster. Students training to be Swordmasters are already beginning the intense physical discipline, study, and fierce drill instruction that will forge them into living weapons like no other in the Imperium. Though they are no strangers to ranged weapons, the core training focuses almost entirely on martial philosophy and sword training as the core and foundation from which all other studies cascade outward.

This faction template is designed for a student of the school, who will need to spend time training between adventures. Until they graduate, they may not benefit from any personal ventures in House management sessions. They may learn up to three Swordmaster Talents until they graduate.

- **Additional Trait:** Ginaz
- **Suggested Archetypes:** Duelist, Protector, Warrior
- **Mandatory Talents:** Weapon Focus, though the gamemaster may allow player characters to be newly inducted into the Ginaz School and have no required Talents. Cadets may not begin play with Swordmaster Talents, but they may learn them over play.

Ginaz Swordmaster Faction Template

Swordmasters were, of course, more than personal fighters. They could repair force shields, plan military campaigns, design military support facilities, improvise weapons.
— Duncan Idaho (ghola)

The finest product of the Ginaz School, a fully trained Swordmaster is more deadly a fighter than any in the Imperium, and a boon to the House they serve. While they are more than capable of serving as generals in battle, most canny Houses utilize them as bodyguards for the noble family, instructors for noble children, and trusted envoys and operatives.

- **Additional Trait:** Ginaz Swordmaster
- **Suggested Archetypes:** Commander, Duelist, Protector, Sergeant, Strategist, Tactician, Warrior
- **Mandatory Talents:** Master of Battle, at least one other Swordmaster Talent, but no more than three Swordmaster Talents.

Swordmaster Talents

Presented here are new Talents suitable for Swordmaster-themed characters. A fully qualified Ginaz Swordmaster has three, and only a Ginaz-trained Swordmaster may acquire one. Some fully qualified Swordmasters continue their training and expand their style and technique to gain more, but it takes almost two years of training to learn one. Additionally, the following existing Talents from the **Dune Core Rulebook** (p. 127–131) are appropriate and recommended: Improvised Weapon, Master-at-Arms, The Slow Blade, and To Fight Someone is to Know Them.

ALWAYS ARMED (SWORDMASTER TALENT)

Anything you hold can be a weapon. You can make any item you pick up deadly in your hands.

If you are unarmed in a scene, you may create a Quality 0 melee weapon asset for free and with no test or action costs during any conflict. This asset may only be used by you and is lost at the end of the conflict, no matter what abilities may be applied to it. To use this ability there must be at least some objects to hand, but they need not be weapons. A chair leg, tin cup, piece of rope, rock, handful of sand, deck of cards, or any other seemingly innocuous item might become such an asset.

BLUR OF BLADES (SWORDMASTER TALENT)

You enter a fray with unbelievable speed, striking so quickly and decisively that your attacks seem to come from nowhere, and everywhere, at once.

You are so adept at swordfighting and fencing that you can move your melee weapon (typically a sword) back and forth between guard zones — right or left — instantly, bypassing any defense your opponent may have in the facing guard position. When you move a weapon asset in a duel or skirmish, you may move it two zones instead of just one.

BATTLE PERCEPTION (SWORDMASTER TALENT)

You have an almost psychic awareness of when a fight is imminent, even when you cannot see your opponent.

You cannot be surprised or ambushed in combat. You always get an action on any round you are being attacked and suffer no penalty for being caught off guard. Additionally, if you have a weapon available, you need not spend an action or suffer a penalty to ready it.

BLADEMASTER (SWORDMASTER TALENT)

You know how to get the best out of any weapon you use.

Any melee weapon asset you use gains +1 Quality while it is in your hands. This bonus applies even if the weapon does not have a Quality bonus, but the Quality cannot be improved beyond 4. This bonus also applies to assets created by the use of a Talent or Momentum.

COMBAT MEDITATION (SWORDMASTER TALENT)

Those facing you are at a disadvantage as your defenses and movement seem as reckless as your attacks are deadly.

When in combat, you can instinctually move between the three stages of combat meditation — *funestus*, *partus*, and *novellus* — becoming a whirling and unpredictable engine of destructive force, throwing yourself wholly into combat with a seemingly reckless fury. Each point of Momentum you spend for any reason *additionally* increases the Difficulty for anyone to strike you that round by +1, to a maximum of +3.



LIGHTNING STRIKE (SWORDMASTER TALENT)

You are so attuned to combat, you know when an attack is imminent. Your blade is in your hand before your opponent has even thought to draw their own.

If you are not surprised or being ambushed, you have a free action you may take on the first round of combat before anyone else. This is in addition to your normal action that round, which takes place as usual.

MASTER OF BATTLE (SWORDMASTER TALENT)

More than a mere duelist, the Swordmaster excels in all the arts of war, as adept at logistics as field repairs or piloting a grav tank.

The Ginaz School is not merely a weapons training course, instead training its candidates in all aspects of combat. Hand-to-hand combat is but the foundation, expanding to military philosophy, logistics, small- to large-unit tactics, munitions deployment, piloting, and even military engineering. At the onset of any skirmish or warfare conflict, the Swordmaster may observe the situation, the intended foes, and the field where the conflict will occur. As an action, they may attempt an Average (D1) **Battle** test, prior to and apart from any test related to the actual conflict itself. Any Momentum gained with this test becomes a separate pool that may be spent freely during that conflict, but only by the Swordmaster.

SOUL OF A SWORDMASTER (SWORDMASTER TALENT)

The soul of a Swordmaster never dies but is instead reborn into the body of another worthy candidate. Your own spirit is that of a great Swordmaster of old, remembered by many, inspiring you from within.

Note: This Talent is only available to full Swordmasters, official graduates of the Ginaz School, and cannot be taken by students or others in training. Upon graduation from the Ginaz School, you drew from the basket a coral disk with a famed name, and thus you are highly respected within the Ginaz School and by other Swordmasters. When dealing with others of the Ginaz School you may reduce the Difficulty by one step for any social tests. Additionally, if one of your dice in a **Battle** test rolls a 1, you gain an additional point of Momentum.

STEEL FOCUS (SWORDMASTER TALENT)

The moment a conflict begins, your training kicks in and your mind gains a razor-sharp focus.

As soon as a physical conflict (Duel, Skirmish, or Warfare) begins, you gain a bonus point of Determination. This point is removed at the end of the conflict, whether it has been spent or not.

WEAPON FOCUS (SWORDMASTER TALENT)

The Ginaz School relentlessly drilled you in swordfighting, from short-blades, rapiers, long-blades, and pulse-swords, to even the mighty two-handed blades favored in times gone by.

When making an attack while using any sword in combat, you may substitute any one d20 in your dice pool for a result of 1, without rolling, as if spending a point of Determination. This may also be used in addition to any Determination spent, or any re-rolls for another Talent, if desired.

SWORDMASTER CAMPAIGNS

An all-Swordmaster campaign can be a tremendous opportunity for a **Dune** roleplaying experience like no other. Unlike a House-based campaign where the player characters are assumedly part of a House or allied with it, the Ginaz School is a melting pot, allowing for students from a variety of Houses. Depending on the era of play, Harkonnens might rub shoulders with Atreides or Moritani with Ecaz, a wide range of potential rivalries set aside for the singular dedication to the art of combat and the blade.

In such a campaign, most if not all of the player characters should be Ginaz students, not graduates, and should use that archetype. The gamemaster may allow the player characters to have additional factional training, based on their House and their backgrounds, as Ginaz School training accommodates all manner of students. Thus, a Ginaz campaign may have students with some early Mentat or even Bene Gesserit training, though few come to the school with backgrounds from the Suk School or the Spacing Guild.

SWORDMASTER OR SWORDMASTER

The term 'swordmaster' can apply to anyone who has great skill with a blade or who serves in that capacity for their House. Such swordmasters are as described in the **Dune Core Rulebook** (p 33) and many who use that title have never been anywhere near Ginaz.

But those with Ginaz training are so skilled, the term 'Swordmaster" has become inextricably linked with them. Whether they serve a House or not, any graduate of the Ginaz school can refer to themselves as a swordmaster. So, while the term 'swordmaster' can apply to a graduate of Ginaz or a respected House role, most people are very careful with their use of the term. Many without Ginaz training usually qualify their description as "a swordmaster of House ..." for instance.

Becoming a Swordmaster of Ginaz

If during a campaign a player decides that their character will try to qualify for the Ginaz School, the gamemaster should be explicit that this represents a considerable effort and may set them apart from the other player characters for a length of time — generally five years or more — representing the training period. Integrating this training into an ongoing campaign depends entirely on the timeframe the campaign spans.

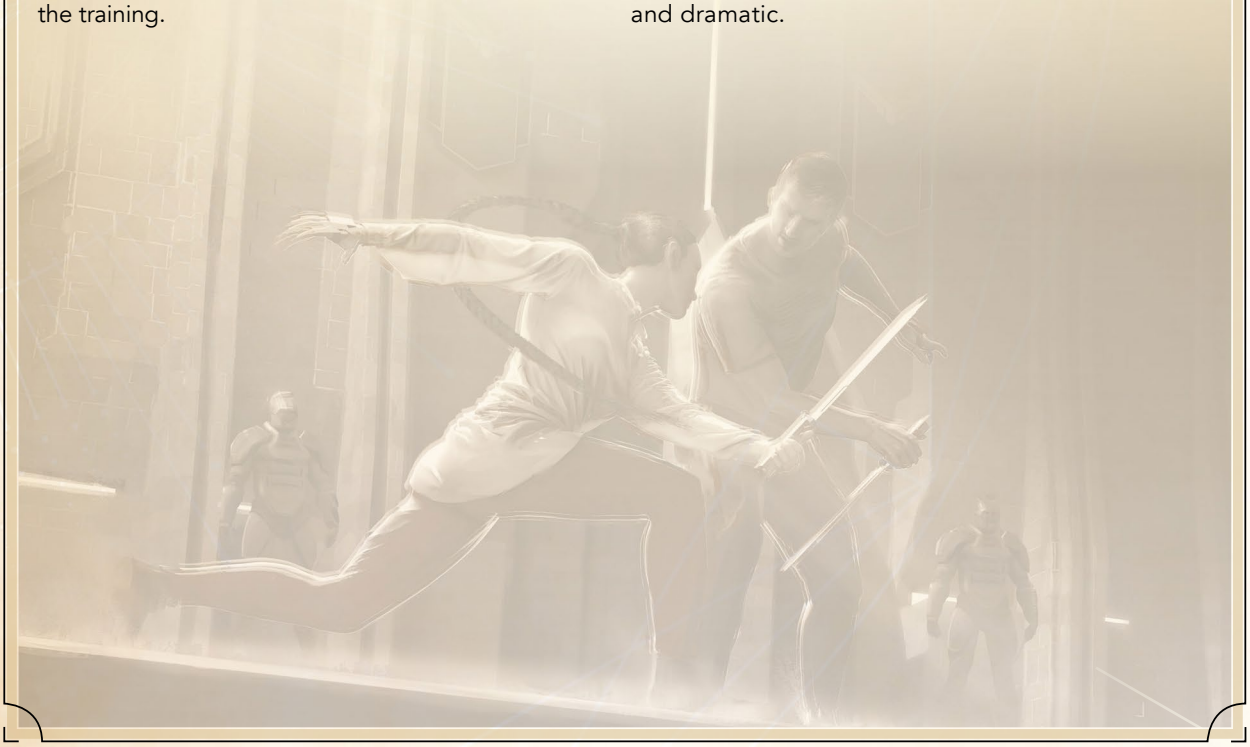
This can be simulated with one of the following methods:

1. The Swordmaster candidate is simply unavailable as a player character — their player uses another temporary character (or variety of supporting characters) in their stead.
2. The Swordmaster candidate is apart from the others and has adventures on their own, connected to the Ginaz School or Landsraad issues that reach even there.
3. The Swordmaster candidate has returned 'home' for the adventure, for reasons of their own, putting their training on hold. With this latter option, the gamemaster should increase the remaining time required to complete their training, due to the distraction of the training being broken.
4. The Swordmaster candidate cannot take on any personal ventures during House management because their time is taken up with training.

In any of these instances, the gamemaster should consider carefully the order of any Swordmaster Talents the player character takes, restricting those reserved for full Swordmasters until the very end of the training.

If you are using the House management system or tracking the years of your campaign, you can track the training of a player character. Each year they must make a Challenging (D2) **Battle** or **Discipline** test. If they fail, they have proven unworthy to continue the training, a complication that may even mean they are killed. For each two years they train they gain a Swordmaster Talent. The training ends after year five, when they must make a Dire (D4) **Battle** test to prove their skill and graduate. Failure means the character does not graduate and may even be killed. For successfully graduating, the character gains a third Swordmaster Talent. Further Swordmaster Talents may only be gained by spending a year in training on Ginaz (with gamemaster permission and by spending the appropriate advancement points) but this does not require any more tests.

After graduating, the player should determine the combat style of their character. Each Swordmaster develops their own unique style from the skills they have learned. It might be focused, flamboyant, brutal, precise, fast, etc. Knowing this style will help you describe how they fight and make conflict more personal and dramatic.



Famous Swordmasters

The Ginaz School has produced many famed and exemplary students, figures who have shaped the destiny of the Imperium to lesser or greater degrees. Depending on what era a campaign is set, one or more of these famous Swordmasters may figure prominently.

ZON-NORET

Though never technically a Swordmaster, he is nonetheless thought of as one of the founders of the Ginaz School, as he was one of the first Ginaz mercenaries to use the combat mek Chirox as a teacher, studying its fighting techniques. He was father to Jool-Noret, who surpassed his father in all aspects of combat. Zon died at the hands of Chirox, which was accidentally set to fight at his son's level of ability.

JOOL-NORET, THE FIRST SWORDMASTER

Son of Zon-Noret and the founder of what would become the Ginaz School, he was the greatest of Zon's children and the only one to be acknowledged as legitimate. Jool's training with Chirox, the combat mek, pushed his abilities far beyond what was thought possible, and he even surpassed the machine's capabilities. His swordfighting style was devastating, seemingly reckless but incredibly deadly, and it became the default style taught by the Ginaz School. Jool-Noret was slain when the Hecate asteroid ship crashed into Ginaz, though his spirit was awakened within Istian Goss.

ISTIAN GOSS

A native son of Ginaz, Istian Goss was an early student in the Ginaz School who was said to be guided by Jool-Noret, the founder of the institution. An acclaimed warrior, his most notable achievements were in the Butlerian Jihad, fighting Omnius and the Thinking Machine armies. He defended the combat mek Chirox from destruction and later awakened the spirit of Jool-Noret within himself, mastering those lost fighting techniques. He is thought to have later returned to Ginaz School as a teacher.

RIVVY DINARI

A Swordmaster and instructor at the Ginaz School, Dinari defended the Archduke Ecaz against an assassination attempt by House Moritani, at the cost of his own life. His death was part of the incident that embroiled the Swordmasters in the War of Assassins between House Moritani and House Ecaz.

HIH RESSER

Hih Resser was a member of House Moritani when his House attacked a member of House Ecaz within Ginaz School grounds. Given the choice of expulsion or renouncing his ties to Moritani, Resser chose the latter, the only member of his House to do so. He fought alongside Duncan Idaho and was captured by Moritani soldiers but escaped, and soon after, he qualified as a Swordmaster. When the War of Assassins was over, he returned to Grumman and House Moritani, assuming he would be imprisoned or worse. Instead, he was made Swordmaster for House Moritani, and in 10,187 A.G. he participated in a raid on Caladan, alongside House Harkonnen. The raid was largely unsuccessful, and he returned to serve Moritani until its destruction.

MORD COUR

Swordmaster to Emperor Shaddam Corrino IV's father, Elrood IX, Cour retired to Ginaz after the prior Emperor's untimely death. He served on the Council of Veterans and was caught up in the conflict between House Moritani and House Ecaz, siding against the Moritani. In 10,191 A.G. he continues to serve on the Council of Veterans.

WHITMORE BLUDD

Bludd was an instructor on Ginaz, having built his own palace in which to train his students directly, as an extension of the Ginaz School. His specialty was fencing using Old Terran rapiers, and he taught Duncan Idaho personally. In the aftermath of the War of Assassins that devastated the Ginaz School, Bludd served House Ecaz, continuing to do so until the ascension of Paul Atreidesto the Imperial Throne. He took part in a faked assassination attempt against the new Emperor and was executed for his treachery.

DUNCAN IDAHO

The most famous Swordmaster after Jool-Noret, and the most important on the galactic scale, Duncan Idaho was a native of Giedi Prime. He escaped from the Harkonnens to find service with Duke Paulus Atreides, father of Leto Atreides. Sponsored by the Atreides, Idaho entered the Ginaz School and emerged a Swordmaster, perhaps its greatest graduate. He served House Atreides, training young Paul Atreides in the fighting arts and serving as Leto's bodyguard and closest friend. Later, Idaho went with House Atreides to Arrakis, where it met its destruction. He himself was slain while defending the Atreides during the Siege of Arrakis, after killing nineteen Imperial Sardaukar. However, his valiant last stand allowed the young duke and Lady Jessica the chance to escape. More on Duncan Idaho can be found in the **Dune Core Rulebook**, p. 248.

The Suk School

The Suk Medical School is one of the great training institutions in the Imperium along with the Bene Gesserit, Guild, and Mentat Order. Admission is open to all, but only the best will be able to pass the entrance exams to be accepted. The high fees are an additional barrier to many, but a few spots are reserved for worthy candidates to receive a free education.

The vision of the Suk School remains the same since its founding by Mohandas Suk during the Butlerian Jihad. The Suk School was to serve as a place where the best scientists, researchers, doctors, and minds of the generation could come together and usher in an age of enlightenment for humanity. The school was to minister to the needs of not only the body, but also the spirit. It would serve the needs of the individual as well as the greater destiny of humanity. After the ravages of the war against the machines, the Suk School was instrumental in saving many worlds from the plagues released in the conflict. Since those times, it's been a respected institution across the Known Universe. With the exception of some areas where anti-technology or religious zealots reside, the Suk are welcome everywhere.

Few Great Houses are without a Suk Doctor as part of their court. Graduates are among the highest sought-after retinue for both their medical expertise in handling the needs of the noble family, and their ability in establishing protocol on the wellbeing of the House. Many serve as valuable advisors due to the deep philosophical education they receive as part of their training. Others hold directorships and serve as ministers of health for the world-spanning fiefdoms of the noble families. Even the military have them in their ranks of medical corps, often in command positions. The prestige and usefulness of a Suk Doctor is generally worth the exorbitant cost.

History of the Suk School

A medical institution founded around 110 B.G. by Mohandas Suk and Raquella Berto-Anirul called the Hospital for Incurable Diseases would form the genesis of what would eventually become the Suk Medical School. After the Butlerian Jihad, the Omnius Scourge virus was running rampant on Parmentier, and Dr. Suk gathered the best researchers, doctors, and scientists to find a cure. The institution was briefly successful, but the Hospital of Incurable Diseases was destroyed by the Martyrists (anti-technology zealots). Dr. Suk and Raquella Berto-Anirul were forced to flee. Once again, they tried to establish a school of medicine and learning in a small village on Parmentier, but once more it was destroyed by zealots.



After being rescued from Parmentier by Vorian Atreides, Suk and Berto-Anirul formed the Humanities Medical Commission (HuMed) by 107 B.G and traveled across the human worlds with their colleagues, continuing the work started on Parmentier.

After the Rossak Epidemic (88 B.G.), Dr. Suk was inspired to create what would be recognized in time as the Suk Medical School, headquartered on Salusa Secundus. Dr. Suk would also pioneer the techniques for Imperial conditioning that would guarantee that Suk Doctor graduates could not take a life and thus could be trusted to administer to the nobility of the Imperium.The Suk School was moved to the current capital of the Imperium on Kaitain after Salusa Secundus was rendered a wasteland. Many other satellite schools would be opened on other worlds, increasing the reach and prestige of the school into the era of Muad'Dib.

Sadly, the persecution of the school by anti-technology zealots who believe the fundamental work of the Suk is against the will of God would also continue. The zealots consider the sophisticated prosthetics and artificial organs used by the Suk to be abhorrent. The irony of the zealots needing space travel to continue their war against the school is not lost on the Suk.

Training in the Suk School

While training is open to all, only a few students will make it to the Inner School. The journey begins, as with most things Suk, with an exam. The entrance exam is comprehensive, and its goal is to identify the best and brightest from across the Imperium. The entrance exam tests for aptitude in the basic sciences, logic, and math, and for moral standing. This way, only the select few who have the ability and temperament are allowed through to the personal interview that will determine attendance at the school.

The personal interview vets the standing of the candidate, and it includes more verbal and written exams. If these are passed, the individual is allowed into the program as an initiate. The fees are quite expensive by the standards of any other higher education system, often averaging ten times more than the next-lower-tier education. But the Suk do reserve many spots for exceptional individuals who may not be able to afford the tuition. This again reflects their philosophy of benefit for the greater good over profit.

The initiate then spends the next three to five years studying the sciences, advanced math, research, logic, philosophy, and basic medicine. Additionally, there are many other courses available to the students in the areas of history, literature, politics, and other humanities. Many nobles who cannot gain admission for their children into the Bene Gesserit or Mentat schools will opt for the excellent education offered by the Suk.

After passing the final exams, the initiates need to choose the path they will now take. Some elect to leave the school at this point, finding the Suk philosophy too restrictive to their lifestyle. Others, like the nobles who only attended for education, generally return to their House for other duties. The ones that continue can become researchers, clinical practitioners, or proctors. Again, after a period of three to five years in those roles or as hybrids of those functions, some will be selected to receive training as full doctors.

Once that training is complete, and after taking a set of rigorous medical exams, those that pass will be given

GETTING PAID

Many people in the Imperium have a hard time reconciling the medical oath of the Suk practitioners to do no harm to another human being with their insistence on immediate payment. Suk Doctors extend no credit; payment must be tangible and immediate or no service.

Suk Doctors are exceptionally expensive to hire or keep on retainer. They are also notorious for not engaging in service until their fees are settled. However, there is also substantial evidence of humanitarian aid rendered by the Suk school without payment. Although contrary, all these observations are true.

On one side, Suk Doctors have been known to charge the Emperor a planet's ransom for treatment, while at the same time providing free medical care for those destitute. The principle the Suk use for establishing fees is to charge based on what the patient can afford. The more wealth one has, the higher the fees will be for medical services from the Suk school. This is in keeping with their general philosophy in pursuing the greater good by essentially redistributing wealth from the rich to the poor in how they offer their services.

Suk Doctors also charge substantial fees to uphold the reputation of their school. It is important the Imperium does not undervalue the worth of the Suk. Most Suk will, however, temper the fees based on the circumstances of the situation and wealth of the asking party. Keep in mind that all Suk practitioners are expected to remit one-third of their earnings back to the Suk School. Many remit even higher percentages, and some leave their estates and fortunes to the school, believing that the money will be used to achieve the goals set out in their primary doctrine by the founder, Dr. Mohandas Suk.

the title of doctor and considered alumni of the Suk School. At this point, most of the graduates will head out into the Imperium and begin medical practice. A select few of the graduates will be invited to the Inner School to have the opportunity to become full Suk Doctors with Imperial conditioning.

Imperial Conditioning

Only those who make it to the Inner School are subject to Imperial conditioning, and only after the Imperial conditioning is successfully applied can the candidate be called a Suk Doctor. The testing and screening process for the Inner School is rigorous; very few have the mental fortitude and medical skills to qualify. The process is also dangerous, so the school only accepts candidates that have the highest chance of success.

The conditioning process was invented by Dr. Mohandas Suk, and over the millennia it has been refined to achieve the best results possible. The conditioning process takes years of active and passive psychosomatic manipulation involving drugs, *prana-bindu* manipulation, and subliminal indoctrination. The success rate is high, with only a small percentage being mentally damaged enough to not be able to function as a Suk Doctor. In very rare cases, individuals have been known to perish, but most can be saved, as the Suk have the best medical services that have ever existed in the Known Universe.

Sometimes these failed individuals can be rehabilitated and function in other roles as non-Suk doctors, researchers, or proctors. Many leave, as the reminder of failure is too much of a burden to bear. This may be an area for an interesting character arc, to explore overcoming the failure to become a Suk Doctor.

Successful graduates from the Inner School are imprinted with a diamond tattoo on the forehead and allowed to wear the Suk silver ring to bind their hair in a ponytail. The diamond tattoo has a unique molecular property that is impossible to fake, and the process for creating it is a closely guarded secret.

Once conditioned, the Suk graduate is unable to cause harm to other human beings or knowingly take actions that will result in harm. The conditioning has never been known to fail, and Suk Doctors are the most trusted agents in all of the Imperium.

BREAKING IMPERIAL CONDITIONING

It is well known that Imperial conditioning is impossible to break, and Suk Doctors will never commit harm to their charges. Yet the good Dr. Wellington Yueh betrays the Atreides as an agent of the Baron Vladimir Harkonnen.

The method employed by the Baron and his twisted Mentat Piter de Vries was to emotionally torture Yueh over years to break the Imperial conditioning. It's debatable whether the break occurred because of the love for his wife whom the Harkonnens held hostage, or for revenge. Perhaps it was a mixture of both.

Regardless, it is the only known incident of a Suk Doctor going against Imperial conditioning, before or since. It should be a very rare occurrence and more driven by storytelling in your campaign than a tactic to be employed. In practice, it would require the right candidate and a fulcrum that can apply extreme leverage to even attempt it. Some Suk may never be broken and may perish in the attempt.

In game terms it would be an extended action to break Imperial conditioning, and it would require access to the individual and the ability to perform psychosomatic manipulation. It might involve the use of drugs, torture, blackmail, and other emotional trauma to achieve the break.

For a minor character it can be an Epic (D5) **Communicate** skill test, with success indicating the target has been broken and is subject to influence that overrides the Imperial conditioning. For major characters or story arcs, it might be considered a variant of an intrigue conflict, as it suits the narrative type of struggle that would emphasize the undertaking that breaking a Suk Doctor should be.

Ranks and Roles of the Suk School

Over the millennia, many different systems have been applied to how the Suk School is organized and administered, but they all fall into the same general scheme. Many Suk Doctors also hold ranks and titles alongside this hierarchy as nobles, military commanders, and directors in various organizations. This is more of a general guide on how to organize the Suk in your campaign, but you can add or remove from this hierarchy as you see fit, even simplifying it as far as only having Suk students and Suk Doctors.

INITIATE

Denoting Rank: White robes with no other adornments.

Duties and Responsibilities: Being students, they mostly study and perform light chores.

RESEARCHER

Denoting Rank: Lab coats or other research gear, depending on the needs of the curriculum.

Duties and Responsibilities: Being advanced students, they are expected to lead or assist in various research endeavors and projects.

CLINICIAN

Denoting Rank: Doctor's robe/coat with the mark of the Suk School.

Duties and Responsibilities: After completing medical school at the Suk School, candidates are expected to practice medicine under supervision for a period of three to five years to gain enough experience to be prepared to become Doctors.

PROCTOR

Denoting Rank: Administrative robes.

Duties and Responsibilities: Not all candidates go on to become doctors' some end up serving the Suk school in the capacity of Proctors. They have their own ranks within that designation, such as Dean, Headmaster, Teacher, Invigilator, and Administrator. Their duties mostly revolve around the running of the Suk School in an administrative capacity. Many are also subject-area-expert teachers.

DOCTOR

Denoting Rank: Doctor's robe/coat with the insignia of a doctor of the Suk School.

Duties and Responsibilities: Recognized as a full doctor, graduates of the Suk School are highly valued for their medical knowledge and are employed throughout the Imperium. Only a select few will be invited from this group to the Inner School to be able to become Suk Doctors.

SUK DOCTOR

Denoting Rank: Unshorn hair worn in a ponytail bound by a silver ring. Also, a diamond tattoo on the forehead.

Duties and Responsibilities: This is the highest rank and only granted to those that can pass the Imperial conditioning. These select few are very highly valued in the Imperium and occupy important positions in most noble Houses.

COUNCIL OF TRUSTEES

The Suk leadership is made of senior members from the different colleges that have seats on the Council of Trustees. A President is elected from the council membership to serve in seven-year terms. The President can speak as an authority figure when a single voice is needed for the Suk, otherwise the council directs how the considerable funds of the school are used. In general, the council is charged with upholding the vision of humanity as set forth by Mohandas Suk.

Talents for Suk Doctors

Not all of these new Talents are exclusive to Suk Doctors. They can be acquired by any character provided there is a logical or narrative way for the character to be able to gain them. The Talents are, however, focused on characteristics expected from a Suk Doctor. The gamemaster may make them exclusive to Suk Doctors as a way of further differentiating character archetypes in their campaigns.

ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Years of diligent studying have made you proficient in all areas of academic performance.

For any task requiring studying, it takes you only half the time to learn it, and the Difficulty is reduced by one for any test involving a task you can study for.

BEDSIDE MANNER (SUK DOCTOR TALENT)

The symbol of the Suk School and Imperial conditioning makes you innately trustworthy.

When attempting to gain the trust of someone or ingratiate yourself with them, you may reduce the Difficulty of the test by 1.

CYBERNETIC SURGEON

You have been trained in the surgery and procedures to augment the human body with machine parts.

Once per scene you can repair or fix any damaged cybernetics to full functionality. Additionally, in extended game time you can perform the surgery needed to implant cybernetics.

EMPATHETIC DIAGNOSTICS (SUK DOCTOR TALENT)

You need no medical devices to be able to diagnose an illness or medical issue.

By using your sense of touch and intuition you can examine a patient and diagnose the problem without the need of medical scanners or lab equipment. If you have access to medical equipment, this Talent lowers the Difficulty of this test by one.

IMPROVISED MEDICINE (SUK DOCTOR TALENT)

You need very little to create medicine or make improvised equipment to serve patients even in the most primitive conditions.

You can create medicine from common household chemicals or natural flora and fauna to heal most afflictions or battlefield wounds, including the effects of poisons. Any Difficulty penalty for using primitive or substandard medical assets is reduced by 1.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR

You are an expert in dealing with large scale medical services.

During a Warfare conflict where you serve as a medical director, you may restore one unit asset to the conflict at the cost of 1 Momentum.

RESEARCHER

You can use your extensive training in analysis to solve even the most complex problems.

In any extended research task you perform, you may add +1 to the Quality of the asset you use for the duration of the test.



MEDICAL ASSETS FOR SUK DOCTORS

These assets fall into the same broad categories as other assets listed in the **Dune Core Rulebook** and operate the same way in terms of rules for deployment and use. They are just specialized for a Suk Doctor character. Other characters can have access to these assets if it makes sense in the narrative and the gamemaster agrees.

HANDHELD MEDICAL SCANNER

A very expensive piece of equipment that some of the highest-ranking Suk Doctors carry as part of their medical kit. The device can be used to scan a patient to get vital readings and chemical analysis. In a pinch it can also be configured to act as a poison snooper in the hands of a skilled Suk Doctor.

As an Asset: The Handheld Medical Scanner greatly enhances the Doctor's ability to perform diagnostics on the spot without having to wait for laboratory results.

Keywords: Medical, Detection, Technology

MEDIC KIT

A standard item carried by most field medics and Suk Doctors alike. The kit has sutures, bandages, needles, medicine, and other portable equipment to perform first aid or light surgery in a setting where access to other medical facilities is limited.

As an Asset: A kit like this allows someone to perform any reasonable field medicine and first aid.

Keywords: First Aid, Survival

LABORATORY

You have access to or own a secure lab in which to do research, experiments, and even create small batches of medicine, poison, weapons, or other small gadgets. The lab can be defined in whatever manner fits your character: a room aboard your ship, a tower of your House's castle, the basement of an office building, etc.

As an Asset: A full laboratory will grant the option to perform a wide variety of research and produce chemical compounds.

Keywords: Equipment, Research

Pharmaceutical Factory

This is a full-scale manufacturing plant that can produce copious amounts of medicine, spice derivatives, and other finished chemical goods that are a source of wealth and influence for your House. The factory can be set up to provide medicines for your fiefdom or as an export source for valuable goods.

As an Asset: This asset grants the option to create large-scale pharmaceuticals, possibly adding wealth to the House.

Keywords: Manufactured, Trade Goods, Medicine

HOSPITAL SHIP

A spaceship fitted with medical equipment, labs, surgery theaters, and two dozen or so trained personnel to handle a wide variety of medical issues. The ship is orbit-capable and can make use of Guild Heighliner travel. The ship can also make planetfall and be set up as a field hospital to address local emergencies.

As an Asset: This ship is effectively a self-contained mobile hospital. Its medical status might also allow it access to places other ships might be barred from.

Keywords: Transport, Shielded, Medical

Cybernetics

Cybernetics requires many cross-disciplines in fields as diverse as robotics, cognitive science, surgery, and systems control. The key ability to being successful is being able to wire machine parts to biological neural systems. Only the Suk have the advanced medical knowledge and expertise to even attempt such augmentation. No other institutions have the knowledge nor pursue cybernetics to this extent, as it invites scrutiny from the prohibition against creating an artificial intelligence in the image of a human mind. Some cybernetics that directly connect to the brain instead of the nervous system skirt the edges of Butlerian restrictions. A case is often made by anti-technology zealots that cybernetics are a violation of the Great Convention, and the Suk should be prosecuted. Over the millennia this conflict has ebbed and flowed and has largely been overshadowed by other conflicts by the time of Muad'Dib.

The issue of cybernetic implants is contentious even within the Suk School. Though in general they are not a breach of the Great Convention by the rules of the Imperium, many question the wisdom in bringing even more attention to themselves with this practice than the already existing tension with anti-technology groups.

The question is often debated in Suk circles: at what point is a person more machine than human and thus might be classified as a Thinking Machine? The answer for some is to push it as far as the rule of law allows and find out. The cautious stay clear of this problematic medical domain, while those without ethical boundaries may very well be on the path to creating a new generation of machine overlords. After all, the cymeks, who were among humanity's more deadly enemies in the Thinking Machines war, were heavily augmented human beings themselves.

Regardless, research continues, and the Suk have perfected the creation of artificial limbs, eyes, and organs in their pursuit to serve humanity. Even brain augmentation has been pursued, bringing them ever closer to AI.

CYBERNETIC ASSETS

The keyword Implant can be applied to any asset to make it available to the character as a cybernetic asset. This works with all personal weapons, shields, and communication devices, and most poisons, drugs, and medical dispensers. Additionally, the keyword Hidden can also be applied to any such implant.

The Hidden keyword identifies items that are designed to be concealed either as part of an artificial limb/organ or implanted into the body so as to be visually undetectable. Small assets such as blades, shields, pistols, communication devices, poison needles, medical scanners and such are easy to add as cybernetic hidden assets.

With the gamemaster's agreement, even more exotic implants such as suspensor fields, jet packs, and larger assets can be considered for gameplay.



Other asset keywords that can be applied to cybernetic implants are Stronger and Armored. Stronger means the limb is twice as strong as normal. Armored means the limb or organ should be considered to have protection equivalent to body armor.

For all their potency, cybernetic implants do not heal naturally. If they are damaged, a skilled cyberneticist is required to fix them. In this way the gamemaster may insist that certain negative traits relating to damaged cybernetics cannot be removed without the right skills and equipment available.

Some caution is advised on how far down the path of cybernetics assets is allowed, as it can unbalance the game and narrative flavor of the setting. Cyborgs are rare and often treated with disdain or concern, given the potentially heretical mixture of human and machine.

EARL RHOMBUR VERNIUS

The head of the ruling House of Ix, Earl Rhombur Vernius, is the best-known example of cybernetics use in the Imperium. His lower body was almost completely destroyed in an assassination attempt on Duke Leto, along with one arm and many organs, and he suffered severe brain damage

Dr. Yueh was able to restore Rhombur to full functionality with extensive cybernetic implants and rehabilitation. His details are provided as an example of a cybernetic character, and he can be used as a template for other cybernetic characters.

Rhombur Vernius, Earl of Ix

NOTABLE SUPPORTING CHARACTER

Having lived in exile from his family planet for most of his adult life, Rhombur was driven by his desire to return as the rightful ruler of Ix. The other major tragedy that drove him was the loss of his natural body during the botched assassination of Duke Leto. Rhombur overcame these obstacles to regain his position as Earl of Ix and restore House Vernius. Rhombur was killed foiling an assassination attempt on the life of Alra Kio, Governor of Chusuk.

DRIVE		STATEMENT
DUTY:	8	Freedom of Ix at all costs.
FAITH:	5	
JUSTICE:	7	Right will prevail in the end.
POWER:	6	
TRUTH:	4	

SKILL		FOCUSES
BATTLE:	6	Cybernetic Limbs
COMMUNICATE:	5	
DISCIPLINE:	6	
MOVE:	7	Untiring
UNDERSTAND:	4	

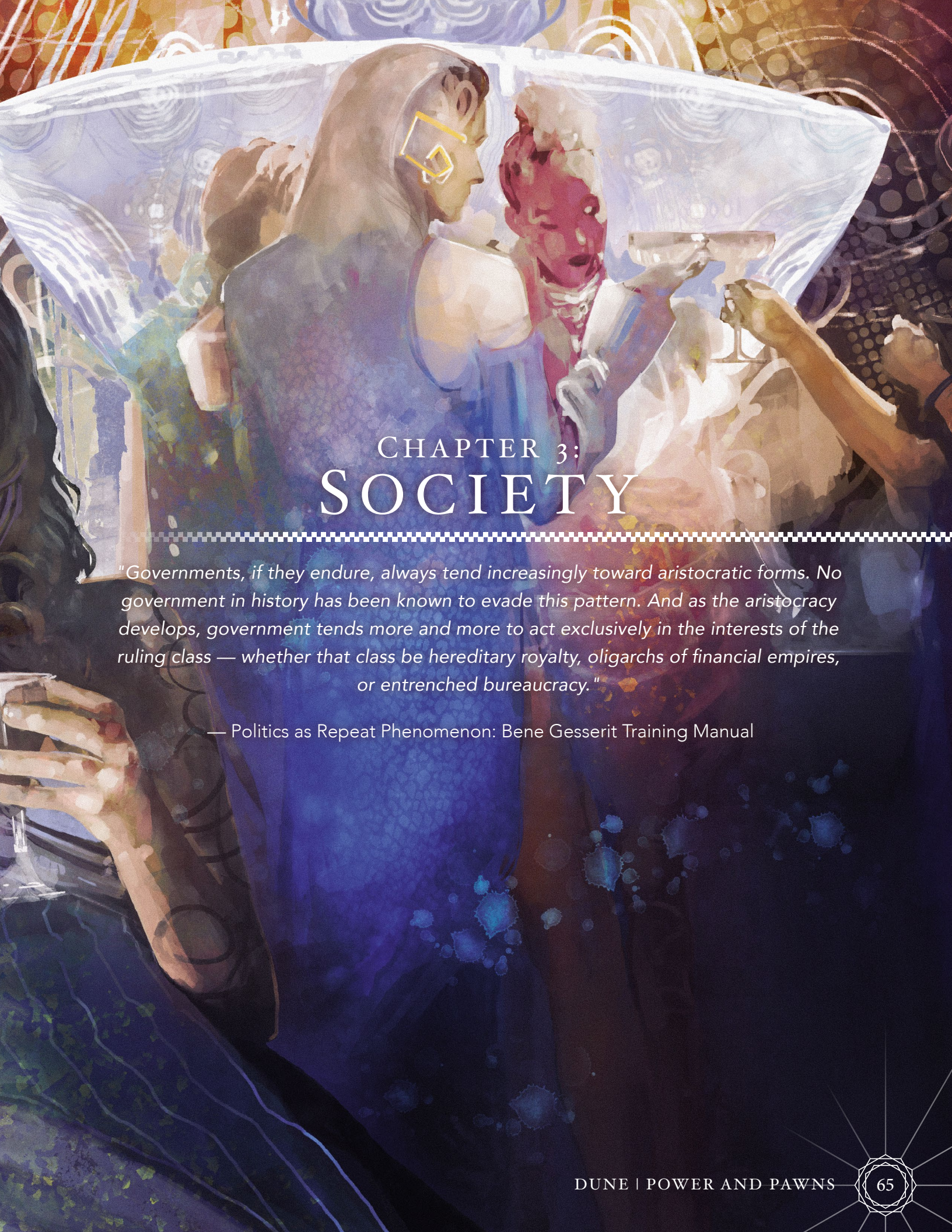
Traits: Desperate, Spy Master

TALENTS

- **Driven:** After Rhombur spends 3 Threat for 1 point of Determination, roll 1d20. If he rolls equal to or under his Discipline rating (by itself), he immediately regains the spent Threat.
- **Improvised Weapon**: As most of Rhombur's limbs are artificial, they can be used as improvised weapons. Once per scene, Rhombur may create a Quality 0 asset (at no cost) that he can use in a personal or skirmish conflict.
- **Rapid Recovery**: Rhombur can recover quickly after physical injuries due to his body being mostly machine. Once per scene, at the start of his turn, Rhombur may add +2 to Momentum to remove a complication which represents an injury (Threat if a PC). In addition, Rhombur may pay to Resist Defeat one additional time during a conflict.

Assets: Armored, Stronger Cybernetic Body





Chapter 3: Society

"Governments, if they endure, always tend increasingly toward aristocratic forms. No government in history has been known to evade this pattern. And as the aristocracy develops, government tends more and more to act exclusively in the interests of the ruling class — whether that class be hereditary royalty, oligarchs of financial empires, or entrenched bureaucracy."

— Politics as Repeat Phenomenon: Bene Gesserit Training Manual

Political Campaigns

The Imperium is beset by the endless machinations of the Houses of the Landsraad, the ambition of the Padishah Emperor, and the meticulous plots of the Bene Gesserit. Despite the omnipresence of the Sardaukar legions, warfare is seldom open in the Imperium. It's much too costly, and much too difficult to arrange. Why waste vast sums of money on outfitting an army when a few well-placed bribes might achieve the same goal, and so much more cheaply? Why pay the Spacing Guild exorbitant amounts of solaris to transport your troops across the gulf of space, when you can simply arrange things so the Guild cancels your enemy's agreements, and they can no longer travel across the interstellar reaches?

This is the great game at the center of Imperial life. A perpetual state of subtle strike and counterstrike, carefully concealed beneath the unspoken rules and protocols governing the conduct of the various factions as they jostle for position.

The player characters are part of this world of subterfuge and deception, where every uttered phrase hides a threat, and every conversation is a step, stab, or parry in an elaborate duel. Unlike many other types of adventure, it is important to remember that political plots are something players can initiate, not something they need to wait for the gamemaster to create.

So, how do you allow characters to initiate such political plots? How can your group bring them to the table and make them as exciting as any other form of play?

First Principles

First and foremost, you must understand the very nature of the game you are about to play. Your enemies will kill to win. We're talking cold-blooded murder. And not just a single drop of poison in a single cup of tea; we're talking about wiping out an entire family, their retainers, their supporters, their allies, and sometimes, even their enemies.

You must recognize the stakes at play. The Houses play families against each other, make friends turn on friends, and hand knives to lovers to use in moments of passion. This is not a polite game. It has no manners and very few rules.

But most importantly — and I want you to listen very closely here — winning always has a cost. And that cost is always more than you thought. You must be willing to pay any price to win, going so far as to sacrifice your deepest convictions. In short, you must be willing to go further than your enemies. Pay prices they would never be willing to pay. Make sacrifices they would never be willing to make.

History is full of stories of noble heroes who stood by high-minded principles such as honor and dignity. Usually, their histories end in tragedy. Heed that lesson. Honor is a weapon you can use against your opponents.

If you do not, your name will be erased from history. If you do, you will be counted among the greatest of Houses. Keep that in mind as we continue. These are our first principles.

Verify, Then Trust

No, not "trust, then verify." That's awful advice.

When it comes to the cutthroat politics of the Houses of the Landsraad, apply the Royal Society's motto: take no one's word for it. Specifically, your strategy should be "verify, then trust."

Be a reporter. Make sure your information comes from two independent sources. If the Bene Gesserit tells you one of your marshals is a traitor, talk to someone else who may have the same information to see if the story holds up.

Have your own sources of information as well. Primary sources are the best. If you can record an important conversation, do it. There's no "he said, she said," when there's a tape.

When you receive information that a third party is plotting a coup or revenge, go to that third party and confirm it. For example, your marshal wants to undermine your House doctor's authority, so she tells you the House doctor has been quietly criticizing your leadership. Your first instinct, of course, is to stop communicating with the House doctor. Mission accomplished. However, there's an important phrase: "Communication is victory." That means you put both the marshal and the doctor in one room, sit them down, and ask, "What's really going on?" Listen to the stories, then check them. Verify, then trust.

Until you have the first, you should never do the second.

Trust Motives, Not Friendships

Who to trust will always be the most difficult question to answer. If you think you have a foolproof way to determine who you can trust, or that you can always trust family, you are going to die. While you can rely on some allies, usually after they have proven themselves loyal many times, anyone can betray you. People can always get scared, listen to bad advice, or just get a better offer.

You need to make sure that any ally you have gets something out of the arrangement or will be equally hurt if the plot goes wrong. Baron Harkonnen and the Emperor hate each other, but they both hate the Atreides more and know that if their plot to destroy Duke Leto is revealed, they will both suffer. Any ally who isn't in as deep as you is already looking for a way out, and that means they will likely betray you. While this isn't a foolproof system, it is more reliable than assuming your current friends will always be your allies.

Initiating a Plot

So, you've never actually played a "political game" before and you're not sure exactly how to do it. In fact, you don't know where to start. Well, let's look at the very first things you should do when starting a political game.

A political game is no different from any other kind of game. It's as easy as Aristotle put it two thousand years ago. All you need are three elements: a character with a desire, the object of the desire, and the obstacle standing between the character and the object. Desire + Obstacle + Object = Plot. In an action movie or adventure story, the protagonist overcomes the obstacle and acquires the object via action. In a political story, the protagonist overcomes the obstacle and acquires the object via negotiation, intrigue, and deception. It will not necessarily take all of those things, but sometimes, it will.

As with any scenario or adventure thread, you should begin by looking at what the characters want. In a roleplaying game, this is pretty easy to find out: look at their character sheets. **Dune: Adventures in the Imperium** does a great job of putting motivations on the character sheet, giving you a clear idea of what the characters (and players) want in the form of Drives. Once you know what the characters/players want, the job of the gamemaster is to put obstacles in their way. And once you have that, you have plot.

In this instance, it's most likely that someone or some organization is standing in the character's way. It might be another House, or it could be one of the Guilds or Schools. It might be one individual with impressive reach and contacts — like Count Fenring, for example.

What or whoever is proving an impediment, the player characters need to deal with them, but simply challenging them to a duel or charging in with blades drawn is sloppy and messy. It makes your House members look like brutes, or at least not good enough at the game of politics to take down an enemy without revealing your hand. Carefully removing the opposing force's support and influence before having them exiled is far more appropriate.

The first step is identifying the threat. Depending on the kind of game you're running, it might be an entire House, or it might instead be a particularly brutal spice merchant on a distant world. It might just be a street-level crook in Carthag. The nature of the threat doesn't matter. This approach works for any form of politically-minded conflict.

The second step in any political plot is to determine where the threat's power comes from. Consider Baron Harkonnen's plot in **Dune**. He knows Duke Leto's power stems from Caladan, his respected position in the Landsraad, and his highly trained soldiers. The first part of the Baron's plan involves separating the Duke from his stronghold and familiar ground with the appointment to Arrakis. In the same way, the player characters should, when beginning to build a plot against an enemy, try to build a similar picture of their foe. Establish what makes them formidable; what renders them capable of resisting the characters. If you can make your enemy think they are gaining an advantage with this separation (like control of Arrakis), so much the better.

MAPPING THE TERRITORY

The reason for compiling this information might not appear immediately obvious to the player characters, but it's absolutely key to any political plot. Without it, a grand political scheme can feel just like any other conflict. Building a comprehensive picture of the enemy's power and influence gives the characters different threads to pull at and unravel and different possible routes to pursue — politics is never straightforward.

Building an organization map for the foe is a great means of visualizing this disparate information and bringing it together in a useful and usable way. Place the enemy's name at the center of this map, and then add arrows connecting to the different sources of the enemy's power. Supplement the map with information, explaining why and how such an element grants power. This aids characters in orienting themselves and beginning to plot ways and means of cutting away some of these supporting connections.

The gamemaster can keep their own map that the players can gradually come to copy, or let what the players have discovered give them ideas for what they don't yet know.

Examples of such maps can be found in the Gamemaster's Toolkit.

Finding out all of this information calls for some careful research, both in the sense of thoroughness and in terms of ensuring no one notices. Characters being too interested in one element of their enemy's holdings or alliances can give the game away, but we'll touch on that in more detail later. Characters might need to carry out numerous investigations to establish clear links between the target of their plot and the infrastructure around them. Why does the Bene Gesserit treat them with such respect, for example? Why does the Guild provide travel at such cut rates?

Such questions might need substantial research to truly answer, but building a full picture of an enemy's capabilities and resources is essential when initiating a political plot. Once the characters possess such an overview, they're ready to start the next stage.

The gamemaster should remember that it is not just up to them to provide all the clues. It is up to the players to create a plan to learn the information they need. The gamemaster's role is to reveal whether the plan is successful or not. However, they should be ready to help the players if they are stuck, perhaps by creating an NPC who offers a new option to infiltrate their enemy.

Undermining the Structure

Plotting requires planning. Once the player characters establish the outline of their target's power base, they can begin working out how to chip away at it. Then they can deprive their target of the things that are problematic for the player characters' plans.

This can be as simple as bribing someone to cease offering a service, or as complex as arranging with the Emperor to remove the fief of a planet from the player characters themselves and have it given to their foe, as Baron Harkonnen does. Whatever the options, the characters should determine what they wish to do and how they want to achieve it.

Again, this might require research, investigation, and the careful deployment of force. Identifying potential weaknesses — for example, Piter de Vries's speculations regarding Doctor Yueh and the breaking of Imperial conditioning — is essential here. Who can be leaned on? Who can be removed, and how? What leverage do the characters possess, and how can they utilize it?



While this shouldn't become a long, laborious process of endless planning and strategizing, it's an excellent opportunity to use the organization map to determine which of the target's support structures could be removed and, importantly, when.

Planning the order in which these things occur is of as much importance as determining how — as will become apparent.

Getting to Business

Once the plan is in place, it's time to bring it to fruition. The player characters indicate how they will break down their enemy's sources of power and influence themselves, or the sources of that power, then they carry out the plan, moving against their enemy quickly and efficiently.

How the characters go about this will by necessity be different, depending on each source of power. It's no good threatening one of the Bene Gesserit Mother Superiors with violence, for instance. The potential retaliation from the Sisterhood renders such a choice enormously dangerous, and what do the Reverend Mothers fear from violence? Pain? They've felt much worse. In the same way, wasting valuable money on bribing a gang of crooks to forswear their allegiance to the target is a bad plan, when an assassin's blade is a cheaper, easier choice. Don't take on your enemies where they are strongest; attack their weaknesses.

The characters need to act decisively, executing their plans in as consistent and effective a manner as possible, seeking to cut away their target's supports as a cruel child might pluck the legs from a spider. Timing is crucial here. Once the player characters make a move, there is a growing chance their enemy might realize something is wrong. If the plan is too direct, the enemy will easily realize what the player characters' goal is and move to protect it.

You know the old phrase: once is chance, twice is coincidence, three times is enemy action. And so, make sure your deliberate strikes (those the enemy can easily deduce as direct attacks) happen only once or twice. Then, give them time to breathe. Once their guard is down, hit them again, but this time, make your attack seem to be an accident. That way, your enemy is always off guard and never moving to effectively defend themselves, or only moving to defend the wrong things.

Once the enemy is without their sources of power and influence, the plot isn't quite complete. Now comes the moment of revelation. The scene of gloating triumph, or, if the player characters don't really fall into the Harkonnen mold, then simply carrying out the final steps of their plan. Whether this is ensuring their enemy is exiled or must flee, or ensuring the enemy knows they've lost, it needs doing.

The Baron Harkonnen made a mistake that nearly ended his life and foiled his plan. He gloated too soon. The proud, arrogant Baron could not help himself. He made his revenge too personal. And because of that, he nearly lost his life and his House. Remember the old adage about revenge being a dish best served cold. Make your heart just as cold. That way, you will not make the same mistakes as the Baron.

A better option is to make your revenge invisible. They say you must dig two graves before seeking revenge, but those words were written by those who do not understand how to enact the perfect kanly: the one that no one can prove. Gain your revenge in such a way that it looks like your target was the victim of circumstance or even self-destruction. Then keep your lips sealed. If only you know the source of your victim's demise, then none can blame you for it.

If you need information from your enemy, they should ideally never know what you have taken from them. Otherwise they will change their plans. However, another perspective is that being seen to destroy your enemies is a good way to maintain a powerful reputation in the Landsraad.

When acting on political plots, player characters should be careful. Political plots work on so many different levels, with so much going on, it's entirely possible for them to get away from their instigators, sparking something entirely unexpected. Baron Harkonnen's plan leads to Paul Atreides' rise. That is why, when you seek to destroy an enemy, you must destroy them completely. As a wise sage once wrote, "When you show mercy, your enemies make you more enemies. When you show them no mercy, your enemies only make graves."

Resistance and Response

While the Harkonnens, with the support of the Padishah Emperor, move against House Atreides, Duke Leto and his trusted companions don't sit around and wait for the end. They scheme and maneuver with the same intensity as their foes. They fail, of course, and there are elements of the Harkonnen strategy they never see approaching, but that doesn't daunt their efforts.

Leto recognizes the Baron's plan early on, dispatching Duncan Idaho to meet and communicate with the Fremen to begin building a force to defend against anticipated Harkonnen attacks. While Doctor Yueh's treachery is never foreseen, much of the weakening of Leto's power is detected and defended against. This should be something the player characters experience too. Their targets won't sit back and simply let themselves be destroyed. They'll respond.

What the player characters' enemy does depends both on the type of enemy and the circumstances they find themselves in. It could be anything from attacking the player characters' resources, attempting to build new alliances to replace those the player characters whittle away, or potentially escalating matters — seeking to bring in outside organizations to censure the player characters, for example. Causing trouble with CHOAM is always risky, and the target might attempt to turn accusations of disruption back on the player characters.

Whatever the specifics, the gamemaster should look to ensure the player characters don't have things all their own way. Challenge them, ensure their plans require changing at the last moment, and that sudden struggles result in danger for everyone involved. Threat points can be especially useful for this, not just to increase a Difficulty but to add new enemies and obstacles to the player's plot.

Use the organization map to pick out key points at which the player characters' plots might be pushed back, or use the timings of the player characters' attacks to allow their target to reinforce some of the alliances the player characters plan to attack later. Politics is never static; there's always something happening, and the interweaving plots of political schemes should be the same.

Contingencies, not Plans

They say no plan survives contact with the enemy. As soon as you hit your enemy with the first part of your plan, everything changes. That's why you need contingencies.

Don't plan on your enemy responding one way after your attack. Instead, consider all the ways they may respond and have a plan for each response. When you assassinate their Warmaster, how will they react? You've made the assassination look like it came from one of her subordinates, but will they believe your ruse? If they do, have a plan. If they don't, have another plan. Make certain you are always ahead of them. Force your enemy to react to you, rather than the other way around.

Feints and Thrusts

In duels, a feint is a distraction intended to move your opponent's attention away from the real strike. It is a setup. Feint toward their left shoulder, forcing them to react, while you disengage and score a hit on their right wrist.

Your plans should also include feints as well as thrusts. Use distractions to put your enemy's attention where you want it, pulling them to the left while you attack to the right. For these kinds of maneuvers, using 'doomed spies' is the best option. These are the poor fools you send against your enemy with false information. Doomed spies are untrained rubes who will most certainly fail. Your enemy captures them, interrogates them, and the doomed spy gives your enemy the information you want them to have. (You can even convince doomed spies they represent another House rather than your own, furthering the misinformation.) Send a doomed spy to poison their water while your true spy sabotages their energy supply or assassinates their Bene Gesserit advisor.



Gamemastering the Imperium

As the gamemaster, your task is to simulate the universe. When playing **Dune: Adventures in the Imperium**, this is quite literally the case. You're creating a game spanning the cosmos itself, taking into account billions of potential non-player characters and hundreds of habitable worlds. A game set within the Landsraad, within the carefully orchestrated plots of the Great Houses, takes all of those disparate elements and requires you, the gamemaster, to add byzantine complexity alongside everything else you're keeping track of. As a result, gamemastering an adventure or a campaign set amidst the Great Houses can be more than a little daunting.

This section is written to offer some guidance on creating and running this kind of game, making them fun, and ensuring you don't need your own Mentat to keep everything moving! However, as political games might be initiated by players, there is much here that will be useful to any group that wants to take a more active stance in Imperial politics.

Types of Political Game

Political chicanery comes in many forms. It can be monumental plots, costing enough money to almost bankrupt a Great House, as the trap set by the Baron Harkonnen does in the novel **Dune**. But it can also be a small, low-key conspiracy practiced in the shadows with the aim of achieving a spike in the price of melange, in order to force an arrogant nobleman to bargain. Deciding the kind of plot you want to represent in your game is essential.

While such a decision is of course one the players can be involved in, the ultimate decision is the gamemaster's, although its possible plots might contract and expand in scope as they occur. The player characters might approach things in an entirely unexpected fashion, changing the focus of the game. The following levels, however, provide a good basis for orienting the whole group's ideas and expectations:

- **Universal Scale:** Plots embroiling the entire Imperium and beyond. For example, the plot to assassinate Paul Atreides in the novel **Dune Messiah**.
- **Landsraad Scale:** Focusing on a conflict between two or three of the Great Houses, typically focused on one or two worlds, as in the clash between House Atreides and House Harkonnen in the novel **Dune**.
- **Planetary Scale:** Concentrated onto a single planet, involving factions indigenous to the planet and perhaps one external force. For instance, the ongoing clashes between the Fremen and the Harkonnens on Arrakis.
- **Personal Scale:** Clashes between small groups of individuals, perhaps within the same organization, all jostling for position and recognition.

As noted above, these categories aren't hard and fast. Some Planetary Scale political intrigues might be outsized Personal Scale conflicts, or vice versa. But bearing in mind the general contours of the game you intend to run, and the size of the plots likely to be conducted, can be an excellent way of codifying the kind of game you want to create together.

Political Thriller

Politics doesn't need to mean lack of action. This might seem an obvious statement, but it's worth stating, and it's worth keeping in mind. Political intrigue might require conversation, carefully guarded statements, and consequences hanging on the height of a single raised eyebrow, but the results of these exchanges and plots can be brutal.

The plot of the novel **Dune** is a perfect example; meticulous preparation gives way to breathless chases, citywide slaughter, and the horrific violence of a brutal jihad. The action should be kept near the surface — Mentat assassins might approach from anywhere. Poison might be mixed in every drink.

The Landsraad is not safe. Death stalks the corridors of every palace, and this feeling of threat and paranoia should be woven into your games. Don't let the fact that intrigue conflicts, and many of the other features of a politically focused game, don't feature massed battles or planetary scale invasions (or at least, not at the start). The threats of a political game are still very real and pressing when they come from those who deal in words.

Try and ensure the presence of threat. This can be done through the inclusion of unexpected action sequences; for example, hunter-seeker drones explode from every corner of a room during an otherwise calm scene. Or it could be in a cryptic but threatening message left on a dining table. Wherever it comes from, threat is ever present.

Plot & CounterPlot

As touched on elsewhere in this chapter, a political plot formulated by one faction is likely to be met with a counterplot from an enemy. But don't worry about this! The gamemaster doesn't need to laboriously plan every stage of an enemy's reactions to the political pressures brought to bear by the player characters. You only ever need to present the most immediate element of an enemy's plot to the player characters. What is happening right now? That's all that matters. Think of it like an iceberg. The player characters might infer the existence of a vast chunk of ice beneath the surface, but what they're worried about is the bit above the surface, the bit they can see.

As the gamemaster, if you can focus on providing one unexpected reaction to the character's plotting, you're doing your job. At the same time, if your player characters aren't doing much plotting but are the focus of an enemy's grand strategy, the same principle holds true. The player characters only need to grapple with one threat, one dire situation, at a time.

Even after they deal with one situation, there's no need to suddenly fling five or six different plot threads at them to unravel. Use the structure of any good mystery: offer clues liberally, but only reveal information in single bites, and only ever throw revealed political or physical threats at them one at a time.

This is a simple principle but it works. As tempting as it might be to confront player characters with myriad threats, this usually has the effect of either overwhelming the narrative and leaving players feeling deprived of agency, or worse, as though playing on is hopeless.

Twists & Revelations

Every good political plot is improved by a twist. The treachery of Doctor Yueh is so effective because it's so unexpected. This can be true for your games too. Revealing a trusted NPC to be a double agent, or the player characters discovering their true enemy isn't in fact the forces of one House but another instead, are a great means of introducing additional uncertainty and paranoia into the narrative and keeping the players (and their characters) from becoming complacent!

At the same time, twists need to be handled carefully. It's far too easy for them to become "gotcha!" moments, where the player characters' carefully prepared plans are torn up without them feeling as though they ever had a means of foreseeing the twist. Thufir Hawat suspects a traitor in the midst of House Atreides, but he suspects Jessica instead of Doctor Yueh. If you intend to use a big twist as part of your games of political intrigue, seed clues about it prior to the revelation.

For instance, if the intention is to reveal to the player characters that their enemy is in fact not one House but another, larger and wealthier Great House, present some hints of this. They can be extremely subtle — a copy of the Orange Catholic Bible with a form of type setting only used on one world, for example. Or they can be completely obvious — a spice shipment stamped with the emblem of the House. What's important is to give the characters the opportunity to piece things together before the twist.

This might mean, on occasion, player characters detect the true nature of things before the gamemaster would prefer, but this is a preferable state of affairs to the players feeling as though they've been cheated. And, knowing players, the theories they have as to the true nature of things are likely far weirder, wilder, and more implausible than any twist the gamemaster might plan! A clever gamemaster takes on such ideas in a way that the players feel they uncovered a complex plot rather than that they were writing it themselves!

Such twists are also perfect vehicles for forcing revelations not simply about the true nature of events in the Landsraad but about the player characters themselves. How do they respond to things shifting so suddenly? What are they prepared to do to survive, or to triumph? Might they now consider working with a sworn enemy, or taking a Faustian pact they were offered?

Twists and revelations are perfect for forcing these major recalculations, so they are perfect for exciting gameplay!

Words of Wisdom

Finally, a few extra pointers for both players and gamemasters for playing out such plots. Take these on board as both ways to create plot and ways to act within a plot, whichever side you start on.

NOTHING IS FOR FREE

Do nothing for free. Nothing. There are no such things as friends in politics, nor is there any such thing as a favor. When someone comes to you for a favor, the first words from your lips should be "What do I get in return?"

If someone shows any kind of hesitation, remind them that they would not put their necks on the line for free. There are no 'harmless actions' in the Landsraad; every action has the potential to lose friends and make enemies. And the more dangerous the favor, the more you expect in return.

Also, always get paid up front. They are the ones coming to you for a favor. Remember: verify, then trust. Verify the payment, then perform the action.



SHOW ONLY WHAT NEEDS TO BE SEEN

When you want someone to believe you, show a minimal amount of facts. The more detailed and convoluted a story is, the less likely people are to believe it (to say nothing of it being difficult to remember and keep straight). People like to believe the world is simple. A straight-forward story is a convincing story.

How do you trim down a story? You leave out the details that don't help you out and keep the details that do. However, you should pepper in some facts that are not in your favor. Admit to mistakes.

TELL THE TRUTH TWICE, LIE ONCE

This old principle is known by everyone, but it still works like a charm. When you want to convince someone of a lie, tell them two truths first. Tell them two things they already know to be true, then slip in a lie that backs up those truths. This way, they'll be more likely to believe the lie.

NEVER START YOUR OWN RUMORS

Never allow gossip, rumor, or innuendo to come back to you. You should have your own gossip mill, constantly creating lies and uncovering unpleasant truths about your enemies, but make sure it can't be traced directly to you.

Next Steps

A game set in the heart of the Imperium, amidst the machinations of the Landsraad, might seem complex — and it can be — but it also offers boundless opportunities for follow-up adventures. Grand plots might succeed, or they might fail, but what happens afterward?

If the player characters succeed in reducing one of their enemies to a shadow of their former selves, is that where things end? Of course not! Such a failure is merely the start of a slowly building revenge plan. In the same way, if the characters are trapped or fail to counter a plot launched against them, how do they fight their way back to power and prestige?

In the Landsraad, there's always a way back, but the price might be high. Do the player characters want to pay it? Play the game and find out!

Running Intrigue

While many arguments in the Imperium are settled with blades or poison, in the political arena, conflicts are usually managed with battles of intrigue. Intrigue is the meat and drink of life in the Imperial Court, with every day a battle for position and rank that can change in a heartbeat. Plots and plans dance around the courtiers constantly, and those who cannot find the right rhythm can trip and fall. Intrigue might range from the odd snipe to put a rival in their place, to complex plots that might take months or years to destroy an enemy.

Intrigue conflicts work in much the same fashion as any other conflict. They revolve around the movement and deployment of assets. What is less obvious, and makes intrigue conflicts somewhat difficult to run, is their emphasis on intangible assets. In a duel, position, obstacles, and the use of assets make immediate sense — the use of knives and swords to penetrate shields, for example. In warfare, the same is true, simply on a grander scale. Even in an espionage conflict, the assets involved typically have a corporeal form; whether it's a spy, or a hidden recording device, there's something clearly and plainly accessible.

This is often not the case with an intrigue conflict. In an intrigue conflict, the currency and assets in play are often things like information, rumors, or knowledge of a person's weaknesses or preferences. While Paul's confrontation with the hunter-seeker is best thought of as a duel conflict, the true purpose of the attack is not to kill Paul (although that would have been a nice bonus for the Harkonnens). It's instead part of an intrigue conflict between Baron Harkonnen and Duke Atreides. Whether successful or not, the hunter-seeker attack says "even when you think you are secure, I can still threaten the life of your son". In this instance, we can see the Baron's use of in-depth understanding of a person's psyche as an asset.

This can be difficult to represent effectively. There are a couple of approaches the gamemaster and players can use to achieve the right feeling and impact at the table.

EXTERIORIZING THOUGHTS

The first of these is to detach the game from exterior reality. That is, move the environment from the physical world to the interior world of the mind. The novel **Dune** and its sequels are notable for the extensive use of a character's inner thoughts to debate and explain the actions taken. In an intrigue conflict where things such as the furniture or other physical artifacts are less important, use this technique in your games.

Speaking a character's thoughts aloud, presenting the use of an asset as it might manifest, can be both effective and evocative. Players describing how information is being used or why such a piece of information is so effective when deployed is a great way of rendering the use of the asset more immediately understandable and potent as a device.

ALLOW FOR PREPARATION

Launching a political coup is always the result of careful planning. Make sure this is the case in your intrigue conflicts too—but be flexible in how you allow this to play out on the table. If during an intrigue conflict the gamemaster presents an obstacle for a player character to overcome, it might be that the player character already anticipated such an obstacle. Now, whether that's true, of course, is irrelevant. If it makes sense for the character to anticipate a certain obstacle or problem, then it should be allowed. That's not to say a character should just be able to dismiss an element of the game, of course.

It does mean they can try and retroactively explain how they anticipated such an eventuality and put in place means of overcoming it. They can use Momentum to pay for such retrospective activities, enabling the intricacies of plot and counterplot to be quickly brought to bear in a game without interrupting the seamless flow of play.

- For example: Rachael de Shaw is a highly trained spy. She's engaged in an intrigue conflict with one of the guards at a spice refinery. The gamemaster interposes an obstacle. The guard demands to know what right Rachael has to access the refinery. Rachael could use a Communicate test to persuade the guard to let her in. She could even knock the guard out with a **Battle** test. Alternatively, she can spend Momentum to have prepared (or otherwise procured) a false ID, creating an asset on the fly.

- Another possible spend is to recall some information about the guard. Rachael de Shaw is, after all, a spy. Spies are expert in finding revealing or incriminating facts about someone. Rachael's player spends Momentum to recall the guard's numerous love affairs he's desperate to keep from his wife. Now terrified of being exposed, the guard reluctantly gives way.

BEING FLEXIBLE

The Momentum rules obviously allow the player characters to create assets in the fashion detailed above, but the gamemaster is encouraged to be particularly flexible in terms of retroactive spends in intrigue conflicts. The intangibility of many of the assets usable by player characters means they're potentially of limited use. As a result, being more generous with what a Momentum spend allows with regard to the use of an asset is not a bad policy. Indeed, it can encourage creative play.

For instance, when using a rumor or lie to attack an NPC, should a player character receive a negative response — as in, the NPC seems unconcerned about the lie or unaffected by the rumor — then allow the player character to spend Momentum to alter its details until the NPC is suddenly gripped with panic!

Intrigue assets should be flexible in this fashion, with player characters able to invest more points into them and subtly change their details. That's not to say they should be able to simply completely alter the fundamental elements of the asset, of course, but that the defining edges of an information-based asset should be a little blurred sometimes.

DO YOU NEED A FULL CONFLICT?

As you gear up collections of pawns and assets, it is worth considering if the conflict needs a full intrigue. While any exchange of social barbs might be a conflict, taking time out to run it might distract from the game. It might also be a lot of rules for what should be a simple interaction. A plot to utterly cut your rival down to size in front of witnesses should be given the time it deserves. But two courtiers trading an insult as they pass in a corridor doesn't need a full intrigue map played out. Match the scale of your use of the system to the scale of the intrigue itself.

But even trading insults in a corridor is a conflict and offers a chance to hurt or build any character's social reputation. If there is a prize to be won or a wound to be inflicted, some system should be used. In such cases, a simple opposed test to see who gets the better of the other in this brief social duel should be enough. The winner should either earn a temporary trait or force a trait of their choice on the loser. Such traits will only last until the next scene, encouraging characters to indulge in some edged banter before any social occasion to establish a pecking order.

INVOLVING THE WHOLE GROUP

While engaging and interesting, a full intrigue takes time. Anyone who isn't involved in it is sitting out of the game. For this reason, the gamemaster should manage the length and complexity of any intrigue with the amount of players whose character is involved. In a group with a mixture of social and non-social characters, you will need to find a balance for where to put the spotlight, as you should with any aspect of play.

Sometimes this balance will be self-evident. If the social character is usually left out during battles and skirmishes, it's only fair that the warrior characters have to take a break now and again so the social character can enjoy a conflict of their own. But it's not really a great solution for anyone to be sitting out of the game at any point, so the key is to find ways to bring other characters into any conflict. Just as non-combat characters might sneak around a battlefield or cause a distraction rather than attacking with a blade, so too can non-social characters help in a social intrigue. They might help move assets, provide alibis, or gather intelligence for the social character's developing intrigue. Any conflict works much better if the whole group can find a part to play in it.

Even if not every character can be involved, there is no reason every player can't be. They can advise the players of characters who are involved and help discuss the options. They might even play a supporting character and get involved that way. While the gamemaster should offer each player the opportunity to make use of their character's abilities, they should always be mindful of who (if anyone) is hogging the spotlight. In turn, players should recognize when it is another's 'time to shine' and be ready to take a step back or assume a supporting role now and again.

ROLEPLAY IN INTRIGUE

While you can add an element of roleplay to any scene, intrigue plots are brought alive with it. If a player can voice the barb their character throws or the insult they attack a rival with, the scene will come to life tenfold. If a player can add more roleplay by detailing exactly what their character says and does in the intrigue (with the gamemaster offering the responses of their enemy), this is to be encouraged. The gamemaster might award a little more Momentum or even advancement points for an especially well-roleplayed scene, although a more enjoyable scene for everyone should usually be reward enough.

It is also important to remember that not every player is adept with social witticisms. In fact, many who are the complete opposite might be drawn to a character with skills they lack in real life; this is why we have a rules system. Just as players who are not good knife fighters can enjoy playing out a duel, so too should less-social players be able to play witty and charming characters. Such players should still be encouraged to suggest what their character is saying, but have the results judged by the roll. If the player comes out with an extremely cheesy line, but the test is a great success, then somehow their character has sold the line exceptionally well.

If a player is still not comfortable with too much roleplay, the gamemaster shouldn't insist on it. While roleplay is to be encouraged, it should not be enforced. Any rewards for roleplay should not unbalance the game or make quieter or less-social players feel that they aren't playing their character correctly. Essentially, any test of a character's abilities should test the character, not the player. However, with the right encouragement and the freedom to experiment, a less-social player might be able to find their character's voice.

The Social Arena

When an intrigue conflict begins, the first thing to define is the series of zones it will be fought in. In an intrigue conflict, each person involved is a zone. The gamemaster should represent everyone involved, including player characters, as zones and draw link lines between any that know or have access to each other. For instance, all the player characters can be considered connected to each other. If they have had dealings with a rival before, they might have a connection to them. But a rival they don't know might need to be approached through a mutual friend, or a particular servant or courtier. As a result, the player characters might have a link to the intermediary but not to the rival.

It is perfectly acceptable for the player characters to focus on creating connections in the early parts of an intrigue conflict. They might focus on an intermediary to make an introduction so they can have a direct connection to their unknowing rival. But until they have the right connections, just as in any conflict, assets can only be applied and moved into connected zones. Creating such connections should be considered the same as creating a new asset.

As with a duel, assets must be placed and moved into the zone representing the character the player characters want to affect, and then be 'used' in that zone to defeat the rival. At that point the player characters can gain the bonus they sought when the stakes were set. Failure will undoubtedly alert the rival to the plot, although they may already have assets in play trying to defeat the player characters. This is especially the case when two rivals are negotiating a deal or competing for the favor of a third party (such as the Emperor).

In any intrigue, the map might change or adapt as the intrigue goes on. Characters/zones might be removed as they are either taken out of play or even killed by the use of assets in their zone. This might even be done by their own side to deny their rival access via a weak point in their network. New allies might be added and new connections forged as the intrigue continues. This can be done as you would add another asset, allowing a player character to add a new participant to the zone map and connect them to at least one other character.

SETTING THE STAKES

Before the intrigue conflict begins, once the zones are set up and pieces put into play, the players and gamemaster must determine the stakes. They must determine the purpose of the intrigue, and what a successful attack on their rival actually means. It could be to hurt their reputation, force them into stepping away from a negotiation, or even see them disgraced at court. The bigger the result, the higher the Difficulty of any attack will be. So, it is better to gradually whittle down your enemies. You might be able to get them banished from court, but that would be exceptionally difficult if they are in favor. A few intrigues to destroy their reputation first might set the stage for them to be cast out of society more easily in a final intrigue. Unfortunately, the longer the intrigue, the more chance the target has to uncover who is trying to destroy them.

While the most obvious use of an intrigue is to crush your enemies, it can also be to make friends. Alliances as well as enmities are acceptable results. You might try to leverage a new alliance with threats and blackmail, but you can just as easily (and more permanently) create an alliance by making friends and using gifts, shared objectives, and your good reputation as assets.

Just as players should declare their intent, so should the gamemaster declare the price of failure. This might be detailing what the player characters' enemies are trying to do, or simply announcing the consequences of failure. In most cases failure will make their plot obvious to their enemy, but it might also carry a loss of assets and reputation when trying to destroy those of an enemy. In a straightforward competition or negotiation, the player characters will simply not gain the prize they are after.

Using Assets

As with any other form of conflict, intrigue conflicts rely on the use of assets. Creating new and effective assets can be the difference between a plot terminating in total success or catastrophic failure. Achieving the right balance is quite complex, for both players and gamemasters. It is important to recognize what is a fair use of an asset and what is pushing the boundaries too far.

The group should agree what represents an acceptable alteration or contortion of any asset. Two or three changes might be made to an asset retroactively, to ensure it remains useful. But this should come with a cost, in terms of Momentum. In general, changing an asset should cost 2 Momentum, as it's effectively creating a new one, but it shouldn't require a test to create. If the change is minor or subtle the gamemaster might only require a cost of 1 Momentum.

USING UP ASSETS

In an intrigue conflict, the gamemaster may rule that some assets are only usable once. If your intangible leverage (such as blackmail) doesn't successfully intimidate an enemy once, it probably won't work a second time. If the asset is specific to a particular person, then the asset should be removed from play. But some assets (such as having the Emperor's favor) might be used on other rivals even if it fails to impress one of them. Exactly which assets should be categorized as 'single use' is up to the gamemaster, but they should make this clear to the player when the asset is brought into play.

If the asset in question is a personal asset, the player should be allowed to replace it with another similar asset. So, blackmail material that fails to leverage one rival might be exchanged for blackmail material on a different rival. But an asset that might be useful in another situation should not be swapped out, as it might be useful in another intrigue.

UNRELIABLE ASSETS

Assets that are objects or even some sort of intangible leverage are easy to control. However, sometimes people and groups might be considered assets, and anything with a mind of its own can be unpredictable. This might be anything from a friendship with a low-ranking courtier to an alliance with a powerful Bene Gesserit Reverend Mother. Some groups or even factions might even be used as assets. This might be a street gang or a social club of nobles at court. It might even be a whole faction like the Guild or Bene Gesserit if the character is playing either a powerful game or is owed a big favor.

Quite often, even these assets can be very loyal and trustworthy. They might be either well paid or simply loyal to the player character or their House, if only while repaying a single favor. Even a group as powerful as the Guild can be trusted to honor their debts and therefore make a reliable asset. However, some factions or characters, such as the Tleilaxu, cannot ever be entirely trusted. They have loyalties outside that of the player character and might be bribed, cajoled, or threatened into betraying the player character that has them as an asset. Plenty of people and groups simply cannot be trusted not to change sides. It might be they get a better offer or are more scared of the opposition than of the player characters.

When any self-determinative asset is brought into play, the gamemaster can declare it is 'unreliable'. The only time the gamemaster cannot do this is for a permanent asset belonging to the player character. Personal assets are carefully curated by the character and will not betray them. However, the gamemaster may insist some assets can only ever be unreliable because they have powerful loyalties to another faction or their own agenda. A Face Dancer, Sardaukar soldier, or Guild Navigator will never be entirely loyal to anyone outside their faction and, as such, may only be taken as personal assets on the proviso they are always considered unreliable.

If an asset is unreliable, the gamemaster can use Threat to neutralize the asset or even make it change sides. At any point in a conflict, the gamemaster can spend 2 Threat plus one Threat for each point of Quality the asset has, to negate any and all effects the asset has for the remainder of the conflict. If the gamemaster spends the same amount of Threat again, the asset changes sides and can be used by the player character's opponent as if it belonged to them (also for the remainder of the conflict). This might allow the enemy to strike at the heart of the player character's network if the asset changing sides is in the right zone. For this reason, unreliable assets are best kept away from the most sensitive areas of any conflict.

It is possible for the gamemaster to secretly declare an asset to be unreliable, but this is an option that should be used sparingly. Most player characters check their assets carefully, and part of taking them on is making sure they can be trusted (or at least understanding where they can't be). If the gamemaster does make an asset secretly unreliable, the player character should have a test to uncover their potential disloyalty at some point. The player can even call for a test (usually using Understand or Discipline) to root out problems in their network. A failed roll might mean they smell a rat but aren't sure who it is (in the same way Thufir Hawat believes Jessica rather than Yueh might be a Harkonnen traitor). The gamemaster should also write down that the asset is unreliable, so they can produce evidence to the player that it was the plan from the start of the intrigue.

NEW ASSETS

The following are some potential new assets for use in intrigue conflicts. These assets focus on the kind of information resources the player characters might gather and how they might be deployed. Some are also designed as defensive assets.

CAST-IRON ALIBI

You just weren't there; it's as simple as that. You might have been on another planet when it happened or perhaps you were too ill to get out of bed. While plenty of people might think you capable of the deceit of which you are accused, the logistics just don't add up. Of course, there is a loophole somewhere, especially if you are actually to blame. You might have used an intermediary or you had time to perform the action between any known appearances elsewhere.

As an Asset: This asset is primarily defensive, protecting the character by proving they just couldn't have physically done what they are accused of.

Keywords: Distraction, Lies, Location

FALL GUY

It wasn't you, and you know who it was. You even have evidence to point the finger at the 'real culprit'. You might have coerced someone else to take the blame or faked some evidence (or just gossip) that they are actually responsible for what you've been accused of. You might have been an accomplice, but you can at least prove you were not the instigator.

As an Asset: A mainly defensive asset that places the blame on someone else. Usually this accusation is just to put yourself in the clear, but if you want the accusations to stick to a rival as the 'fall guy', then this can be used as an attack.

Keywords: Accusation, Rival, Bystander

FAVORED THING

Everyone has a passion. It might be for music, for horticulture, or for the precision of the slow blade when dueling. Whatever it is, such interests are often the starting points for deep friendships, for connections which become bonds of trust, admiration, even love. Of course, you might also utilize such information to form a friendship with a target assigned to you; learning what makes someone smile is priceless when seeking to bring them to your side or to win their loyalty.

As an Asset: Knowledge of a person's loves and passions can be used to quickly build friendship, secure loyalty, and ensure trust. Their passion might also offer specialized knowledge.

Keywords: Bonds, Knowledge, Loyalty, Connection

INNOCENT REPUTATION

You are known to be kind and gentle, or you at least have a reputation as such. Someone like you wouldn't play the games of court, and certainly wouldn't be mean or cruel to anyone if they did. When rivals accuse you of such dealings, it just makes them look like a bully. However, it is very hard to maintain this sort of reputation if you do get involved in politics.

As an Asset: This is mainly a defensive asset, as it makes it harder to accuse you of manipulating and deceiving others.

Keywords: Kindness, Innocence, Reputation

PLANNED TREACHERY

The Imperium is a wilderness of mirrors, an endlessly refracted nightmare of competing desires, needs, and motives. Treachery is always a possible move for an ambitious retainer of a Great House, or for an entire cabal of similar schemers. Somehow, you learned of upcoming treachery and of how they intend to carry out their coup. Such information might be used in a great many ways.

As an Asset: Giving detailed insight into a conspiracy to betray a member of a Great House or similarly high-ranking person, this information can be used to bribe or intimidate participants, to access and thwart the plot, or to aid its completion.

Keywords: Cunning, Treachery, Knowledge

SECRET PAST

The previous activities of certain individuals provide a means of blackmailing them, controlling them, or predicting their next action. As such, it can provide a vital insight into their character and is a powerful psychological tool by which to manipulate them. There is a reason the lives of young heirs to the Great Houses are so carefully planned and scheduled, so no scandals or mishaps common to youth can be one day used against them.

As an Asset: Secret knowledge of a significant failing in a character's past can be used to control or predict certain actions, if deployed at the right time.

Keywords: Subterfuge, Deceit, Revelation



Reputation

Player characters are more than their Houses, and those who want to make a name for themselves need to build a reputation outside their allegiances. But how do you nurture a reputation and use it to instill trust or fear in your enemies?

Reputation in **Dune: Adventures in the Imperium** is dealt with using traits. After all, it is important to note that a person's reputation is not always about just one thing. It is the sum total of all you are known to be, whether this is true or false. Some might be generally good, like Duke Leto. His people would say he is kind, just, intelligent, a good leader, and many other things. But these are all separate aspects even though they all collate into a reputation as a great ruler of a House. It is important to note that the Harkonnens would probably agree with most of these aspects of Duke Leto. Even as his enemy they don't think he is cruel, unjust, or stupid. But they do think that the traits Leto is lauded for make him weak, pretentious, and hateful. As a result, while a reputation is what most people consider your character to be, not everyone believes it, and not everyone will agree on whether it is positive or negative. After all, an assassin known for kindness might have a lot of friends but isn't going to get much work. Remember who the character is interacting with rather than treating any specific trait as always positive or negative. In one negotiation, being 'Honorable' might make a potential business partner more eager to trade and make a good deal. But in another negotiation, it might make a different potential business partner regard the character as weak or constricted by a code they can take advantage of, making it harder to strike an advantageous deal with them.

So, at the simplest level, your character's traits tell you what their reputation is. If they have a trait of 'Kind', 'Cruel', 'Artistic', etc then this is something they have a reputation for. This reputation can then be brought into play whenever that trait can come into play. The character's reputation precedes them, helps them threaten, cajole, or persuade those they interact with, and applies like any other trait.

But while many people have a reputation of some sort, some have more of a reputation for some things than others. Most Harkonnens are cruel, but Rabban is especially brutal. The easiest way to simulate this is to give an especially powerful trait multiple levels ('Brutal II', 'Brutal III' etc.). This can lead to overloading a single dice roll, however, and it's better for a character to have a variety of traits. Any character that is just one thing, just a lot of it, needs more fleshing out. But a single trait can be rendered more powerful in two ways: Collated Reputation and Power Differential.

Collated Reputation

A person's reputation is made up of several traits, so several traits can be used when a character is exerting their reputation. While they may be focusing on being 'Charming', the fact that they have other traits to back up that charm can also affect the dice roll. Even if they aren't using their 'Kind' trait, the fact that it might make them seem more charming when the character's reputation is being used can allow it to apply. In this way people who are 'Brutal', 'Cruel', and 'Spiteful' tend to be more intimidating. When reputation is being brought into play, you might apply several traits under the banner of granting a bonus for reputation.

In some cases, collated traits might cancel each other out. The gamemaster can use reputation traits that would negatively apply to the roll to cancel out positive ones. This is why the Harkonnens have such a bad reputation and the Atreides a good one; they each have very few traits (if any) that work against their usual reputation. Finally, it is important to remember that positive-seeming traits can apply negatively. A reputation for kindness might make a character less intimidating and will affect a dice roll accordingly.

Power Differential

What also makes a reputation more powerful is a power differential. If someone is trying to threaten you at a social event when you both have several guards, they won't seem so impressive. But if you are tied to a chair in someone's dungeon, their reputation for brutality takes on a whole new meaning.

Power differential can be drawn on as a new trait in a scene when the character invokes their advantage. "To remind you, this is my palace," "The guards only obey me here," "My House can crush yours." After such a declaration, the gamemaster may then allow that character to gain the trait 'Power Differential' without spending Momentum or doing a test. It always takes at least one action to remind the character's opponent who has the social high ground. The 'Power Differential' trait can then be used like any other but will often add to other traits to bring more social pressure to bear on an opponent.

Fake Traits

People in the Imperium have a tendency to lie, and this also applies to reputation. There is no reason a character cannot develop reputation traits they do not deserve in the slightest. However, it takes a little more work. It's pretty easy to get known for things you do, but a lot harder to get known for things that you don't. However, if you are patient and a good actor, you can convince the right people of 'the real you' and let the

rumor mill do the rest. If the right people see you being helpful and gentle, you might get a reputation for 'Kindness'. Carrying an Orange Catholic Bible around and quoting from it in conversation might make people think you are 'Pious'.

Unfortunately, developing a fake reputation requires a certain degree of self-control, because it forces the character to act against their nature for long enough for the reputation to take root. If you are gradually making people believe you are kind, it only takes one person to see you beating a servant to destroy months of work.

Reputation (true or fake) can be built using the personal ventures system detailed in **The Great Game** (p.114-115) in the following way:

GAIN REPUTATION

Skill: Discipline, **Difficulty:** 3

The character makes a point of acting a certain way to develop a new trait. The trait can be any of their choosing as long as it applies to their reputation. They might simply remind people of their actions and take more credit, or try to portray themselves in a different way. The trait is lost at the end of the next House management session. However, if the gamemaster agrees the character has not openly acted contrary to this new trait, it may be kept until the following House management session. After then, this trait may be made permanent in the usual way. The same trait can be gained, if desired, each time this venture is used.

If you are not using the House management system, or you prefer to play out the character gaining a new trait, an intrigue conflict can be used. The character will have to collect assets representing the actions they are performing to build the reputation or to use as leverage to get people to lie for them. The zones will be at least three people who need to be convinced to back up the character's new reputation. These people must include at least one high-ranking member of the character's House and at least one from an opposing House or the Imperial Court. All the characters must have social power and influence or their declaration about the character won't have an impact. However, they need not be nobles. A trusted Mentat, valued servant, or important advisor can all help spread rumors.

FAME

Reputation can be used as a mark of a character's celebrity status as much as what they are known for. Certain traits like 'Well-Known', 'Impressive', 'Celebrity', 'Famous', and 'Noble' are all fine and can be used to determine how well-known the character is in society. If the character is from a House with notably more power than most of the rest of the gathering, that might grant them a temporary trait of 'Fame" for that evening too.

Traits that focus on fame and glory can be used to make an entrance and get yourself noticed at a gathering. This requires a **Communicate** test at a Difficulty based on the importance of the gathering. Essentially, the more important people there are, the less important each of them is. At a society gathering, traits like 'Stylish' or 'Well Dressed' might also have the same effect, as the character may be a fashion leader and stand out in the crowd that way.

Characters can gain Momentum for a good entrance (at least 1 but more if the roll is a good one as usual) which can be used in social situations for that scene. For the most part, people want to get close to famous people and those being noticed, so it is a good way to get the ear of anyone you want to talk to. It is also a good way to hide the rest of the character group. Should one character dazzle the gathering, the others won't be noticed so easily, allowing them to make a more clandestine turn around the room.



New Drives

The drives (Duty, Faith, Justice, Power, and Truth) cover a broad range of motivations, but not all of them. Just as characters rarely prioritize the same drives, some have different drives entirely. In this section we offer six new drives (Challenge, Glory, Indulgence, Hate, Honor, and Love) that may be chosen instead of any of the standard drives. Rather than this being a new set of drives, any of these new drives can replace any of the standard drives during character creation. It is permissible for a character to swap all their drives for this new selection, but it is recommended that characters only ever swap out one or two at most. If every character has wildly different drives it can become confusing to keep track of them all. As always, using these new options is at the discretion of the gamemaster, who can restrict how many and which drives are available in their campaign.

For some campaigns the gamemaster might insist on a set of drives all characters will be using, at least at the start. A group of Harkonnen thieves or spice smugglers might share the same general drives. This starting set of drives will help to emphasize the themes of the campaign and the background the characters all share.

These new drives function just like the standard ones, and they are no more powerful or involved, simply different. However, it is important to remember that swapping out a drive does not mean the character no longer has the drive they have removed. Most people have a little of every sort of drive within them. The five drives a character has shows what their five most important motivations are, not their sum total. As before, drives show which of them that character prioritizes and how much. If a character has Love instead of Duty, this doesn't mean they have no concept of Duty or no loyalty to their House. But it does mean they don't prioritize Duty very much. For this reason, it is just as important to note what drives you lose as much as which drives you gain. While a character will still have a Duty to their House without that drive, it will clearly be a very low priority for them. In all cases, no character may have more than five drives.

Drives can be replaced during play, but it is much harder because the character has established their motivations by this point. In all cases, a new drive can only replace a drive that has been challenged and that a character has become unsure of. The challenge is completed as normal, then the drive may be changed instead of being recovered. In such a case the challenged drive is reduced by 1 (and another drive is promoted as usual) and then replaced with a different drive (and drive statement if required). The gamemaster may rule that a drive cannot be changed unless it is below level 6 (and has no drive statement) or unless it is the character's lowest drive. While it is possible for a drive that is important to a character to be changed, it is more likely that a new drive will take time to become important to them and replace Drives that are not especially valued.

Challenge

Challenge is the desire to always be tested and to (ideally) overcome obstacles. There is a certain amount of arrogance to it, as few people who enjoy a challenge really enjoy the lessons they learn from failing. Whatever their reasons, they make a point of fighting against bad odds or taking on tasks that test the weakest part of their skills and character.

- Use Challenge when the character is out of their depth or facing something new. It may be something that will prove their mettle or teach them a new skill or ability.

Example Character – Paul Atreides

Born with an inquiring mind, Paul seeks to expand his own abilities and skills as far as he can. After years of schooling he is eager to enter the world and test his abilities. He risks death in drinking the water of life, so he might become what he suspects he could be.

Example Challenge Statements

- Because it's there.
- My weaknesses must be tested.
- Life is meaningless without challenge.
- I can't stand by and do nothing.
- I can only improve by doing.
- Learning is nothing without experience.
- I will not be found wanting.
- The scabbard dulls the blade.

Glory

Glory is the desire to be rewarded with praise for your action. It is not enough to perform well if there is no one around to see it. Characters who seek glory are often selfish or self-obsessed, or they lack confidence and need constant reassurance through praise. While some seek glory to be loved, others seek it to be feared, but for much the same reasons. They want to inspire feeling in those around them, and they often don't care what that feeling is. There is nothing worse than being ignored.

- Use Glory when your character seeks recognition for what they are doing and wants to show off. This might be when their reputation is on the line or when they see a chance to impress someone.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER – GLOSSU RABBAN

The 'Beast' Rabban relishes in his reputation as a brutal overlord. He hunts a sandworm so he can be the first to do so, but he is apoplectic with rage to see the creature dissolve before his eyes and deny him a trophy to display.

EXAMPLE GLORY STATEMENTS

- If no one notices, it's not worth doing.
- I'll show all of you.
- Respect is love.
- Better to be feared than adored.
- People expect greatness from me.
- Everyone will know my name.
- My deeds will be spoken of in centuries to come.
- My name echoes in the highest of places.

Indulgence

Indulgence is for those who don't really want to do much of anything. We all have personal needs, but the indulgent character focuses on their own, no matter how illegal or immoral. Life to them is about personal pleasure, be this something they get from adrenaline, sexuality, drug use, or some other vice. Anything else they do is simply to kill time before they can get back to something fun.

- Use Indulgence when your character wants to do nothing more than see to their own needs. The action might serve their own needs over anyone else's or allow them to pursue some form of vice more easily.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER – FEYD-RAUTHA

Conditioned to privilege since birth, Feyd-Rautha is used to getting what he wants. He sees no issue with putting his needs above those of his House or family. He is also used to winning and sees nothing unfair in fighting an uneven contest. After all, it's meant to be fun, and losing isn't fun, so it's not unfair.

EXAMPLE INDULGENCE STATEMENTS

- I take what I want.
- If I want it, I've earned it.
- Pleasure is always worth pursuing.
- Nothing is too good for me.
- Life just gets in the way of [vice].
- People don't say no to me.
- Privilege is a word only poor people use.
- If it's rigged in my favor, it's not unfair.

Hate

In a universe of power and vendettas, hatred can fester. Old feuds can breed loathing among those who know nothing of the original slight. Others simply allow bitterness and jealousy to drive their actions against those who do not appreciate or deserve the gifts they have been given. Hate can sometimes be justified, but its results are never positive. They foster a cycle of pain and hurt that can often only end when one side is utterly destroyed. Quite often, the hatred grows with each encounter, becoming larger and all encompassing, until there is nothing you will not risk losing just to make your enemy suffer.

Hate is a brutal and often consuming drive, and so the player should get the permission of the gamemaster (and possibly the other players) to pursue this drive. The hatred should never be directed against another player character.

- Use Hate when you see an opportunity, any opportunity, to make some attack on the object of your loathing. It might be a way to remind them of the pain they caused you or a warning of the pain you are yet to inflict.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER – BARON VLADIMIR HARKONNEN

Once a charming, attractive, and wealthy man, the Baron feels he has had everything taken from him. The Bene Gesserit poisoned him, the Atreides usurp his position of respect in the Imperial Court. But he will have his revenge. It doesn't matter that his House is one of the most powerful, wealthy, and influential in the Known Universe. It all means nothing until he has taken every opportunity, and used every device at his command, to make them suffer.

EXAMPLE HATE STATEMENTS

- I hate [enemy].
- I will drag them down with me.
- Nothing matters but revenge.
- A drop of their blood is worth a lake of my own.
- No price is too high to get even.
- Every day is a new opportunity to hurt my enemies.
- Trust is only possible through shared hatred.
- The last thing they hear will be my laughter.

Honor

Honor is a way to find a moral path in a difficult world. It can be hard to make the right choice with so much gray, and few people are really sure they are making the correct one. So some define a code for themselves, a set of rules to live by that help to guide them. If you stick to the code, you might not always be right, but you won't often be wrong. Unfortunately, this means the morality of your actions is only as good as the code you develop. Some even develop a code to try and deny their own guilt at what their motivations drive them to. Honor statements define the tenets of the character's code of honor, or at least its most important rules. The player should consider what other aspects of this code of honor might be.

- Use Honor to follow your own code of ethics. This might not always be for the right reasons, but they are the reasons your code compels you to act on.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER – GURNEY HALLECK

Gurney develops a code to live by to maintain his self-discipline and moral compass in the face of what the Harkonnens make him suffer. It makes him rigid at times but helps him act for the best when it is less than clear what the right thing to do is.

EXAMPLE HONOR STATEMENTS

- Never kill an unarmed foe.
- I face my enemies.
- Protect the innocent.
- Honor means more than life.
- My sword is always ready to defend what is right.
- I do not break my word.
- Where I stand will always matter.
- The letter of the law is what matters.

Love

Love is often in short supply in a universe of arranged marriages and breeding programs. But it is still a powerful force in the Imperium and still has the power to change destinies. Characters driven by love will do anything for those they care about, make any sacrifice. While this is usually noble and selfless, it is not always the best plan. Love statements should name those the character truly cares for, they should not relate to ideals or objects, however important they are. Love of an ideal is closer to Duty, and love of an object is an Indulgence!

- Use Love when someone you care about is in danger or needs your help. You might also use Love to help face difficult decisions or protect the secrets of those you care about.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER – LADY JESSICA

Jessica's love for her partner Duke Leto caused her to act against the orders of the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood, whom she had been taught to obey since childhood. This simple decision would lead to the fall of the Imperium.

EXAMPLE LOVE STATEMENTS

- I love my [partner].
- I would do anything for my children.
- My family is everything.
- My [mentor/teacher] is the most important person in the world.
- I can't be without my [sibling].
- My best friend will never let me down.
- I can always be trusted to cover my friends' backs.
- I will not be the weak link in the chain of my relationships.

Creating New Drives

If all these options for drives are not enough or do not suit the campaign you want to play, it is perfectly fine to create more. However, both the players and gamemaster should take some time to make sure any new drives are suitable and broad enough to apply to any skill. They should first consider if a new drive is really required. In most cases, an existing drive with the right sort of statement will be more than suitable.

If you do need the new drive, then take a moment to detail it as we have done above. Think of at least five statements that might apply to it. Then consider what a skill test with each of the five Skills would represent in the game. You may even like to find an example of a character that is especially representative of that drive. If you can't, then the drive might not be broad enough to function properly. Remember that any drive isn't just a feeling, it is a motivating force. So Happiness cannot be a drive, as it is just a feeling. The drive would be what a character would have to do to find happiness. Make sure any new drives are a force that might push a character forward.





Chapter 4: Controlling your House

"We all live in the shadows of our predecessors for a time. But we who determine the fate of planets eventually reach the point at which we become not the shadows, but the light itself.

— Prince Raphael Corrino, Discourses on Leadership"

Taking Power

Your House has many moving parts, all of which rely on each other. Under most circumstances, the lord or lady of the House is the controlling power ... but that isn't always the case. In this section, we'll talk about how you can take charge of your House even if you don't have the right surname. It's a tricky proposition, but in the world of **Dune**, having power is the only way to be truly in charge of your own destiny. And if you don't have power, then you *need* to take it.

As a Vassal

As a vassal of a House, you are an organ within an organism. Working with the other vassals, you provide the House with services no one else can provide. You are essential. But how do you take power in a House? How do you make your position more important than any other? Let's talk about that.

STEP ONE: BECOME INVALUABLE

The vassals of a House are the most important minds in the House. The ruler of the House turns to you when they need advice or counsel, or in some circumstances, when they need to be defended. And here is where your opportunity lies.

No matter what role you play in the House, you must make yours the most important. The way to do that is to make yourself invaluable, the vassal the head of the House comes to when they need advice or need something done because your advice always leads to success and when they ask you to do something, it gets done, quietly and efficiently. Let's take a look at an example so you can get a better understanding of how this works.

You are the spymaster for Lord Caligar. You are a loyal vassal and hope to earn the lord's trust. You learn that enemy spies from House Bringan have been sabotaging your supply lines. You go directly to your lord and inform him of the problem. This gets you the lord's attention and lets him know you're doing your job. He may give you some resources to help solve the problem and you're well on your way to fixing it. You send a hit squad to assassinate the spies, ending the problem.

This is a good approach. You are upfront with Lord Caligar, you've kept him up to date on the situation, and when it is solved, his estimation of you increases. Good job.

However, you can do better. Find out where the spies take the ill-gotten supplies, go to your House marshal, get some hard-hitting soldiers, raid the place, and capture the spies. You interrogate the spies and find out who the leader is. Then, you bribe the leader of the spies to turn on their master. Now, they report to you. Either they do this, or they die, it's that simple. Or, if their loyalty can be tempted in ways other than the threat of death, you can use those as well.

Allow the spies to continue their smuggling. It's a small expense for what you're about to get in return. After all, you could have killed them. But instead, they continue to earn money from the enemy House, and in exchange, they feed you information. In fact, why not hire them to raid from the enemy House's supply lines? House Bringan will not suspect their own spies (until they do), and in the meantime, you make up for your own losses at House Bringan's expense.

In the first example, you stopped the smuggling. That's all well and good. But in the second example, you earned a resource you did not have and created future opportunities.

This is how you make yourself invaluable.

So, as each role in the House, how do you make this happen? Let's take a look.

STEP TWO: TAKE POWER

As the ruler takes notice of your efforts, they entrust you with more responsibilities. That also means the other vassals fall behind you. Yes, the marshal may be important and the Warmaster serves a certain need, but without you, the whole House would fall apart.

In other words, you make yourself more important than the ruler, and you make sure everyone in the House understands that fact.

And this is the part where you must take the most care. The tipping point. If your ruler is cunning, they will understand what's happening and simply demote you, throw you out of the House, or kill you (depending on their own moral compass). You have to act fast. And what do you do?

You throw a fake coup.

No, not you. All this time you've been arranging to make yourself the true ruler of the House, you've also been organizing a silent coup among the lesser members of the House. You do this through an agent, of course, representing themselves as agents from an enemy House or even — if you're daring — agents of someone within the House who is not you.

The coup will do some damage to the House, yes, but this is your intention. Because who does the ruler turn to? You, of course! And that means you're the one who rebuilds what was broken. That means you get to plant your own people to replace those who were killed, adding allies to the House. You also add secrets to the House that no one knows but you.

Repeat as necessary. Someone attacks the House and causes damage, you rebuild, and you replace the lost servants with your own people. Eventually, the entire House is under your command, and that is when you make your move. The ruler has no allies, everyone is on your side, and you can take over with ease.



As the Ruler

Anyone who's been in a position of leadership knows it is full of traps, snares, and dangers. Those who tell you "Leadership is easy!" have never been a leader — at least, not successfully. When you become the ruler of a House, an immeasurable amount of responsibility and pressure falls on your shoulders. You need the right skills and mental strength to pull it off. Fortunately, you don't have to go alone: others have walked the path already and can give you advice. This section will show you tactics and tricks you can use to keep the crown on your head.

ENCOURAGE YOUR VASSALS TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH

The most important thing you can do is impress on your vassals that the truth is always better than a lie, even if the truth hurts and the lie is a soothing balm. Once you've convinced them that you will handle uncomfortable or even damaging truths with a cool and calm demeanor, then address the problem head-on without throwing blame around, they will always feel comfortable coming to you with problems.

Teach your vassals that you will fix the problem, not angrily blame them. If they are frightened to tell you the truth, you will never hear it, and if you don't know what is true, you cannot rule effectively.

JUDGE OTHERS BY THE COMPANY THEY KEEP

When strangers come to your House, ignore the stranger and evaluate the people around them. The qualities they show you — both vices and virtues — also show you what the stranger values in a friend. Once you know this, your estimation of the stranger becomes complete.

MATCH THE RIGHT VASSAL FOR THE RIGHT PROBLEM

One key to leadership is correctly evaluating a problem before sending a vassal to fix it. Let us say there are bandits raiding your supply lines, a common problem. You could send the Warmaster to kill the bandits or even the marshal to arrest them. But what about your concubine? Why haven't you considered them?

Do not look at a vassal's role; look at their capabilities. What someone can do is more important than their position in your House. But be careful: the extensive skills available to a Bene Gesserit are one of the reasons they become so close and trusted to those who rule. They are often the one with the capabilities required and they are good at positioning themselves so their ruler knows this.

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO AVOID DANGER

In the Imperium, all activities include risk and danger. Do not let this concern you. Knowing there is danger means you don't have to worry if potential danger exists. Instead, put your energies into evaluating the risk and the reward. Is the potential loss of your Warmaster equal to the reward you will get for sending him into a blatant trap? Well, if you know it's a trap, you can arm your Warmaster with the proper tools and people to overcome it. Worrying constantly about danger will paralyze you. In all instances, you must balance the potential loss versus the potential gain.

WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT OLD WOUNDS IS TRUE

They never go away, and that means your enemies never forget them. Old wounds may heal, but there is a festering under the skin that never vanishes. Vendettas and revenge are seen as noble and virtuous in the Houses of the Landsraad. If someone has a reason to hurt you, they'll find a way to do it. That is why when someone declares kanly on you, you must destroy them utterly. Living enemies make more enemies. Dead enemies only make graves.

TO YOUR ENEMIES BE THE DEVIL; TO YOUR ALLIES BE A SAVIOR

Your enemies must fear you as if even speaking your name may summon your wrath. On the other hand, for your allies, be the solution to all their problems. If they are short on funds, you are there with a gift or loan. If they have an enemy they cannot dispatch, you send spies to murder that enemy. Anything you can do, no matter how small, earns you respect and love from those you count on. They may even go so far as to call you "friend."

But why do this? What reward do you get in return? Simple. Men and women will walk through fire for such a friend. When you call on them with need, they will do whatever they can to help you because you did the same for them.

Meanwhile, with your enemies, be as ruthless, cutthroat, and merciless as possible. You do not stop enemies with sanctions. You burn their houses down, burn their friends' houses down, salt the soil, and cut down anyone who runs. Bury them all so the whole galaxy knows that if they cross you, you will come at them with the same unrelenting passion with which you defend your friends.

NO WALL IS TALLER THAN YOUR PEOPLE'S LOVE

Even with the most loyal vassals, even with the best defenses, even with cutting-edge technology, nothing protects you more than the people you rule. If they love you, they will sniff out spies and bring them to your court. They will notice approaching armies hidden in the hills or forests. They will be your strongest wall.

Because of that, you must treat them with love. The love you show them will come back to you tenfold. Yes, there are always cowards in the bunch, but for every five cowards, there is a hero. You need all the courageous subjects you can get. Once your people love you, they will guard you better than anything, for betraying one you love is much harder than betraying one you hate ... or fear.

LEARN TO THINK OUTSIDE OUR OWN MIND

Perhaps the most important skill for a ruler to learn is the ability to think like others. This requires imagination and empathy. Once you learn to think like your enemy, you can be one step ahead of them at all times. Once you learn to think like your ally, you can easily earn their trust and bring them gifts they truly desire. You must put aside your own ego and learn that you are not the only mind in the galaxy. Once you do that, once you learn how others think, you become the chess master, knowing your opponent's move before they make it.

Your House Ascending

All this advice is just as useful when looking to increase the power and prestige of your House as well. The rules and the tricks are the same, whether you are a Minor House or a Major one. It is just that the stakes get higher and the allies and enemies get more powerful. But just as the consequences for failure are far harsher, so the rewards for success are much greater.

While there are certain qualifications a House needs to be considered Major or even Great, the hardest part is becoming accepted as such among your peers. In the Imperium, nobody likes change, and a Minor House moving out from the shadow of its former liege or a Major House claiming to be Great shakes up the natural order. It gets a House noticed and flagged as a potential threat. After all, it clearly wasn't content as it was, who knows how far its ambitions may reach? It is important to grow a House slowly to avoid the Landsraad panicking and trying to destroy your House simply out of fear of what you might do next.

While a House may seem like a vast impersonal organization, it is controlled by people, and they will always be its weak spot. If you make your House seem invaluable to either its Major House or the Landsraad in general, its power will grow. With the centralization of so much power, you often just need to convince one person your House is the ally they cannot do without. For instance, the Warmaster of your liege House might think your House painfully ill-suited to conflict and both underequipped and badly trained. But if you can convince the ruler that your House has a sterling military and that their Warmaster is just being difficult, they will overrule them. While any good leader will always listen to their Warmaster in such matters, not every House is led by a good leader. Plenty of people are susceptible to flattery and comforting lies, even when they think they are not.

It is important to note that if you or your House are lacking in a particular area then that isn't the best aspect to focus on. But if military (for instance) is what your allies need, that may be the area you will have to impress them with. Find out what those you seek to impress need, and what they expect of those they trust, and form your House to serve that purpose. Ideally it will be an area where excellence is within reach for you. But if not, then you have some work to do.

When increasing the fortunes of a House, follow the previous rules but change the level of your peers. When trying to attain Major House status, instead of competing against your fellow agents and advisors, it is the other Minor Houses that serve your liege House who are your allies and enemies. If you are increasing the fortunes of a House Major, your peers are the other Houses of the Landsraad and possibly even the Emperor. But in all cases, the same rule applies; make yourself invaluable and then take power. Creating problems that you can solve works just as well; the scale is just a little bigger. Secretly engineering and then publicly ending a famine either on your homeworld (to impress your House Major) or on a planetary scale on another House's world (to impress the Landsraad) are basically the same thing. The only problem is scale, making the project more expensive and more difficult. However, as you gain power, you also gain resources. While engineering a famine is tricky for an agent of a House, it is much easier for the ruler of a House with all its resources at their command.

In House management (see **The Great Game**, Chapter 4) we offer some simple rules to increase the power and status of your House. Such gains should take a lot of time and effort, as change rarely comes easily in the Imperium. While the game offers statistical prerequisites for ascension, it is really up to the gamemaster to decide if the player characters have really earned the right for their House to take on greater power (and more threatening foes). Any shift in a House's status should be a major part of its story and not one you should manage with just a few dice rolls. Take all such suggestions as a guide rather than a rule.



Before granting any ascension, the gamemaster should feel convinced the House has earned it. Essentially, the House should be considered to have the status it seeks before it is officially granted. It should be so clear that people begin to wonder why the House Major or Emperor is clearly snubbing them in this rude and impolite way. Once those above you appear unfair for not raising you up, it will not take long before social pressure will push them into granting what you want. But take care. House Atreides was on the cusp of becoming a Great House after building a reputation for honor, dedication, and service and it was that very social power that caused the Emperor to see them destroyed.

Finally, it is also important to remember that power can be relative. Most of the factions in the Imperium take a back seat when it comes to raw surface-level power, satisfied their unique abilities give them all the power they need. The Guild is a prime example: it has vast wealth and power yet appears to be little more than a transport service. The Ixians and Tleilaxu also eschew direct power and rely on the leverage they have with what they can offer to get what they want. Even the Bene Gesserit prefer to work behind the throne to maintain their secrets. Your House can be the same, carving out an essential and unique place in the Imperium. It isn't easy, however, as you will have to make a point of destroying anyone who can offer anything similar. Unique means one-of-a-kind, and any competition will ruin your position. After all, if people can go elsewhere, they don't need to grant you any concessions. But if your House can offer something unique and valuable, and no one is strong enough to take it from you, even the Emperor might be made to accede to your demands, as long as you make them quietly.

New Political Talents

The following Talents are designed for use in a more political game but will suit any character. They might be taken by devious heirs as much as Bene Gesserit courtiers.

COME HITHER

You know how to intrigue people to hear more about a proposal you offer them.

You may remove an NPC from a scene as long as you also leave the scene with them. They won't necessarily drop their guard or be more likely to agree to a proposal, but they will go somewhere more private with you. They will at least listen to what you have to offer, be it business or personal.

DANGEROUS SEDUCTION

You are good at convincing others you are secretly on their side.

If you spend 1 Momentum and succeed in an Average (D1) **Communicate** test, you convince an NPC you are secretly on 'their side' regarding a specific matter. In any further regard to that matter, you have the trait 'Trusted' until you prove your true allegiance. Each time you successfully use this Talent, the gamemaster gains 2 Threat, representing you getting closer to your enemies.

FLICK OF THE WRIST

You are adept at picking locks and pockets and other skills of sleight of hand.

Spend 1 Momentum to pick a lock, pick a pocket, or otherwise make a keen sleight of hand maneuver without being noticed. This Talent cannot be used to steal anything especially important as the owner will be on their guard for attempts, but for any ordinary lock or unguarded pocket it requires no test.

INSIGHT

You are good at spotting the abilities of others with a short conversation.

Once per scene, at the cost of adding +1 Threat, you may ask the gamemaster to name a Talent (if any) an NPC of your choice possesses. To do this your character must either engage them in conversation for a few minutes or observe them for around thirty minutes.

INSTANT DISGUISE

You are adept at blending into the background and changing your appearance.

For a cost of 1 Momentum, you may create a quality 0 disguise asset for the remainder of the scene. This might represent changing a shawl, a veil, or a coat to appear as a servant or simply as someone else. Any tests to create and maintain a disguise must still be made, but the asset allows or enhances such a test as usual.

GOLDEN TONGUE

You can talk your way out of pretty much anything.

Once per scene, you may use your **Communicate** skill on a single skill test instead of any other skill, and you are counted as having a focus for that test. This usually represents you talking your way into a different resolution for the problem.

INSULT TO COMPLIMENT

You can endure an embarrassing moment with style and grace.

Once per scene, if you say or do something embarrassing or damaging to the House (usually by gaining a complication) you may spend 1 Momentum to explain yourself, canceling the effects of that complication.

LOOK OUT!

You can throw yourself into danger to protect your friends.

Once per scene, if a nearby ally suffers a defeat, you may spend 1 Momentum to allow them to Resist Defeat. If you do, the gamemaster gains 3 Threat.

NEUTRALIZE

With the right words or gestures, you can deny others the full use of their abilities.

At the cost of 1 Momentum, you may stop an NPC using a Talent you are aware they possess for the remainder of the scene. This can only be done in a social setting, and you must engage them in conversation to invoke this effect. You essentially convince them that using the ability would make them look weak or be socially unacceptable in the current circumstances.

POISON RESISTANCE

You have spent time getting your body used to a multitude of poisons.

If you imbibe a poison, you can offer the gamemaster 3 Threat, and if it is accepted, you may declare it is a poison you are immune to. The gamemaster may refuse the Threat and disallow the immunity.

RAPIER WIT

You can change the rules of a conflict with your silver words.

During a physical conflict, you may make an Average (D1) **Communicate** test. If successful, you may remove one asset from your opponent by convincing them it is inappropriate or dishonorable to use. This cannot leave them unarmed unless you are also unarmed.



SLIP OF THE TONGUE

You are adept at making others commit social faux pas, or making the most of the ones they do make.

Once per scene, you may force a negative social trait onto an enemy at the cost of 1 Momentum. This might be 'Embarrassed' or 'Disgraced', etc. The trait lasts until the end of the scene. You need not have encountered them directly, as rumor and gossip are more than effective enough.

THE PERFECT DEAL

You are good at convincing those you deal with that they are getting the better end of the deal.

You may reduce the Difficulty by 1 of any attempt to make another character accept a business deal you are offering them. They must be at least getting something out of the deal, even if it is not as fair as you are convincing them it is.

THE QUIET KNIFE

Your attacks make no sound and do not draw attention.

Anytime you make an attack in a physical conflict, the Difficulty for anyone to hear you or notice the attack is one step higher.

WAIT!

People pause to listen to your inspiring words before a battle.

Once per scene, you may spend 2 Momentum just before a physical conflict begins. The conflict is paused so you might make a monologue to your enemy, your allies, or the crowd, as you see fit. Everyone involved stops and listens. You may make an Average (D1) **Communicate** test to see how good the monologue was, gaining Momentum as usual. The conflict resumes immediately after this speech.

YOUR THREATS ARE MEANINGLESS

You can shrug off social embarrassment as if it is nothing.

Once per scene, as an action, you may remove a complication you gained through social interaction.

Roles

In this section we offer specific advice on how to play a vassal in a House. Each section speaks directly to your role, how to play it, how to exploit it, and how you can better serve the House. We also look at particular rules you can put on your character sheet to make you the perfect vassal ... which also makes betrayal by your House less likely.

Taking on a Role

There are as many paths to claim the power and responsibility of a role as there are people to take them. But in general, the same advice applies that we discussed above. Make yourself so invaluable and trusted, there is simply no one else for the job. Most roles have a multitude of secretaries, advisors, clerks, and apprentices, and this is where you start. Getting a position within a household is relatively easy as long as you prove yourself loyal and trustworthy to the House. Then you can learn the role from the current incumbent and eventually prove yourself better. Never ignore the fact that the person you are trying to replace has already managed to do what you are trying to do. They are ahead of you in the game, so there is much you can learn from them. Consequently, you should never be certain they are unaware of your ambitions.

While some roles have rather specific prerequisites in terms of a job description, they also come with a series of unspoken requirements. It is not enough to be the best person for that role; you have to be what your ruler wants from someone in that role. Some rulers surround themselves with people who massage their ego; others want to hear it straight. Some like to hit a problem head-on, others like to step around any potential consequences or play safe with every plot, others like to leap in and cause as much chaos as possible. The ruler will have a preferred way of doing things and what they consider to be good sense.

This is nowhere more evident than in the role of the consort, but every role carries elements of this. While any consort might be beautiful and well versed in seduction, the ruler might be looking for wit, innocence, charm, intelligence, or even a little domination. Without this essential element, the consort is not going to impress them. In all cases a little research will be required to find out what the ruler is really looking for. Only when you know what the ruler secretly looks for in a role can you really make a point of trying to fit that mold. It may also show you ways they are not especially happy with the incumbent.

It is possible but not advisable to try and convince the ruler that they want what you offer rather than what they usually look for. Sometimes they might want to try something new, but otherwise you will need to prove categorically to them that your way is better. If you can, it's a quick way to impress them. However, it is hard to do so without also proving to them they have been a fool for trying another way all this time. No one likes to look a fool, meaning your most successful ploy could be the reason you don't get the job.

Remember as well that the roles in a House are a team, and so each can be an ally or an enemy in your ploy to gain power. If you can prove the incumbent isn't very good, other roles may help you oust them. It is all for the good of the House, after all. Consequently, it is worth knowing who the friends and enemies of the incumbent are before you start bad mouthing them to the wrong person.

So to take on a role, you will need to know what the job requires and what the ruler requires of it. If you have plans for the House, get the role first, and then start trying to make changes. Once you have the ear of the ruler, you can quietly advise them to try another way.



Ruler

You may be the ruler, but you can't go throwing your authority around. You must prove your authority every day. And you must do it for everyone under your charge. Every day.

To maintain power, you must ensure that every one of your vassals sees you as a savior. When problems occur, you fix them (or at least make sure they are fixed). Or, you ignore them, deeming other matters more important. You are a god and a demon to your followers, depending on your whims and your plans.

When speaking to your vassals, you must appear to them as someone who either knows their jobs better than they do, or as someone who cherishes their advice. Not just listens to them, but actively follows their advice, thanking them for their wisdom. You must make them feel that you do not take them for granted, that their skills and abilities make a difference. Otherwise, you get resentful vassals. And resentful vassals plot coups.

But when you make a decision, it must be final. If you go back and forth, undecided, constantly changing your mind, your vassals will lose confidence in you. A weak-willed noble is not someone to follow, and your vassals will either leave your service or plot against you.

USEFUL TALENTS

Strangely enough, **Unquestionable Loyalty** is a great Talent for you to take. It clearly shows your vassals that you are on their side. But, as the ruler, you want Talents that help your vassals do their jobs. In fact, you can take Talents usually designed for their roles. This does a couple of things. First, it frees up a Talent they don't have to take (because someone already has it), and second, as we said, it helps them do their job.

Bolster is a great Talent for a leader. **Make Haste** gives you an automatic success, proving your capabilities. And **Hidden Motives** will keep your enemies uncertain about your true intentions.

Pay special attention to any Talent that gives the group Momentum or Determination or adds dice to their pool. All these Talents are valuable because they help build trust in your competence. Your vassals will begin seeing you as an invaluable resource rather than a nuisance who is a mere six inches of steel away from removal.

Consort

You have a unique relationship with the ruler of your House. More than anyone else, they trust you. When their conscience is in conflict, they speak to you. That also gives you a unique position in the House: you are the one the ruler trusts most.

But you don't have to stop there. Your skills and abilities allow you to win trust from every member of the House. They may feel they can't speak honestly in front of the ruler, but you can make them believe they can speak honestly to you. Show them sympathy. Show them empathy. Earn their trust by trusting them with your own secrets. This accomplishes a few things. First, you become the most trusted person in the House. Even enemies within the House (yes, not everyone gets along) will listen to you. You can solve problems between the ruler's vassals with a quiet word. The ruler never needs to know.

Which also means you can be the shadow ruler of the House. While your lord or lady may be the power in front of the throne, you are the power behind it. While the ruler goes to their vassals for counsel, the vassals come to you. That also means you have the inside track on every aspect of the House. You know all its secrets.

And that is power.

USEFUL TALENTS

Take advantage of any mechanic that gives your allies bonuses. After all, you'll be the one they're trying to protect. The Swordmaster and the marshal are there to protect you. The easier you make their jobs, the better they'll do it. **Advisor** and **Collaborator** are great for you because they give others a bonus when you work together with them. That means they look to you for that bonus. **Bolster** would also work because, again, your Talent gives someone else a bonus. Finally, **Performer** allows you to add dice to the Momentum pool. That helps everyone.



Advisor

Rulers in the Imperium are highly trained in many subjects: treachery, blades, politics, romance, poisons. But there are times when a ruler needs a second opinion from someone who has seen more of the world than they have. That person is you.

When the ruler is unsure, they turn to you for perspective. What's more, when the ruler prepares an unsafe, rash, or unwise action, they count on you to pull them back. You are more than just a source of information, you are their conscience. Information is great, but if you don't know how to use it, you're just a mechanic with a tool they don't understand. You must show the ruler how to use the power and resources they have. Your experience is your greatest asset.

You know of pitfalls the ruler does not. You know how to balance a House budget. You've seen it before. You know how to recognize when the warmaster starts getting fidgety and needs a battle to fight. You've seen it before. You've seen the rise and fall of Houses and know the signs. You're the herald of good and bad times. Those who do not listen to you are fools marching toward doom.

Because of your position, you can shape the House's stance on nearly everything: politics, religion, economics ... everything. The ruler trusts you on matters they don't know, so you should know everything. Make sure you have all the skills covered so you can answer any question intelligently, giving the ruler your best advice.

And remember, the ruler comes to you when they are uncertain. This is the perfect opportunity to use that uncertainty to guide the ruler toward a just and fair decision. Or alternatively, march them straight into a disaster, if that's more expedient to your goals.

USEFUL TALENTS

Of course, **Advisor** is the obvious choice here, but don't just go for the obvious choice. **Masterful Innuendo** allows you to pass secret information to others. Use this to give your ruler (or another vassal) a coded message only they know. It seems you're just speaking in aphorisms, when actually, you're passing on a crucial piece of information the ruler might have missed. **Putting Theory into Practice** is also useful because it allows you to turn information you notice into a bonus that your allies can exploit.

Speaking of information, check out **Constantly Watching**. This gives you bonus dice for noticing things. You can use this when observing your House's enemies, then pass that information on to your allies.

Chief Physician

You save lives.

No, not in a metaphorical way. Literally, you save lives. The Swordmaster comes in with a gaping chest wound and you pull her back from the brink of death. The consort drinks poisoned tea, and while he's gagging and struggling for breath, you give him an injection that counteracts the poison.

You literally save lives. People come to you and you keep them breathing. Is there any better way to earn someone's trust?

You'd be surprised how powerful that patient–healer bond can be. After all, these people are trusting you with their lives. And once you earn that trust, you can begin to use it. While you stitch up the warmaster's wounds, you can ask questions. Should you worry about raising suspicions? No! They trust you. And once you've earned enough of the House's trust, you can start to use that power to move the House in the direction you want.

What would happen if the ruler was suddenly poisoned and had permanent, chronic aftereffects? So chronic, the ruler had to come to you every day for a shot to counteract those aftereffects? That would be awful, wouldn't it? It would even put the ruler in a position of weakness. Not only that, but it puts you in a position where the ruler relies on you to survive.

Wouldn't that be a shame?

USEFUL TALENTS

Of course, all the Suk Doctor Talents are obvious choices (as well as taking the Suk Doctor faction archetype). But consider some of the less obvious Talents as well. **Bold** is great for you because you can hook it up with your **Understand** skill and get a bonus whenever you're trying to pry someone from the jaws of death. You can also take **Cool Under Pressure** so you can heal someone while the fighting is going on around you.

Pick up **Specialist** to further your medical skills and take **Nimble** to get around a fight scene's dangers so you can get to your patients quickly. And finally, you can take one of the many combat-oriented Talents — such as **Master-at-Arms** — to protect your patients and be the doctor that nobody in the galaxy wants to cross.

Councilor

The ruler is a busy person, addressing problems all day long while also trying to move strategies forward, managing funds, and more. So when the ruler is busy, you are there. You listen to complaints and complications to existing plans with the expectation you will report back to the ruler with an accurate account. The ruler can't see everyone ... but everyone can see you.

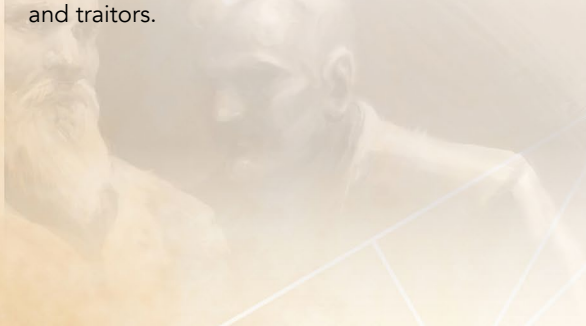
In other words, to speak with the ruler, someone needs to speak to you first. To earn the ear of the ruler, they must convince you that their concerns are worth the ruler's time.

While the treasurer hands out funds, you're the one who sees the funds get spent wisely. You manage the kitchen staff, the waiting staff, the valets, and the cleaning staff. That means you are their connection to the ruler, their direct line. The consort and the heir have to schedule time to see the ruler, but you are always available, bringing their issues directly to the ruler. That also means the ruler counts on you to let them know if anything in the household is wrong. Everyone else looks down on the working part of the House. You don't. That's why you know when a maid becomes a spy for an enemy House. If the Warmaster plans a secret coup, their valet will tell you. The working staff of a House knows its real secrets, and if you're doing your job right, they'll tell you everything you want to know.

USEFUL TALENTS

Interestingly, this role is highly suited to a Bene Gesserit Archetype, using all the Talents that comes with that Archetype. It seems like a natural choice. You can use **Voice** to force people to tell you what they really want, **Hyperawareness** to learn additional information by just looking at them, and **Prana-Bindu Conditioning** to protect the ruler when an assassin pulls a knife.

Of course, if you aren't part of the Order, you have some other choices. **Subtle Words** gives those who wish to speak to the ruler a trait they can exploit (as long as you tell them about it). **Unquestionable Loyalty** or **Suk Conditioning** means the ruler trusts you implicitly with their business. **Verify** also allows you to ask the gamemaster one question about whoever you're speaking to, which allows you to identify assassins and traitors.



Envoy

You literally put your hands on every message sent from your House to another and back. You are the hub of information. You know every secret deal, every clandestine conversation. More than any other member of your House, you have the widest perspective — perhaps more even than the ruler. Someone in your unique position has access to every ally and enemy of the House, which means you can use that information to either aid your ruler ... or end them.

Using the **Binding Promise** Talent, you can put people into agreements that are more beneficial to you than to them, and if they try to renege, you have all the advantage. This makes you an invaluable asset to the ruler. You can put enemies of the House in dangerous positions where they must follow the agreement or put their foot in a trap. When the ruler sends you to another House, they know they must treat you with hospitality and respect because you decide whether to use your abilities when you visit. In that way, you are just as powerful as a Bene Gesserit or Mentat. Don't ever forget that.

USEFUL TALENTS

"Don't kill the messenger." That's good advice, but unfortunately, people seldom listen to good advice. You are always in enemy territory, behind the lines, and in danger. So let's talk about ways to keep yourself alive. First, take **To Fight Someone is to Know Them**. With this, the first time you use a weapon in a conflict, you get bonus dice against that opponent. Also, **The Reason I Fight** is great because you can choose a drive such as "I Will Always Return to My Ruler" and get a bonus for that drive. Take **Specialist** and select an asset that helps you get out of danger.

Passive Scrutiny allows you to ask the gamemaster a question about a scene you just entered. Choose carefully and get the most out of your question. "What's the best way out of here?" should always be near the top of your list.

Heir

One day, you will inherit the House. Everyone knows this. That means everyone wants to make a good impression on you. They want to ensure their position the moment you sit on the throne. Yes, they are all, in some way, loyal to the House above all other things, but you are the House. You are its future. That makes them loyal to you.

And you must choose how to use that loyalty. The ancient question arises: is it better to be feared or loved? You must decide where you stand. Yes, you can sit on the fence and say, "Both!" but in the end, you are the one who defines your relationship with the House's vassals. You can be kind or cruel, earn respect from your abilities and compassion, or earn them through cruel tyranny. The choice is up to you.

The standard answer to this question is that love is easily broken and then turns into hatred, but fear always remains. However, when your vassals love you, they will die for you. When your vassals fear you, they look for ways to flee or betray you.

In the meantime, establish and build relationships with the other vassals. Discover what you want to learn from them, and take advantage of your position. The relationships you build now will be the bedrock of the House you build when you inherit the throne.

USEFUL TALENTS

You want to know a secret? Nobody likes you. You're the snot-nosed kid who's going to inherit the House one day and you have to make everyone believe you deserve it. So, let's take some Talents to help you out. First off, take **Stirring Rhetoric**. This gives everyone listening to you a re-roll. Giving your vassals bonuses is a good first step. Second, take **The Reason I Fight** and attach it to a drive such as, "My vassals are my life." (Be sure to make that Drive 6, otherwise this won't work.) Giving yourself re-rolls to protect your vassals? Sounds like a great way to get them to love you.

Finally, take **Unquestionable Loyalty**. You must take this one. If you take no other Talents, this is the one you want. This tells the other characters that you are loyal to the House and not only looking out for yourself.

Marshal

You are the ruler's troubleshooter. They count on you to solve problems inside the House's territories, to take care of smugglers, pirates, brigands, and all the other troubles a House faces. More than your sword, the ruler counts on your intellect, perception, and ability to solve a problem with the least amount of blowback. That means you should solve the House's problems with the least amount of noise. If the ruler never needs to call on you, you're doing your job.

And that's a problem. You want the ruler to notice you. After all, out of sight, out of mind. So, when you capture brigands on the borders of the House's domain, you bring them before the ruler for judgment. Whether that judgment is merciful or merciless doesn't matter. The ruler sees you doing your job and rewards you for it. You've proven your worth.

Of course, you can also go out of your way to make problems the ruler can see. Through a third party, you pass on some information about a spice shipment leaving under the cover of night. Of course, that information isn't entirely correct, but it is correct enough to lure the villains in. Then, once they arrive, your agents capture them and you bring them to court to see justice. And what happens when they say they were fed false information about the shipment? Won't the spymaster get involved? Sure they will. But what are they going to find? Nothing. You've covered your tracks.

USEFUL TALENTS

Sure, you can take combat-oriented Talents, that's obvious. Your job is dangerous, and protecting yourself is important. But for a moment, may we suggest you consider **Ransack**? This Talent allows you to get bonuses when searching an area. Your job is to find clues to help you uncover crimes and conspiracies, and that Talent will certainly help you in that area. **Improvised Resources** also allows you to have the proper tool at the proper time.

Find Trouble is also a Talent you should be looking at. Having contacts among the criminal element is always helpful when you're looking for someone who is part of the criminal element. Finally, **Cautious** is helpful because it gives you a re-roll when you're in enemy territory.

SCHOLAR

Nobody respects the scholar. After all, you don't do anything; you just know things. Everyone knows things. What's special about you?

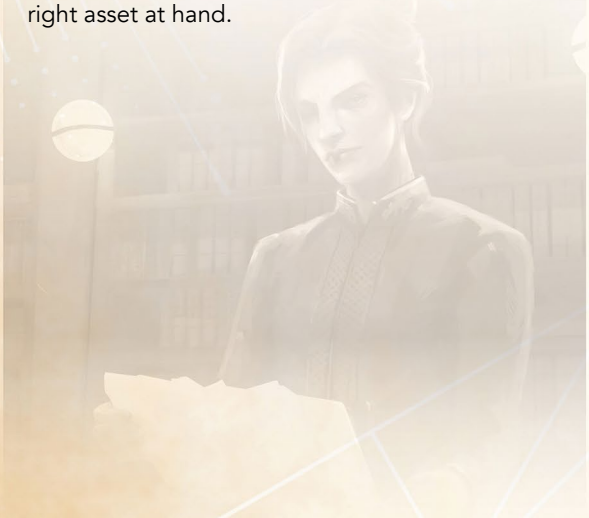
Here's what's special about you: when the ruler doesn't know something, they ask you. You have the ear of the ruler in a very real way. When the ruler feels ignorant, you are there telling them what they need to know. In other words, your advice gives the ruler direction, and you choose which filter to use when you give that advice. If the ruler asks you about a particular subject, you choose the ruler's attitude about that subject, whether that's positive, negative, or neutral.

But you must be careful with this power. Ill-advising the ruler can cause you to lose your station. But you can choose how to present the upside and the downside of technology, science, and new innovations. You literally decide what weapons the House's guards carry, what defenses guard the court, and what poisons the House's spies use. You must work with the other members of the House to have sufficient information to guide the ruler's decisions, but in the end, it is you the ruler trusts. It is up to you whether you use that trust to guide the House or destroy it so you can rebuild it in your own image.

USEFUL TALENTS

All right, so you seem to be the most passive member of the ruler's court. Let's change that. **Intense Study** seems a natural fit for you. Not only does it allow you to switch out **Understand** for any other skill — such as **Battle**, for example — it also gives you focus. Because knowing your enemy is all the battle. **Masks of Power** allows you to create a fake asset you can use to intimidate others. This plays up your "I know everything" demeanor.

Also, try out **Specialist**. This allows you to create assets that are appropriate to the task at hand. Combine that with **Intense Study** and you are the scholar who knows everything and always has the right asset at hand.



SPYMASTER

"Defeat your enemy before they get to the battlefield." An ancient war scholar wrote those words and they still hold true. More importantly, this is your job. Providing intelligence for the ruler is one thing, but if the intelligence is not actionable, it means nothing. You must give the ruler tools to end an enemy's plans before they can execute them. The only way to do this is through well-trained spies, the most important asset the House has. If a ruler discounts the importance of spies, it's time for you to gain as much as you can and move to another House.

You must use your spies carefully, regulating them to different duties. You need spies who operate within the House's borders, giving you information on morale, sabotage, and possible treachery. Recruit these from loyal subjects who may be simple farmers and other workers. They see more than any soldier. You must have spies planted in your enemies' Houses who provide you with movements and plans, giving you a sense of how and when to react. Recruit these from unsatisfied concubines and officers who have been passed over for promotion and recognition as well as servants who have been abused. You must also have spies who are fed misinformation and sent into enemy territory to be captured and tortured, misleading your enemy to your true intention. This collection of spies will serve you well and make you a valuable asset to the House.

USEFUL TALENTS

All right, let's get the obvious ones out of the way. **Masks of Power**, of course. **Subtle Step** is so obvious, it's almost too obvious. **Subtle Words** was made for you. And we can go on and on with what's obvious, but let's take a look at some that are less obvious. If you're a Mentat and you don't have **Verify**, you're a fool. Also, if you want to be the knife in the shadows, take **Cool Under Pressure**. You automatically succeed, making sure your knife hits the mark.

Also, consider **Dual Fealty**. You need information, and the best way to get that is to have allies in more than one camp. **Hidden Motives** is also great for making your House's enemies believe you're on their side. Finally, **Improvised Resources** drops a knife in your pocket when you need it most.



Swordmaster

Being responsible for the ruler's safety gives you unique access to the throne. You must be willing to stand between the ruler and an assassin who is willing to die if it means ending the ruler's life. Others in the House may be willing to do that, but it is your sworn duty. That kind of duty creates a trust between you and the ruler. They may love their consort, but they trust you with their life.

You are also responsible for the House's personal guard, its janissaries. It is your job to convince them they are the highest-held vassals in the House. Everyone — from the heir to the consort to the scholar to the cook — relies on you and your guard for protection. Use your House guard to listen to the compliments and complaints from everyone, from the high-ranking vassals to the lowest. You will have a sense of the House's attitudes because they trust you and your guards with their lives. Then, pass that information along to the ruler so they know you're doing more than just standing in front of doors.

What's more, you only do your job when all the other vassals fail to do theirs. When the spymaster fails to detect an assassination, when the marshal fails to spot a coup, when the envoy fails to ease a rival House's concerns, when the warmaster's armies fail to stop an invasion, when all else fails, you are the final guard. You stand in front of a locked door facing dozens of blades while the ruler tries to escape. That's your job. If your ruler is wise, they will provide you with the best resources, equipment, and adulation because they understand the nature of your position. If they don't ... it may be time to find a ruler who does.

USEFUL TALENTS

First things first: you need to take **Direct**. This allows you to command your troop of bodyguards to act out of turn. Use this the right way, and you and your janissaries will take out a gaggle of assassins in no time flat. Other talents like **Make Haste** and **Nimble** mean you can be anywhere in the battle you need to be. After all, your job is to protect the court. When someone's in trouble, you need to be there protecting them. **Rapid Recovery** is also important, allowing you to ignore complications and making you damn hard to kill.

Master-of-Arms and **To Fight Someone is to Know Them** are obvious choices, but a less obvious choice may be **Constantly Watching**. This keeps your eye out for assassins. You may also want to consider **Dedication** because re-arming the group with Momentum is often the key to victory.

Treasurer

Whoever pulls the purse strings holds the power. That ancient phrase is still true, even hundreds of thousands of years later. Not only do you manage the House's finances, but you are also the chief diplomat to CHOAM, which means you have access to information nobody else has. You can get the dirt on other Houses with a quiet coin passed under the table. Who is paying their taxes, who is begging for leniency, and who is on their way to censure.

With access to the House's funds, you also have access to one of the House's most important assets. You have access to the one thing every other vassal under the ruler needs: funds to do their jobs properly. You decide when they get paid. If the spymaster asks for money for bribes, that money coming on time or a week later (sorry, we had to move some money around to accommodate your request) means everything.

You also get full access to everyone else's budget, which means you know how the money is being spent on both a small scale and a large scale. Who gets more coin, the envoy or the chief physician? And why? These choices are up to you. If you want to know what the spymaster is up to, you can find out easily because you know how they spend every solari. You can approve expenditure or deny it, depending entirely on how each vassal treats you, whether they show you respect or disrespect. Which means you are the hub of the House. Nothing happens unless you say so. Or if the ruler tells you to. But you can control that element of the House as well. You tell the ruler how much money they have at their disposal ... and you don't always have to be honest.

USEFUL TALENTS

When you think about it, your job is really to protect the House's money. Also, you're the person who can "get things." So, let's look at some Talents that help you do that. Mentats are good with numbers, so consider their Talents. **Calculated Prediction** is fun because you can say things are true about the future. **Improvised Resources** helps fulfill your role as the person who can get things.

But also consider some of the Spacing Guild Talents. **Priority Boarding** not only allows you to smuggle items onto a ship, but people as well. You want to ship a couple hundred hard-hitting Fremen to your enemy's base? No problem. Also take **Guildsman** to gain access to the rich and fertile resources of the Spacing Guild. And finally, **Ransack** works well for you because you can identify valuable objects the moment you walk into any room.

Warmaster

Why do coups always come from the military? Because the military is the true power of the House. The spymaster can have their spies and the consort can have their pillow whispers, but when it comes to power — true power — nothing is greater than a well-trained and well-armed military willing to march toward death with songs in their hearts.

You are responsible for this power, which means the ruler has placed their greatest trust in you. More than the treasurer who counts money, more than the chief physician who stitches their wounds, more than the scholar with all their wisdom, you have the real power to protect or overthrow the House.

Strategy and tactics. Not many understand the distinction, but you do. Strategy is the overarching plan. Tactics are the steps you take on the battlefield to overcome obstacles standing in the way of that plan. You are able to put these two together to enact the ruler's will. When the spymaster fails, you march. When the envoy fails, you march. You are the last resort, the most dangerous resort, and it is all up to you. If the other vassals fail, they fall back on you. When you fail, there is no-one to fall back on. So, when the other advisors mock you for being a brute who only understands violence, smile quietly to yourself and say in a calm and cool voice, "When you fail, the ruler calls on me."

USEFUL TALENTS

All right, we know you want to take **Master-at-Arms**, **To Fight Someone is to Know Them**, and **The Slow Blade**. That's all fine and good. But have you considered **Stirring Rhetoric**? That allows you to inspire a number of people in a group. **Decisive Action** allows you to get rid of your opponent's assets, and that may be important in a battle. **Collaboration** gives you bonuses you hand to allies. That also seems to be important in warfare.

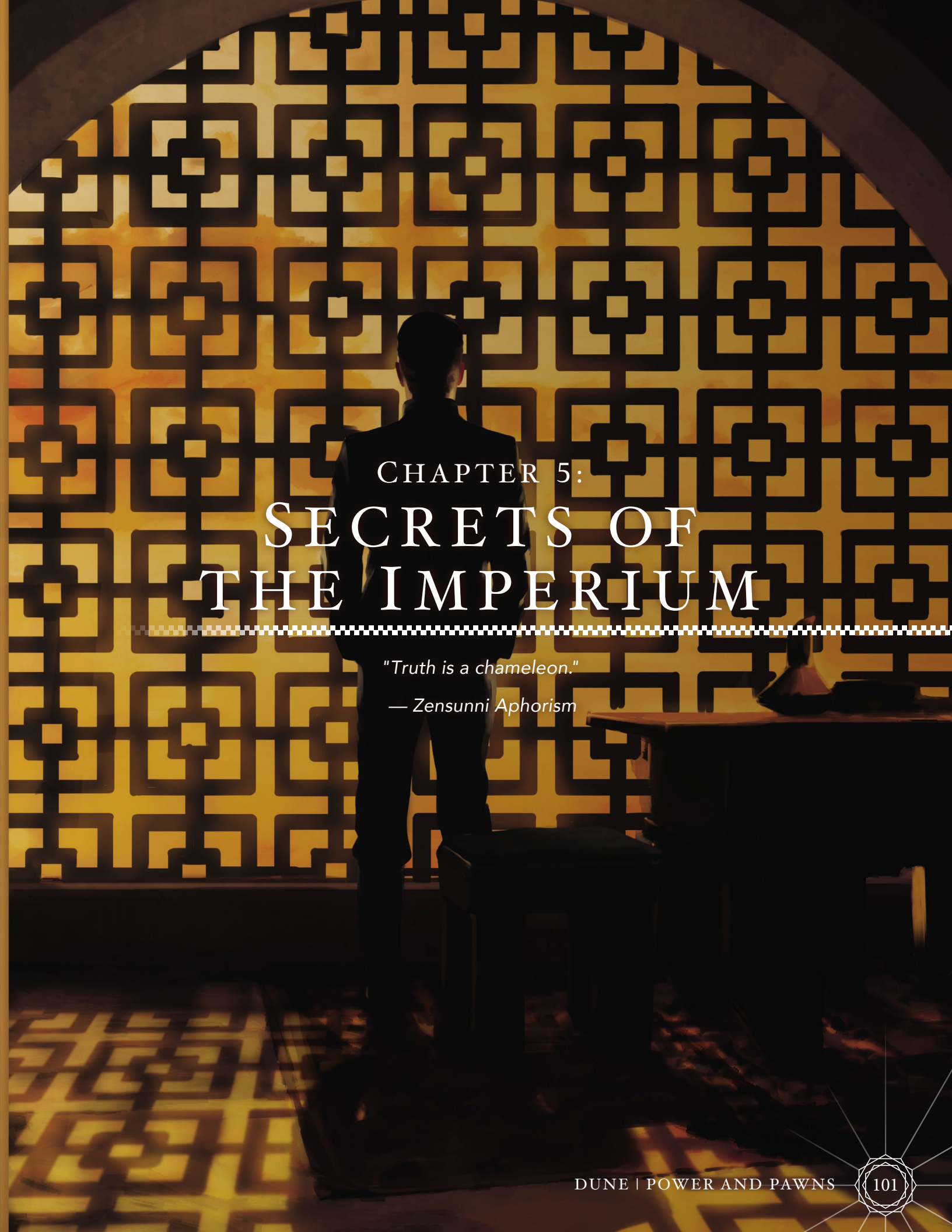
Performer adds Momentum to the pool (something Gurney Halleck would certainly appreciate) and **Unquestionable Loyalty** gives you one bonus point of Determination at the start of each game session. Those all seem valuable for your role.

While the Imperium projects an image of order and consistency, behind closed doors the reality is very different. Each House Major is granted control of their planetary domains to enact whatever horrors they like on their populace. While many take care of their people, others abuse them in terrible ways. No one likes to speak of this; no one likes to interfere in the affairs of others lest they invite that same attention on themselves. This secrecy is no less evident than within the Tleilaxu, the Guild, and the mercantile empire that is CHOAM.

This chapter is designed for the gamemaster, to reveal to them the deepest and darkest secrets of these organizations. However, players who have a character based in one of these factions may also understand a few of these mysteries. It is up to the gamemaster how much of this lore to allow players to know, bearing in mind that few members of any organization know all its secrets.

> "What has mood to do with it? You fight when the necessity arises— no matter the mood! Mood's a thing for cattle or making love or playing the baliset. It's not for fighting."
>
> — Gurney Halleck, Warmaster of House Atreides





Chapter 5: Secrets of the Imperium

"Truth is a chameleon."

— Zensunni Aphorism

Secrets of the Tleilaxu

There are few organizations more secretive than the Tleilaxu. They do not welcome outsiders on their worlds, and even those they do allow are restricted in terms of travel and what they can see. The Tleilaxu trust none outside their order and often don't trust many inside it either. The populace at large knows little of what goes on among the scientific elite. Only the shadowy 'masters' are allowed to understand the secrets of axlotl tanks, gholas, and other Tleilaxu 'products'.

There are many reasons for this secrecy; the simplest is their distrust and suspicion of outsiders. The Tleilaxu don't just have a slightly different culture compared to the rest of the Imperium; they are closer to being a religious cult. This means you are either a part of that faith or not, and the Tleilaxu only trust those who are part of their faith. No matter how friendly or helpful a new ally might be, they are still not Tleilaxu. As such, they cannot be trusted.

Just like Ix, the Guild, and the Bene Gesserit, the Tleilaxu also protect their secrets for business reasons. They are the only people who can do what they do. This allows them to charge a handsome rate for their services, knowing that no one can find them elsewhere. Also, just like their peers, their unique skills allow them to step out of Imperial politics a little, as the threat of removing their services to the Imperium grants them some leeway from the commands of the Emperor and the Landsraad. As long as they pay at least lip service to the laws of the Imperium and maintain a public loyalty to the Throne, they can do as they wish.

The last reason for their secrecy is much darker. While the Tleilaxu have a reputation as flesh mongers and perverted biologists, the truth is actually far worse. If the Imperium at large really knew what was being done on Tleilax, they would shrink away in horror.



Axlotl Tanks

Content Warning - Body horror, Abuse and mutilation of women.
The nature of the axotl tanks is both horrific and potentially traumatic. In further references we will not detail their nature, allowing gamemasters to come up with their own version of their truth and insert that as the basis for this technology.

The foundation of most Tleilaxu science is the axlotl tank. Most educated people in the Imperium know that these tanks exist, but no one outside the Tleilaxu knows anything more than their name. However, the general supposition most people have is correct. These devices are incubators, allowing a variety of products to be grown and developed inside them, as much of Tleilaxu science is based in biology. This all sounds very simple, and most people imagine these tanks to be large vats containing some form of nutrient liquid that Tleilaxu masters pour over as if brewing some form of ale.

While the tanks do indeed perform this sort of function, the truth of them is both repugnant and abhorrent. Many have noted that there are few if any women among the Tleilaxu. These tanks are the reason. The tanks are the women of the Tleilaxu. The Tleilaxu take women from their population and convert them into these devices. They are lobotomized and wired into various systems so their wombs can be used to develop whatever chemical, creature, or product the Tleilaxu are working on. Many production factories have rows and rows of these 'tanks' living in silent broken horror for as long as their bodies last. As each one dies, or when more are required, the Tleilaxu simply draw more women from the population. Even in an Imperium that ignores slavery and suffering, this is unforgivable, which is why is it kept a closely guarded secret, although the Tleilaxu themselves are more concerned that others might duplicate their technology if its nature was known.

The women of Tleilaxu are aware that being chosen by the Masters is to be avoided. Anyone they do take, regardless of gender, is usually never seen again. The people do their best to live their lives in this shadow and hope it passes them by. However, people know that women are in far more danger of being taken than men; they just don't know why. Most of the population just hopes that the Masters will have enough to satisfy the quotas for their experiments. Unfortunately, the quotas are worked out the opposite way. There is such a need for axlotl tanks that the Masters calculate how

many women they can take based almost entirely on how many women they must leave in the population to maintain a healthy birth rate. What this does mean is that any woman who passes her childbearing years without being chosen has a good chance of living her life out in peace. Even so, no one on the planet is safe, as the Masters have a vast array of experiments that always need more human bodies in some form or another.

Clearly, the Tleilaxu elite are extremely misogynistic. They see women as no more than 'potential axlotl tanks'. This attitude is especially prevalent on their homeworld but also bleeds into their dealings in the Imperium. It is one of the reasons they despise the Bene Gesserit as an example of what happens when 'women fail to be put in their proper place'. This horrendous level of sexism leads the Tleilaxu to usually ignore or dismiss any women they encounter. But it also leads them to underestimate the women of the Imperium, often to their cost.

Amal and the Great Spice War

There have been many attempts to duplicate the spice melange since its effects were discovered. Not only is there never enough being harvested to satisfy demand, but the reliance on a single planet for the supply makes many people very nervous. What if something was to happen to Arrakis? All the spice could be lost. However, when the best minds in the Imperium struggled to copy the substance, they all met with failure. While a few might nurse a dream to succeed where others had failed, most simply gave up. Many were forced to end their experiments due to the expense of 'wasting' spice as part of them. The Tleilaxu were among the few who never quite gave up, but they lacked the advanced research space they needed to dedicate themselves to the project. That was, until the Emperor himself decided to revive the experiments.

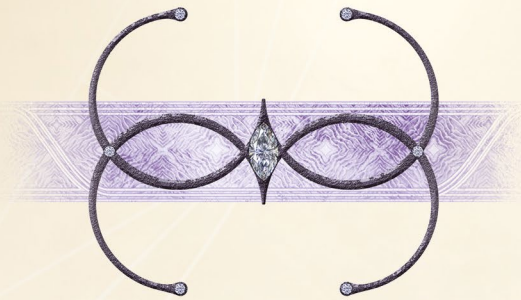
Emperor Shaddam IV had little concern about the loss of spice for the Imperium; he just saw in artificial spice the potential for wealth and power. If he was the one who controlled spice production, his wealth would be unimaginable and his power unassailable. His plan, however, would ultimately fail, after tearing whole planets apart and nearly leading to the end of spice itself.

He came secretly to the Tleilaxu and offered to fund their experiments into a new artificial spice, as long as they gave him control of it. The Tleilaxu agreed to all of the Emperor's terms, fully intending to betray him and keep the secret for themselves. Once the deal was struck, the Emperor, greedy for power, spared no expense to make sure the plan would work. His first act was to help the Tleilaxu take control of Ix, to act as their research facility. A coup was organized using Face Dancers and secret Sardaukar troops to exile House Vernius from the planet. Many died in the fighting, and the survivors were condemned to work as slave labor for the Tleilaxu on the renamed planet of Xuttuh. The heirs of House Vernius took refuge with House Atreides, but their pleas for intervention from the Emperor fell on deaf ears.

It took over twenty years for the Tleilaxu Master in charge of the project, Hidar Fen Ajidica, to create a viable form of artificial spice, which he named Amal. The breakthrough was not due to his skill but a hideous accident. The Bene Gesserit had sent a spy named Miral Alechem to Xuttuh/Ix to support its rebels and find out what the Tleilaxu were doing. Miral was captured during the operation and, unaware of her origins, the Tleilaxu made her into an axlotl tank. The Bene Gesserit training of her body and mind, even with her consciousness destroyed, had a powerful effect on the experimental spice substitute. Her tank was the only one capable of creating Amal, even though Master Ajidica didn't entirely understand why.

BENE GESSERIT AND THE AXLOTL TANKS

Even without her conscious mind, a Sister of the Bene Gesserit still has incredible control over her body. Converting one of them into an axlotl tank was the key to creating Amal. While this secret died with the creator of Amal, if the Tleilaxu at large discovered the fact, they would crave more Bene Gesserit tanks. Each is several times more efficient than the best they have. The Tleilaxu would be subtle at first, trying to trick and kidnap as many Sisters as they felt they could get away with. If the Sisterhood ever discovered what was being done to their Sisters, their wrath would be terrifying. By the end of the inevitable conflict, only one of the factions would remain.



Ajidica underplayed his success in his reports to the Emperor to allow him time to manage a betrayal, but Shaddam was too excited that the experiment had been a success to wait for conclusive results. He knew that most noble Houses had stockpiles of spice, which they could rely on for a while rather than support the Emperor's new substitute, so he declared that all stockpiles must be either destroyed or handed over to the throne in accordance with an old law no one really paid any attention to.

As a result, in 10,175, the Great Spice War began. Shaddam picked on single Houses and threatened them with a Sardaukar assault unless they handed over their spice. When only one House was threatened, the rest of the Landsraad was too frightened to be the first to stand against the Emperor. In addition to trying to reduce stockpiles, the Emperor also used the war as an excuse to settle a few other scores as well. The war came to a head when Shaddam led an Imperial assault force to Arrakis (then under the governance of House Harkonnen) and threatened to destroy the planet. He wanted the source of the spice gone, believing his substitute was ready to be used. It nearly cost him the throne and destroyed the Imperium.

While Shaddam had been swept up in his dream for wealth and power, Ajidica was betraying him. He got the Sardaukar, who were meant to be keeping him under Imperial control, addicted to the new Amal and claimed their allegiance. Even as he got ready to leave Xuttuh with his Sardaukar, Amal stores, and the Miral axlotl tank, House Atreides and Vernius led an assault to reclaim the planet. Everything was lost during the fighting, including the research notes. Ajidica destroyed them himself to keep his secret.

Meanwhile, the Emperor's best friend Count Fenring and the Face Dancer Zoal had infiltrated two Guild Heighliners. They planned to secretly replace the Navigator's spice with Amal to test if it worked for space travel. The plan failed, with both Navigators dying after failing to pilot their vessel to the correct coordinates. One ended up in the far reaches of unexplored space, and the other crashed on Wallach IX, causing untold destruction. Ajidica, already addicted to Amal, fell victim to lethal side effects and dissolved before he could make an escape from Xuttuh.

The project was a complete failure.The Guild stopped the Emperor by marooning him on Arrakis, saying they would leave him there if he destroyed it. The Emperor had planned to announce his new power with Amal concurrent with his destruction of Arrakis. But with no one listening, he was forced to capitulate. Had he pushed forward and destroyed Arrakis, the spice would have been gone forever.

It is not impossible that another scientist might recreate Amal, although it is highly unlikely. The research notes are gone and the substance requires a living Bene Gesserit axlotl tank, a disgusting and unthinkable plan. Even then, it is not a safe or a reasonable or in any way acceptable substitute for spice. Those who take it can use it as a spice asset when using any spice Talent. However, prolonged use literally melts the body from the inside, as well as being highly addictive. It does slow aging in the same way as spice and grants glimpses of the future that can predict the actions of others. As such, any character taking it regularly gains the trait 'Amal Addict' they can use to gain a bonus when such glimpses would be useful, such as in combat or when trying to make an escape. Unfortunately they will also be dead within about a year or so. Should a Guild Navigator take Amal instead of spice when guiding a foldspace vessel, they will arrive at a random destination in the universe and must make a Dire (D5) **Discipline** test or die on arrival. Should they survive, they simply die a few hours later, but in the meantime they can make another foldspace jump as long as they use real spice.

GHOLA

Among their many perverse talents, the Tleilaxu can bring back the dead, almost. They have discovered ways to clone a dead body, allowing it to live again just as if it had never died. But the process is not perfect. The main problem is that these 'ghola' retain none of their original memories. They awaken as a blank slate and often need training in basic skills and literacy as if they were children. The Tleilaxu consider this a feature rather than a problem, as this allows them to train the ghola to whatever purpose they need it for. While most are trained for simple manual labor, a few might be trained as Mentats or other advanced positions if a customer requires it. Like all things with the Tleilaxu, gholas are not resurrected out of the goodness of their heart but to supply a demand.

The bodies of ghola are regrown from a certain amount of original tissue in an axlotl tank. As such they often appear new and youthful, like a newborn, regardless of their apparent age. They are absent the scars and wear and tear of their previous life, being recently reborn. Some delicate tissues, however, cannot be successfully regrown. This is most noticeable in the eyes, which have to be replaced with Tleilaxu cybernetic prosthetics.

Ghola are most often used as cheap labor for the Tleilaxu. While they are rarely seen outside Tleilax itself or a Tleilaxu spacecraft, they are very common in those places. For the most part, the people of the Imperium see the process of creating a ghola as repulsive, so few request a ghola be made for them. Those who do so to try and bring back a dead loved one are always painfully disappointed. It is suggested that the Tleilaxu might kill

their own people and bring them back as gholas just to ensure their workforce is compliant and knows nothing of a life outside this purpose.

GHOLA PLAYER CHARACTERS

It is permissible, but rare, for a ghola to be a player character. They do not require a faction template and are created like any other player character. It is assumed they have been bought or gifted to the House they will serve upon their delivery. They may be trained as Mentats, or (more rarely) Guild agents, but the Bene Gesserit will not train ghola, and the Fremen usually kill them on sight. While they can train as doctors, a ghola Suk is exceptionally rare, as few trust anything that comes from the Tleilaxu, even with Imperial conditioning.

The character gains the additional trait 'Ghola', which usually applies as a penalty, given how uncomfortable they make people feel. Few people blame the ghola for their state, but that doesn't mean they are any more comfortable having them around. They also have a background no one (especially them) is aware of. A ghola serving a House will probably have a connection to it, as Tleilaxu gifts and products are often double edged. They tend to enjoy sending the deceased loved ones of noble families back to them and claim they never knew there was a connection, just to see how people react.

In later eras, the Tleilaxu learn to grow gholas to order and discover ways to restore original-body memories to the ghola. But these changes will have to wait for later sourcebooks.

The Tleilaxu Campaign

A Tleilaxu-based campaign offers many new possibilities but best suits a group looking for espionage and intrigue. The Tleilaxu are almost universally reviled by the rest of the Imperium, so it is very hard to run a game looking to form alliances and friends. The needs of the Tleilaxu are always selfish, and they will sink to any method to get what they want. They can also be vindictive and spiteful to those they feel have wronged them, and they often seek to deliver punishments far in excess of the slight.

While the Tleilaxu are outsiders, this doesn't mean they cannot interact with the Imperium; they just have to be careful and more self-reliant. What the Tleilaxu cannot find on their own planet, they will have to acquire elsewhere, and no one will give them a good price. So everything outside their planet that they need, they have to either cheat or steal for. This, of course, only makes their reputation that much worse.

A Tleilaxu campaign, like any other, will involve the player characters trying to further the ends of their masters and find a way to get what they are tasked with finding. The difference is in the methods they will employ, the lengths they are prepared to go to, and the allies they may have. Two potential campaign formats are detailed below:



SERVANTS OF THE MASTER

In this campaign, the player characters all serve a single Tleilaxu Master. They are tasked with getting hold of supplies for his experiments (whatever they may be). The Master may need the player characters for a variety of purposes, such as stealing notes of competitors or making deals to supply one of the noble Houses. Any such deals will have to be done carefully, as few noble Houses are happy to be seen to deal with the 'dirty Tleilaxu'. Each adventure sends the player characters out into the Imperium, often in secret or in disguise, to fulfill their master's wishes. The master won't care how they go about this, or what laws they break (moral or social) to get what they need. The things they are sent out to get hold of could be anything from spice to people.

The characters in this campaign will often be Face Dancers, but they might also be ghola or other specialists trained among the Tleilaxu. The group will probably be led by a twisted Mentat. It is possible the master might be a player character, but they will rarely leave Tleilax, so he would work mainly as an architect.

REBELS OF BANDALONG

In this campaign, the player characters are ordinary folk trying to survive under the repressive rule of the Bene Tleilax. This may be quite short-lived, as the Masters have all manner of infiltrators to root out treachery and malcontents. But the player characters are desperate and have little to lose. They might all be women, one step from being taken for the axlotl tanks, or people with interesting genetic profiles the Masters wish to 'harvest'. The odds will be stacked against them, because the Tleilaxu allow little freedom for the common folk. As such, any unusual activity will be easily noticed and clamped down on.

This sort of campaign will be very player driven, with the gamemaster asking the players how they plan to strike back. They will have to decide on targets and how to get the equipment or access they need to mount a bombing, infiltration, assassination, or theft. The players will also have to work out what their ideal endgame actually is. Do they plan to free the planet, or do they just want to escape or kill a particular Master that hurt them or their family? Whatever their goal, it will be very hard to achieve, and the slightest mistake will end the campaign very swiftly.

For slightly more freedom, a similar campaign might be set on Ix under the rule of the Tleilaxu. The player characters might be survivors of the conquest looking to strike back, and hoping one day House Vernius will return to free them.



Secrets of the Guild

Of the three 'pillars' of the Imperium — the Emperor, the Landsraad, and the Spacing Guild — only the Guild is indispensable to the function of the Imperium as a whole. In the absence of an Emperor, the Landsraad could make do. The Emperor could perhaps rule more efficiently without the Landsraad, but without the Guild and the foldspace travel it provides, the Imperium would soon dissolve or descend into chaos and anarchy, subject to the cruel whims of unchecked Houses, and beset by external threats. Thus, the uneasy balance between powers is always held with the tacit understanding that the Guild is in the true position of strength.

Inside the Spacing Guild

The Spacing Guild has existed in one form or another since the very formation of the Imperium, so integral to its history that time is defined as being 'Before Guild' and 'After Guild'. Despite this, the organization was not always known as the Spacing Guild, and its earliest origins were such that it conflicted with what would become the Imperium.

Founded by Adrien Venport, the organization originally known as the Foldspace Shipping Company was the first to take advantage of the radical new technology provided by the Holtzman Effect, as developed by Norma Cenva (see p.119). When released from her service to Tio Holtzman, Cenva worked with her father, Adrien Venport, and his company, VenKee Enterprises, to build the first successful foldspace vessel.

After her capture by the Titan Xerxes, Cenva underwent a transformation into something beyond human. This began the large-scale intentional creation of beings able to navigate foldspace, humans mutated by intense exposure to concentrated amounts of spice, done in tandem with other psychological and physiological conditioning. These new Navigators could guide ships to cross the immense reaches of space predictably, and instantaneously, their prescience plotting courses through unfathomable variables and distances. However, these early voyages were not reliably safe, with some ships vanishing to never be seen again. It would be many years before the Guild established a perfect record for safe transit.

Cenva's son, Josef Venport, created VenHold Industries, a corporation devoted entirely to foldspace technology and the development of Navigators. Based on the planet Kohlar, VenHold was initially not aligned with the new Imperium.



Tupile

Star System: Unknown

Moons: Unknown

Habitable: Unknown, but likely Class V

Noble House: None (Spacing Guild)

Primary Export: None

Population: Exact numbers unknown (refugees)

Languages: Galach and others

Locations of Interest: Unknown

OVERVIEW

To the rest of the Imperium, the sanctuary planet of Tupile is practically mythical, a place where Houses go when exiled or as refugees, never to be seen again. To the Spacing Guild, Tupile is a small group of habitable planets (not just one) in a single solar system, that system's location one of their many closely guarded secrets.

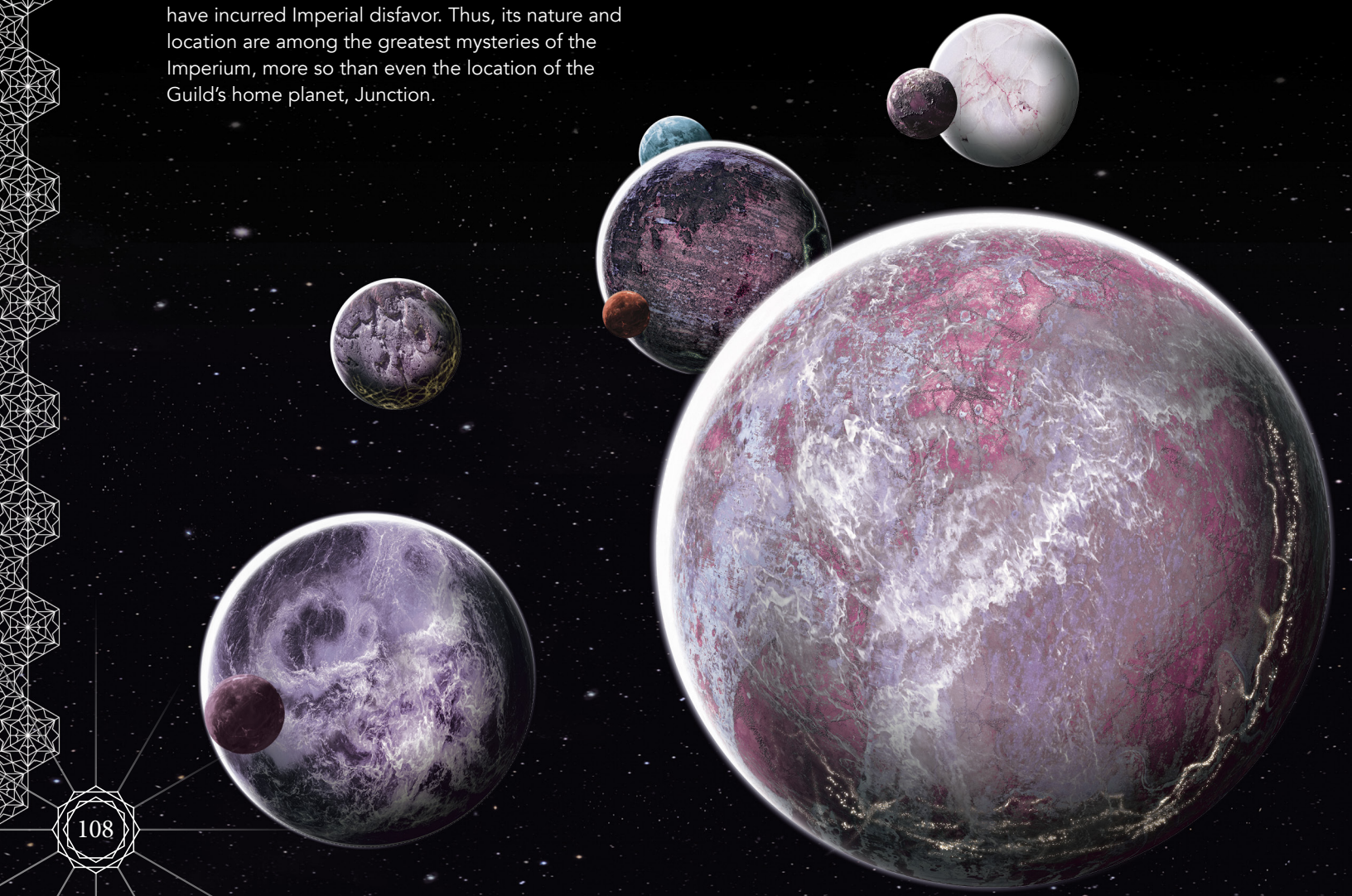
Nothing else is known about Tupile, including the nature of the environments, what the Guild presence is like there, and who resides there. To know such information puts the Guild at risk, as they almost certainly have offered sanctuary there to Houses that have incurred Imperial disfavor. Thus, its nature and location are among the greatest mysteries of the Imperium, more so than even the location of the Guild's home planet, Junction.

All that can be said for certain about the place is that if a House wishes to continue to exist outside the Imperium, it has few options but to seek transport to Tupile, paying whatever cost the Spacing Guild asks.

HISTORY

Outside of the Guild, little is known about how Tupile was first discovered and what state the planets were in. It has been used by the Guild for millennia, helping Houses escape persecution or annihilation, often in return for some service or goods.

After his ascension to the throne, Emperor Paul 'Muad'dib' Atreides used the issue of Tupile's location in a negotiation with the Guild, as it was hidden from his prescience due to the involvement of Navigators. After ten years of negotiation, concessions were made, the Tupile Treaty was signed, and Tupile's location remained secret.



They struggled against the Imperial edict and fought against the forces of the Butlerian Jihad. Unlike the forces of the Jihad who were forbidden to use technology approximating human thought, VenHold Industries used meks extensively for a variety of purposes, especially in combat. VenHold had a clear advantage in both the scale and quality of their starships, and their Navigators provided near-instantaneous transportation across the universe, allowing VenHold to dominate the conflict in its early stages.

Despite their superiority in space power, losses on both sides were devastating, and the planet of Kohlar was bombed, the surface ravaged. Eventually, peace was made and an uneasy alliance formed between the Corrino Emperor and VenHold Industries, a pact that has remained fast ten thousand years later. The Guild rebuilt itself upon Junction and flourished, but they maintain their own goals and secrets, aiding the Emperor and Imperium only so much as such aid is profitable and advances their own agenda.

The Guild's 'homeworld' of Junction is described on page 78 of the **Dune Core Rulebook**. However, the Guild operates a few worlds far from the reach of the Imperium for their own purposes. Given that they are the only people who can reach certain planets, there is no reason for the Guild not to have a vast empire of secret worlds across the galaxy. However, administrating such an effort would take more time and trouble than they would be worth. That being said, the existence of Tupile might suggest the Guild has similar facilities elsewhere.

THE GUILD AND THE IMPERIAL COURT

The relationship between the Imperial Court and the Guild is the foundation of the ongoing prosperity of the Imperium. The alliance, forged more than 10,000 years ago after the war between the Corrino Emperor and Josef Venport, has held firm, and though the Guild professes a strict neutrality in all matters relating to the Landsraad and the Imperial Court, the unassailable truth of the matter is that the Guild uses the Emperor when it can, and acquiesces when the Emperor asks favors of it that are in its interest to grant.

Before the Great Spice War, the Guild worked hard to play down its power so as not to cause enmity with the Houses. But by stranding the Emperor and his feared Sardaukar on Arrakis at the end of the war, almost like naughty school children, the Guild proved to the Imperium just how powerful it was. From that moment it was clear that the Guild answered to no one. Before this incident, the Emperor and the Landsraad had convinced themselves the Guild was unaware of just how much power it had, mainly as any House with that much leverage would have made a play for the throne. But the end of the Great Spice War proved that not only was the Guild aware of its power, but it was prepared to use it. Now the Houses and even the Emperor live in fear of the Guild exercising that power against them, as it might mean their end, in the time it takes to fold space.

THE ENEMY

In the eras prior to and during the reign of Paul Muad'Dib, most of the Imperium has little interest in anything beyond what they call the Known Universe. When Paul's son, the God-Emperor Leto Atreides II, ascends the throne, he begins to dismantle the Guild, eventually limiting all foldspace travel to only his own servants, stranding humankind on their homeworlds as part of his mysterious Golden Path. Upon his death, the Scattering sends humankind across the galaxy, and many civilizations spring up far outside Imperial control or even Imperial knowledge.

Later, when the enigmatic Honored Matres arrive in the Imperium and begin to conquer what remains of human civilization, they hint that they have been driven so by an encounter with stranger, darker forces. This is eventually revealed as the remnant of the Thinking Machine civilization. A campaign set in this tumultuous period may decide that the Spacing Guild was aware of their existence out there or may even have maintained contact with these heretical enemies.

While the Guild has no intention of changing the status quo that has given it power and position for centuries, it also has no intention of kneeling before anyone. But it is also aware it is not unassailable. After all, it is utterly reliant on spice and knows a strong Emperor might exploit that to bring them to heel.

BEYOND THE KNOWN UNIVERSE

The primary activity of the Guild is the transportation of goods and personnel across the Imperium, but some portion of its attention is devoted to exploration and surveying unknown space beyond that inhabited by the Houses and the Landsraad, charting the expanses beyond the borders of the Known Universe. It is a carefully guarded secret that the Guild's Navigators, gifted with prescience, have detected forces in motion that threaten the delicate balance of power within the Imperium. Beyond the veil of the known is the unknown, and they are aware of a great and mysterious 'presence', something beyond their comprehension. Navigators who travel too far, such as D'Murr Pilru when he was poisoned with Amal, report something terrifying out there. Whatever it is, it means humanity ill and is patiently biding its time. While the Guild does explore the outer reaches, it remains very careful and tries to tread very lightly, for fear of what might be out there.

A Guild campaign might take player characters into the far reaches of space, seeking out new planets and resources to expand the Known Universe. They might find clues to the identity of this potential enemy, or they might become its first victims.

Guild Navigators

The process for creating Navigators, developed more than 10,000 years ago by Norma Cenva and refined over the intervening centuries, incorporates a variety of psychological exercises and neuro-physiological conditioning, bolstered with a hyper-enriched diet of spice and spice gas. Candidates are chosen early in life, some growing up within the Guild specifically for such purposes, and are subjected to this process, severing all ties with their former lives.

In valleys upon the surface of Junction and concealed far beneath the ground are many immense fields of incubation tanks with nascent Navigators growing within them, their clear plaz obscured by the thick spice mists inside. These are well-guarded and tended by failed Navigator candidates and still-human guards, vital signs monitored carefully.

Thousands are selected for this rigorous development process. Most do not proceed, either being psychologically unfit for the role or unable to metabolize so much spice. They spend much of this time in suspensor tanks into which spice gas is pumped, receiving somatic instructions and meditations to unlock their minds and open their latent prescient abilities. They are monitored carefully, with no sense of privacy or individuality during this time. Many go insane through this inhuman treatment or mutate in ways that preclude further conditioning.

Those who do not proceed are evaluated for future service to the Guild. If they are capable of service in some fashion, they are allowed to live and function in a variety of roles, either on Junction or on Heighliners, invisible to the passengers. In the rare case of a candidate that survives the process but is not able to become a Navigator, their prescient abilities are utilized by the Guild in whatever fashion they may be of service. Few, if any, ever see life outside the Guild, much less return to their homeworlds. For those who are too horribly mutated or psychologically broken to continue, the Guild disposes of them as efficiently as possible.

Eventually, when they are ready, each Navigator candidate is rigorously tested and vetted before their true training begins, at which point they are transferred off-planet into Junction's orbit to begin the early stages of becoming full Navigators.

NAVIGATORS IN PLAY

As non-player characters, Navigators present an incredible opportunity for the gamemaster to provide prescient visions and hints at powers beyond comprehension, and to present player characters with a cautionary glimpse at the effect that spice has upon humans. Other than the Tleilaxu, there is little in the Imperium that is effectively nonhuman, so encountering a fully mutated Navigator should prove a sobering experience, especially for any who rely on spice to a greater than normal degree.

While the Known Universe is full of Guild bankers, agents, engineers, and other functionaries, and even the occasional failed Navigator candidate, the avenues for physically encountering a Navigator are extremely few. One might be summoned to Junction or a safe holding to speak with a Navigator in their tank, or in exceptional circumstances be allowed to interact with one on their Heighliner. Only in the rarest of situations will a Navigator leave the surety of a Guild escort, and when they do so, they are placed in mobile protective suspensor tanks filled with orange spice gas.

If the player characters encounter a Navigator, it is entirely at the desire of the Navigator and most likely the Spacing Guild. Few Navigators act without the Guild's sanction, and such is their existence that a Navigator must always be accompanied by Guild facilitators no matter where they go, their movements across the galaxy tracked, and even the prescient 'dead space' they generate is noted by other Navigators.

Utterly alien, yet clearly once human, a Navigator's presence in a scene may be confusing or even demoralizing to any characters with prescience or enhanced awareness. Navigators often speak about events that have yet to occur, offering vague prophecies and predictions about potential outcomes, and often ground their statements in time — a 'when' that implies knowledge of hidden futures and concealed pasts. They are frequently cryptic and rarely reveal their own thoughts on a matter at hand, stating the obvious, as if oblivious to social cues.

While it may seem constrictive to be stuck in a spice-filled box, the Navigator barely notices. Their mind is usually projected out into the universe, charting the ebb and flow of a hundred different futures. Their minds watch planets dance around suns and stars turn and shift across the galaxy. Where their physical body happens to be is almost irrelevant to them, and many are only barely conscious of the remnant of their physical existence. It is often an act of will for any of them to remain in their body and interact with those who might be talking to them.

Ultimately, any encounter with a non-player character Navigator should emphasize the Navigator's alienness and its inscrutability. Even successful use of Bene Gesserit abilities against a Navigator might be framed in such a way that they are merely feigning any inconvenience or loss of control. No player character should ever feel they truly understood what occurs in an encounter with a Navigator, or that the communication was transparent.

It is important to note that while a Navigator plots a course and steers the ship, they do not actually fold space themselves. That is done by the vast Holtzman engines of the ship (usually only installed on a Heighliner). However, ever protective of their secrets, the Guild likes to infer that Navigators have the power to fold and control both space and time. They certainly never share the mechanics of foldspace travel outside the Guild. Historians do

often note that the first Navigator, Norma Cenva, was able to fold space herself, skipping across worlds with the power of her will alone. So it is at least possible that some Navigators are capable of this feat, and if not, it is certainly an ability the Guild would like to imbue them with if it could find out how.

NAVIGATORS AND PRESCIENCE

Much can be said of the interaction between Navigators and prescience, but little is truly understood. The Guild does all that it can to dissuade such conjecture, though their own studies, experimentation, and understanding on the matter are profound. The Bene Gesserit are also invested in learning all they can of this phenomenon.

When utilizing a Navigator in play, the gamemaster should consider the following:

- Any prescient characters, or those with enhanced senses, find the Navigators extremely difficult to sense or make predictions about.
- Anyone connected to the Navigator, whether allied or just in their proximity, is also shielded from detection in the same fashion. This extends beyond mere physical space and can even shroud the Navigator's allies from prescience when they are acting independently of the Navigator, to a degree at the gamemaster's discretion.
- It is possible to detect a Navigator's involvement (but nothing else) by the absence their prescience blocking abilities create. In a sense, you know they are involved in a plan because you cannot use prescience to see that plan. This also extends to those within its sphere of influence. Such detection is extraordinarily subtle and possible only to other Navigators or those with an exceptional degree of spice-granted prescience.

Effects of each of these conditions are up to the gamemaster to determine. They may manifest in higher Difficulties for attempts at 'reading' them, or vague and unsatisfactory answers for Talents relating to forecasting or predictions, or when spending Momentum to Obtain Information if it relates to future events or probabilities. Ultimately, though, this is simultaneously a powerful advantage and a glaring weakness, as the unnatural nature of this concealment is obvious to anyone with the ability to detect it.

GUILD NPCS

The Spacing Guild is made up of billions of peoplewho do the work of operating and maintaining the colossal fleet of foldspace vessels, managing the Imperium-wide transactions of the Guild Bank, and performing the support work and administration required to keep the facilities and operations of the Guild functional. The vast majority of those personnel — the administrators, the minor bankers, the bureaucrats, and the mechanics — will not need game statistics, but a few more interesting types of individuals from the Guild can have an impact on a party of player characters.

In addition to the Guild NPCs presented below, archetypes from the **Dune Core Rulebook** can be repurposed and sprinkled with Guild flavor to serve as Guild personnel. For example, a Guild Mentat would be useful for calculating a ship's position via traditional navigational methods or for rapidly reviewing and recalling cargo manifests. The Guild also has its own Envoys, Guards, Technicians, and maybe even Assassins

PLAYER CHARACTER NAVIGATORS

Due to their nature, full Navigators are not recommended for use as player characters. They are highly limited in mobility and ability to act, requiring bulky and expensive life support systems and exorbitant amounts of spice for their daily existence and their extraordinary abilities. The following is provided to help use them as supporting characters and major NPCs who might be connected to the player characters.

Navigators are conditioned and mutated from a very young age and have little place in the social structure of the Imperium, much less within a noble House. Furthermore, their prescient abilities are such that they are an extraordinary challenge for any gamemaster, due to their ability to both predict the future and to foul the prescient abilities of others.

Given that such a character would not be excused from their Guild duties and is limited by their physicality, they could only interact in any adventure using architect play. A Navigator character is almost defined by their relative vulnerability, their reliance upon technology to sustain themselves in the form of their suspensor tanks. They require vast amounts of expensive spice to maintain their prescience and are heavily addicted to it. Furthermore, accustomed more than any other being to life in space, they derive a measure of discomfort in being on a planet's surface for a prolonged time.

Even if a Navigator forms a connection to a House, they are always loyal to the Guild first. None can bear allegiance to anything else. Their Guild loyalty should inevitably make them untrustworthy by any House standard, even if the Navigator has behaved forthrightly and without conflict.

Guild Banker

Representatives of the Guild Bank are the kind of Guild personnel most often encountered by the typical citizen of the Imperium. Characters might encounter one if they need additional finances to acquire a specific asset, help investigating a financial trail, or assistance in establishing investments or liquidating assets. It is also possible that the players' House could be faced with an investigation by Guild Bankers ordered to look into the House's finances.

Traits: Guild Agent, Banker

Talents

- **Methodical Efficiency:** When making an **Understand** test that applies to finance, commerce, or bureaucracy, one of the d20s in their pool may be considered to have rolled a 1 instead of rolling it.

Assets: Guild loan contract, Guild Bank guards

Example Guild Bankers

- **Dinao** is a loan officer who enjoys finding technicalities so he can reject customers he doesn't like.
- **Tiala** is a popular banker, probably because he is known for taking bribes for special treatment.
- **Vilja** applied for Navigator training but was unsuccessful. She still has occasional nightmares, as well as brief visions of the future.

Scenario Hook

- After undergoing a financial setback, the player characters are visited by a Guild Bank representative who offers to help get them back on their feet financially if they will undertake a simple, easy mission for the Guild. Better yet, it involves acting against one of their old enemies.

Drive		Statement
Duty:	6	
Faith:	5	
Justice:	7	Wealth flows to those who deserve it.
Power:	5	
Truth:	5	

Skill		Focuses
Battle:	4	
Communicate:	5	
Discipline:	7	Composure, Precision
Move:	5	
Understand:	6	Finance

Guild Engineer

The Guild does not let just anyone service and maintain their Heighliners. Only trained technicians do such work, usually under the auspices of an engineer. Most Guild technicians are trained to do one job very well, therefore few have great understanding of Guild and foldspace technology in full. An engineer, however, knows the plans of both the Heighliner and its engines by heart so they can manage the teams of technicians. They are privy to some of the most advanced technology in the Imperium.

Traits: Guild Engineer, Technician

TALENTS

- **Foldspace Technology:** The engineer is familiar with restricted spacecraft technology, such as foldspace engines, and may attempt tests on such devices with no penalty.

Assets: Full Heighliner access, Tool kit, Spare parts

EXAMPLE GUILD ENGINEERS

- Vashid has been assigned to a particular Heighliner for over a decade as its head engineer. He knows every nut and bolt on the ship and has developed a sixth sense for when a failure might occur.
- Nala made a mistake running a work crew that caused a Heighliner to have to cut a trip short and return for a repair. It got her demoted to a standard technician. While she hopes to prove herself again, she nurses a grudge that she was treated unfairly.
- Maris just loves engines. She spends her days on Junction fixing whatever is put in front of her. But sometimes she is shipped out to make minor repairs on active ships and loves to see these great machines running.

SCENARIO HOOK

- Something has gone wrong with a Heighliner and the player characters are stuck with the other passengers waiting for a Guild engineer to arrive. Unfortunately, the engineer finds evidence of sabotage and suspects the player characters might be involved. Did they make a huge mistake or is someone trying to frame them? Either way, the Guild has little patience.

DRIVE		STATEMENT
DUTY:	6	
FAITH:	5	
JUSTICE:	5	
POWER:	5	
TRUTH:	7	Machines don't lie.

SKILL		FOCUSES
BATTLE:	4	
COMMUNICATE:	5	
DISCIPLINE:	6	Precision
MOVE:	5	
UNDERSTAND:	7	Advanced technology, Spaceship technology

Guild Navigator

While still technically human, the Navigators of the Spacing Guild have been thoroughly mutated by their constant immersion in spice gas. They have an elongated fishlike body with thin, delicate limbs, webbed hands and feet, and a giant skull that holds the creature's enormous mutated brain. Facial features like their tiny mouth, small nose-flap, and pulsing temples are often difficult to make out through the orange cloud in which they constantly float, sealed away inside great armored tanks of transparent plaz. Navigators' spice-fueled minds can see all paths through space and time, which allows them to guide ships safely through foldspace. Some Navigators have difficulty communicating with other humans, whose minds they see as limited and trivial, but others do not, and even enjoy going on non-piloting excursions

DRIVE		STATEMENT
DUTY:	6	
FAITH:	7	My own abilities keep us safe.
JUSTICE:	5	
POWER:	5	
TRUTH:	5	

SKILL		FOCUSES
BATTLE:	4	
COMMUNICATE:	4	Secret language (Navigator)
DISCIPLINE:	7	Precision
MOVE:	2	
UNDERSTAND:	7	Foldspace navigation, Space navigation, Mathematics

Traits: Guild Agent, Navigator, Spice addict

TALENTS

- All Navigator talents (see p. 117).

Assets: Containment tank, Spice capsules, Heighliner, Several servants and guards

EXAMPLE NAVIGATORS

- **Pilot Halas** is one of the relatively rare individuals who entered Navigator training as a teenager. He has only recently finished his physical metamorphosis, and he still enjoys talking to regular humans.
- **Steersman Sarden** is far removed from normal human thought and occasionally pauses during flight to spout abstract poetry.
- **Steersman-Ambassador Vorb** represents Guild interests on other planets when the Guild calculates that the imposing presence of a Navigator would be helpful.

SCENARIO HOOK

- During a space flight, the Navigator's control compartment is sabotaged and their spice contaminated. The player characters must help repair the ship and find a clean onboard supply of spice to keep the Navigator alive.

Guild Spy

Though the Guild is known for its ability to keep secrets, this does not mean it has no use for such secrets. Indeed, it hungers for hidden knowledge. Guild spies can infiltrate nearly any group, especially Houses they want to investigate for any reason

Traits: Imposter, Guild Agent

Talents

- **Hidden Motives:** When an opponent fails an **Understand** or **Communicate** test against them, they may immediately create a trait which reflects a mistaken belief the opponent has about them.

Assets: Cibus hood, Memocorder, Flip-dart

Example: Guild Spies

- **Galiena** is embedded in the spice harvesting operation on Arrakis to keep an eye on production and the House's finances.
- **Jeldon** is posing as a musician in a traveling band so he can gather intel on the Houses for whom they perform.
- **Ona** is a forensic accountant able to quickly analyze a target's written records, renowned for being in and out in a single day.

Scenario Hook

- The players' House receives word that a trusted ally is actually a spy. When the characters investigate, the ally has recently left the planet. Where are they headed, are they truly a spy, and who is the party who told them so?

Drive		Statement
Duty:	7	The Guild relies on my information.
Faith:	5	
Justice:	6	
Power:	5	
Truth:	5	

Skill		Focuses
Battle:	6	Sneak Attacks
Communicate:	7	Acting, Disguise
Discipline:	5	
Move:	4	
Understand:	5	



Wayku Steward

Steward services aboard Guild ships are commonly carried out by the Wayku, an exiled House of refugees who live aboard spacecraft because they have been forbidden to set foot on any planet's surface (see **The Great Game**, p. 78, for more details). These dark-uniformed Wayku workers are generally quiet, solicitous, and unassuming — so much so that many passengers never notice them at all. Most are plugged into a music and sensory display that keeps them entertained and isolated at all times. Their shipboard duties include keeping passengers satisfied, cleaning up after them, selling them snacks and trinkets ... and spotting anything out of the ordinary for their Guild superiors.

Traits: Wayku, Servant

TALENTS

- **Subtle Step:** When they attempt a **Move** test to sneak or otherwise pass unseen through an area, or when they attempt to move an asset subtly during a conflict, the first extra d20 they purchase for the test is free.

Assets: Influence aboard ship, Invisible to the upper class, Network of shipboard passages

DRIVE		STATEMENT
DUTY:	6	
FAITH:	5	
JUSTICE:	5	
POWER:	5	
TRUTH:	7	I yearn to see new places

SKILL		FOCUSES
BATTLE:	4	
COMMUNICATE:	5	
DISCIPLINE:	7	Observe, Precision
MOVE:	5	
UNDERSTAND:	6	Etiquette

EXAMPLE GUILD STEWARDS

- **Azar** has young twin children who sometimes get underfoot while he is serving passengers.
- **Lainen** wants to escape from shipboard life and is looking for someone to help them secretly disembark.
- **Saska** is an artist who sometimes neglects her duties because she is sketching a passenger.

SCENARIO HOOK

- While the player characters are traveling on a Heighliner, a Wayku steward confides in one of them that another group of passengers has been abusive toward several Wayku. Do the players get involved, and can they do so safely without the Guild accusing them of violating inter-party neutrality during a space journey?

New Talents

We provide a few new Talents for advanced Guild characters here. Some are restricted to Navigators and are therefore only available to NPCs, but the gamemaster may allow a character with the Failed Navigator Talent to select a single Navigator Talent.

FIND A SAFE PATH (NAVIGATOR TALENT)

You know how to find the path that takes you to a safe place.

The Navigator may make a Challenging (D2) **Discipline** test before taking an action or entering a new scene. If successful, they reduce the Threat or Momentum pool to zero for the next scene they enter. No ambush or surprise attack is possible at the start of the encounter, and no one will have a ready weapon or offensive asset in play. Essentially, where they have come to is safe for themselves and their passengers.

FOLDSPACE PILOT (NAVIGATOR TALENT)

You are able to control a foldspace vessel and navigate across star systems.

Only with this Talent can a character make a foldspace jump in a Heighliner or similar vessel with foldspace engines. Making such a jump requires an Average (D1) **Understand** test with failure taking the vessel off course. However, this usually just requires another successful jump to make the correction. Complications may cause the ship to get lost or be wildly off course. While the Difficulty may be increased due to the vagaries of space and the fabric of the universe, distance makes no difference whatsoever. It is as easy to travel to a neighboring star system as to the other side of the galaxy.

FOLDSPACE TECHNOLOGY

You know your way around devices that few outside the Guild have even heard of.

The machinery for folding space is exceptionally complex and relies on principles few are taught outside Ix and the Guild. As such, anyone without this Talent suffers a 2-step penalty to the Difficulty of any task they attempt to repair, adjust, or make use of foldspace technology.

NULL ZONE (NAVIGATOR TALENT)

Your mere presence inhibits prescient abilities and the clarity of prophecy.

Any attempt to use prescient or clairvoyant abilities on you or anyone in your immediate area is always one Difficulty level harder. You may increase this penalty by spending Threat/Momentum for the duration of a scene: 1 point to increase it to a 2 Difficulty penalty and a further 2 points to increase it to a 3 Difficulty penalty. An additional point may also be spent to mask any single person not nearby but who is working on your personal behalf.

SENSE THE PATH (NAVIGATOR TALENT)

You are able to see when a person, place, or object has a destiny.

When you Obtain Information you may ask (as one of your questions) if the subject has a destiny. They may be due to do great or terrible things or be used in an important way. For the cost of an additional Threat/Momentum, you may get a glimpse of what this destiny could entail.

SPICE-WARPED (SPACING GUILD TALENT)

Despite the promise the Guild saw in you, you were unable to complete the process that would turn you into a Navigator. The stars will never be yours, but you still serve the Guild as best you can.

Your oldest memory is of spice, its taste and scent and the feel of it suffused throughout your entire being. Your body and your mind were changed by the spice, mutated, but ultimately you could not handle the massive transformation the hyper-dosing of spice inflicted upon you. Though you have no place among humans, the Guild has a place for you. You exhibit some physical trace of the spice mutation — whether an elongated form, long and partially webbed fingers and toes, a swollen cranium, or other deformations — or it may be simply blue-within-blue eyes and a mind that travels in strange channels. Generally, the Guild keeps those like you out of sight, but sometimes you are utilized outside the Guild's sphere of secrecy.

Due to this alien aspect and lifelong disassociation from normal human society, your emotional state and inner thoughts are inscrutable to normal humans, even those trained in careful observation. You may use this off-putting aspect to hamper attempts at discerning your intent, increasing the Difficulty by +1, and any attempts at Obtaining Information about you cost 1 more Momentum than normal, or 1 Momentum when they would normally cost nothing. Furthermore, you may re-roll any 1d20 used while working on Navigator life support systems or Guild technology.

THE RIGHT MOMENT (NAVIGATOR TALENT)

You know the perfect moment to take action after seeing all the potential variables.

When you spend a Determination point to perform an action, you may also reduce the Difficulty of that action by one in addition to any other effects granted by the Determination point.

SIGHT OF THE UNIVERSE (NAVIGATOR TALENT)

You are able to send your mind out into the universe and see the galaxy laid out before you.

You are able to see any part of the Known Universe, but on a planetary scale. You can't see what individual people are doing, but you can see when a planet is being bombarded, a sun explodes, or a Heighliner folds space to a new destination.



Roles and the Guild

When creating a Spacing Guild character, the following roles are especially suitable, drawn from those in the **Dune Core Rulebook**, pages 91–95. Each role is described with their suggested rights and responsibilities within a House. These suggestions are not restrictive and other roles are certainly possible but are often of marginal use to the Guild and are thus not recommended.

- **Advisor:** A House-based advisor is in an interesting position, essentially serving two masters who may occasionally come into opposition. The advisor's role, then, is to ensure that this rarely happens and that the House's activities relating to the Guild are handled smoothly and without conflict. They use their contacts within the Guild to ensure that the House gets the best deals for transport, and that the Houses's needs take precedence over those of other Houses where the Guild is concerned.
- **Envoy:** Essentially serving as an ambassador to the House, the Guild envoy has been placed within its ranks to facilitate communication and cooperation between the two organizations. If the House is one with a strong manufacturing or technology base, it might be that it is a valuable source of spaceship parts. If it is connected with Arrakis and spice harvesting, the Guild has even more reason to have a representative within the House to ensure that the spice flows uninterrupted to it.
- **Treasurer:** A Guild representative within a House will inevitably be linked to the Guild Bank, and the treasurer's primary role is that of an auditor, ensuring that the House's accounting is correct and that it is not being cheated or taken advantage of in trade negotiations. A Guild agent in this role also works directly with the Guild Bank, ensuring that issues such as investments and profits are maximized to the House's advantage.
- **Warmaster:** Though a rare role for a Spacing Guild agent within a House, this is nonetheless a vital one, as in this specific case the Warmaster's duties include coordinating with the Guild when spaceships are transported via Heighliners, dealing with the immense logistics required for such an endeavor, as well as providing defense to the fleet and Heighliner should their ships be attacked by in-system rivals while embarking or disembarking.

Spacing Guild Campaigns

A campaign set in and around the Spacing Guild would be a unique one, unlike anything else in the Dune universe. If entirely within the Guild's confines, with only a few external members, the campaign would dispense with the great veil of secrecy that is the greatest challenge with Guild-based characters, and the structure could be fashioned along the lines of a Landsraad House, though altered due to the Guild's nature and function.

Instead of a homeworld, the campaign group might be assigned a satellite post, a station on one of the Guild's own planets, perhaps a base in Tupile (p. 108), or even a Heighliner or smaller ship to call their own. Furthermore, instead of a ruler, the House might have a Navigator in that role as a non-player character, perhaps a newly qualified specimen recently assigned a Heighliner or smaller foldspace-capable vessel. Various members of the Guild could function in equivalent household roles, even incorporating training and backgrounds from outside the Guild itself.

The goal of such a group would not be supremacy within the Landsraad or promotion of their House against others, but instead to further some element of the Guild's agenda, whether acting as a rapid deployment troubleshooting group or a group of observers assigned to a particular situation or region of space, or it could even be tasked with exploring the regions beyond the Known Universe, particularly those in which lost tribes of humanity may have fled, either in the eras before the Guild or during the Scattering.

In a campaign set in the Age of the Enemy, a Guild-based player character group might even be a strike force or a scout vessel, seeking information on the Honored Matres or the newly returned Thinking Machine Empire.

Famous Navigators

Few of the Guild ever achieve any notoriety or fame, as the Guild's very nature eschews personal contact or overt intervention in the affairs of the Imperium. However, a few Navigators have achieved some degree of name recognition.

NORMA CENVA, THE FIRST NAVIGATOR

While apprenticed to genius inventor Tio Holtzman, Norma Cenva used an application of the Holtzman Effect to develop the ability to fold space, among her other inventions still used throughout the Imperium ten thousand years later. After experiencing considerable psychic and physiological duress inflicted by the Titan Xerxes, her latent psychic abilities transformed into actual prescience, as well as the ability to alter her molecular structure. She escaped and was later instrumental in establishing the planet of Junction, which would become the home of the Spacing Guild. At that time, foldspace travel was still prone to error, and to solve this problem, Cenva subjected herself to immense quantities of spice gas. The gestalt of her existing powers and the spice-conferred abilities transformed her into the first Navigator, mutating her but giving her hyper-awareness, prescience, and the incredible ability to fold space without a Holtzman engine. With these abilities at her disposal, along with her son Josef Venport, she would change the Known Universe itself.

One of the Guild's most closely-guarded secrets — and it has many — is that Norma Cenva might still live, guiding the Guild from within her tank, flitting beyond the Known Universe and moving behind the scenes, a force still in control. If she continues to live within the Guild, 10,000 years of spice exposure may have transformed her into something far more alien than even Navigators, or Leto II's own incredible transformation. She might also be mad and immobile, contained and imprisoned by the Guild, or perhaps she has been missing, lost in the realm beyond the borders of charted space.

It might also be that her remains are entombed on Junction, where genetic samples are taken and used as seed to inculcate her unique mutation into new generations of Navigators — a secret breeding project like the Bene Gesserit's, conducted in the hope of creating one who can move through space as easily as the Kwisatz Haderach can transcend time.

D'MURR PILRU

One of a pair of twins born to an Ixian ambassador in the era of the Imperium, D'murr passed the examination into the Guild, while his twin C'tair did not. Trained and prepared throughout childhood for a role within the Guild, D'murr entered its ranks and was transformed into a Navigator. He was instrumental in the restoration of Ix from Tleilaxu occupation. His Heighliner was supplied with ersatz spice as part of Emperor Shaddam Corrino IV's attempt to manufacture fake spice in his Great Spice War, and D'murr was poisoned by it. Near death, he became aware of the concealed Thinking Machine Empire beyond the borders of the Known Universe, and returned with this knowledge to Junction, dying immediately thereafter.

EDRIC

A Navigator in the era of the Ascension of Muad'Dib, Edric participated in a conspiracy against the newly crowned Emperor, working in league with Paul's wife Irulan, the Reverend Mother Helen Gaius Mohiam, and a Tleilaxu Face Dancer named Scytale. Edric's presence allows the group to remain undetectable by Paul's prescient senses. Though the conspiracy is unable to kill Paul, it blinds him, and thus sends him into the desert to die, according to Fremen tradition. Edric is slain by Stilgar, Paul's staunch Fremen ally.



SECRETS OF CHOAM

CHOAM is the ultimate arbiter of economic power in the Known Universe. CHOAM has oversight of all economic trade and regulates the ebb and flow of wealth between the Houses of the Faufreluches, the Guild Bank, and the Emperor himself. Directorships, conferring immense economic power, are usually hereditary, passing down through the heads of Major Houses, though the ultimate decision of who gets to be a director lies with whoever sits upon the Golden Lion Throne.

While we have detailed how CHOAM works in the **Dune Core Rulebook** and how player characters might become a part of it in **The Great Game**, here we look at the highest levels of CHOAM. At this level of play, characters might be directors, each with a Great House under their control, looking to compete with their peers for control of the entire Imperial economy.

The current President of CHOAM is Frankos Aru. He performs largely ceremonial and public relations functions from the Silver Needle on Kaitain, with easy access to the Imperial Palace. The real power of CHOAM, however, is split between the Emperor (House Corrino is the biggest minority shareholder) and the secretive ur-director or 'urdir', Malina Aru, Frankos's mother. Malina's other son, Jaxson Aru, disgraced himself by leading a rebellion against Shaddam IV, and his mother and brother are very keen to divorce themselves from his sedition. All this, however, contributes to an atmosphere of distrust between the Emperor and the highest levels of CHOAM as an organization.

The loyal Aru and the directors of CHOAM sit at the top of a pyramid of accountants, auditors, Mentats, and a small handful of associated Truthsayers. These consultants and employees collect and analyze the data on economic flows so the directors can make optimal decisions. Even the urdir herself has no power to influence policy directly, although of course the manner in which she presents the data influences the directors' decisions and even those of the Padishah Emperor.

BECOMING A DIRECTOR

Most CHOAM directorships are hereditary and have been in the same family for centuries. CHOAM directorships belong to the heads of Major Houses. Should the Emperor grant a directorship to the head of a Minor House, that House will almost invariably be regarded as Major from then on. As a result, the most common way of acquiring a directorship is to be heir to one of the Major Houses whose head has a directorship. Then, of course, the relevant parent must die. Directorships are highly desirable due to the extra wealth they bring

to one's House, along with the power to influence the wealth of friendly and rival houses through the board of directors. There is also the matter of House prestige, though prestige frequently precedes the granting of a directorship rather than following from it.

It is definitely worthwhile for a House to acquire a directorship, but unless one inherits it, it's a long and uphill struggle to get one. First and foremost, it is essential to carry out one's duties as a shareholder in an exemplary manner. Second, one needs to make a sufficiently positive impression on the Emperor. Gaining the admiration of other Major Houses helps here, as the Emperor cannot afford to ignore the opinion of the Landsraad entirely. Making yourself too popular, however, can be counterproductive because many Emperors, fearing those who rival them in power, have taken pleasure in knocking back Houses when they raise their heads too far above the parapet. Becoming a director involves playing court to the Landsraad, the Emperor, and the urdir in a carefully balanced manner, giving each power within CHOAM its due. Influence with the Spacing Guild and even the Bene Gesserit doesn't hurt either. While they are minor partners in CHOAM and do not hold directorships, an ambitious House cannot afford to underestimate their influence.

MEETING THE BOARD

Physical meetings of the board are infrequent and most business is carried out via specially appointed couriers. These couriers answer to the board as a whole rather than to individual directors, though directors are free to call upon their services as needed. The couriers are exceptionally discreet and carry messages between directors without a trace of corruption or prejudice. As such, they enjoy considerable status among their peers and consider themselves superior to other couriers and, indeed, to anyone who works for a single boss.

As the composition of the board of directors is almost identical to that of the Landsraad, board meetings often take place on the fringes of major Landsraad meetings. This saves these very important and powerful individuals an extra trip to Kaitain. They can, of course, afford as many such trips as they need to take, but most consider spending too much time away from their own holdings to be risky. Rival Houses, heirs, siblings, and resentful underlings can wreak a great deal of damage when the head of a House is off attending a meeting elsewhere in the Known Universe.

Given the composition of the board (of which the Emperor is always chair), it is not surprising that resentments and old grudges are at the forefront of most directors' minds as every director vies to win the favor and the ear of the chair. At this level, directors can leverage even the smallest of advantages into personal profit and the honor and prosperity of their House.

BALANCING LOYALTY TO HOUSE AND CHOAM

CHOAM exists to ensure profits circulate, particularly in the direction of major shareholders and directors. Most of the time, therefore, the interests of one's House and the interests of CHOAM align closely. There are, however, always exceptions. If, for instance, a Minor House associated with the director's House fails in its duties as a shareholder, the director needs to decide whether to support their errant underling or join with the rest of the board in condemning them. Making excuses for a House that is clearly at fault is a mistake unless, of course, the director can fabricate evidence showing a rival is to blame. Insisting on the harshest punishment for a House under the director's sponsorship does not increase a Major House's standing in the Landsraad. It is best, in such cases, to find some kind of compromise, although, no doubt, the director's rivals will arrange to make the incident as embarrassing as possible.

Worse still if the director's own House is failing to meet its commitments or some employee has been caught trying to cheat CHOAM. Does the director meekly submit to an audit, or do they promptly execute whoever was responsible for the failing? Most consider the latter to be the wisest course, though if the perpetrator was a beloved child or concubine, or even a trusted Mentat, an execution can be emotionally devastating. In such cases, the director will often try to deflect the blame onto a scapegoat, preferably one who is in the employ of a rival House or a rival director.

A director who submits their House to audit almost inevitably loses their directorship, unless the House emerges from the process without stain, in which case whoever called for the audit comes under suspicion of having born false witness, wasting the time and resources CHOAM spent on the audit. If that person is themselves a director … well, this is another way to lose a directorship, a position that normally passes from parent to heir. These are some of the ways directors can compete with each other, and indeed, even Houses who lack a directorship have been known to take part in this game.

CHOAM may occasionally require a director to move their base of operations. The Emperor is usually the one to make such a proposal, and several Emperors have done this to put down a House they feared was becoming too powerful or to promote a House in favor. A wise director will, however, see such a move as an opportunity to increase their wealth, power, and influence in the Landsraad, CHOAM, and throughout the Imperium.

New Talents

Many Talents spread throughout the sourcebooks are good choices for a CHOAM director, and gamemasters should feel free to allow directors to take any of the CHOAM talents from **The Great Game**, p.18, though some of these are a bit low-level for some of the most powerful people in the Known Universe.

ACCESS TO CHOAM FACILITIES (CHOAM DIRECTOR TALENT)

Directors of CHOAM have access to CHOAM's assets, both facilities and agents.

Wherever you are, once per game session, you may avail yourself of CHOAM facilities or assets, including personnel. By spending one Momentum, you may gain any physical asset you desire for the next scene, from a knife to a Heighliner. Especially rare or difficult assets might take some time though, at the gamemaster's discretion. These assets are delivered at Quality 0.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS (CHOAM DIRECTOR TALENT)

Not all information submitted to CHOAM reflects reality. Many shareholders cook the books, and the implications of their transactions are often opaque.

You have a series of accountants at your command to take a forensic look at any ledgers and accounts you get hold of. This allows you to Obtain Information about the status of any organization you have access to the records of.

PULL THE STRINGS (CHOAM DIRECTOR TALENT)

You can nudge the Imperial market a little to make sure the goods of your House are met with favorable trade options.

All primary and secondary domains in your House generate an additional Wealth point each during House management.

RICH BEYOND THE DREAMS OF AVARICE (CHOAM DIRECTOR TALENT)

A director of CHOAM can afford to ensure their assets are always of the highest quality

Whenever you create an asset (see **Dune Core Rulebook**, p. 168-9) it has a quality of 1. By spending a point of Momentum, you can increase the quality to 2. This is in addition to the Momentum you must spend, should you wish to make it permanent.

SANCTION SHAREHOLDER (CHOAM DIRECTOR TALENT)

The board of directors holds immense power over shareholders and the holdings of shareholders.

Once per adventure you may use your influence with CHOAM to sanction any one shareholder. The usual means of doing this is to remove territory or assets associated with production. Next time a sanctioned shareholder moves against you or your faction, any use of Threat costs the gamemaster twice the usual cost.

Running a CHOAM Campaign

Running a game where all the characters are CHOAM directors and heads of their House presents certain challenges, since these characters have immense political sway within the Known Universe. Like everyone else, however, they are forever striving to improve the position of their House among their peers and tear down their enemies and rivals. They also have their own unique problems to cope with. Along with power comes a great deal of responsibility.

There are several ways the gamemaster and players can set up such a campaign. One is where one player takes the role of the head of House, and the others have roles within each of the Houses involved. This does suit some groups, especially if there are short story arcs making up a big campaign, and everyone gets a turn at being the director. Most groups, however, will be happier if everyone starts off on the same level. This is pure Architect-level play, where instead of getting their own hands dirty, the characters instruct their House assets to do the hands-on work, reporting back in sufficient detail to enable the directors to decide on their next move. This is an ideal model for distance play, but many players will prefer a game in which they get to see more of the action. A compromise to consider here is to alternate sessions — so players get to alternate between playing the head of their House and a character who occupies one of the House roles as described in the **Dune Core Rulebook**, p.93–95.

A campaign set among the directors might be cooperative or confrontational, as your group prefers. If everyone has a House at their command, the players might enjoy trying to crush each other until only one of them remains. The gamemaster then becomes more of a referee, judging the outcomes of the various plots being attempted against each player. Gamemasters should be careful and ensure everyone taking part will enjoy that style of campaign first, as a confrontational campaign is not for everyone. In a more cooperative group, the player characters might be a secret alliance working to take down a joint enemy or aggrandize their own Houses together for mutual benefit.

CREATING A DIRECTOR CHARACTER

As most directorships are hereditary and pass to heirs in the same way as leadership of a House, there is no reason to suppose a director would be inherently more powerful than anyone else. Character creation takes place in the same way as for any other character, but there are some Talents which can only be taken by CHOAM directors (p.122–122). Furthermore, as the head of a House has the entire resources of their House to back them up, heads of Houses must take their entire House as an asset.

Because each director is a House ruler, each director player should create their own House rather than share one together. In a lower-level campaign, a similar model might be used to create each of the rulers of Minor Houses serving a single House Major. While it would not be a CHOAM game, the machinations of the various Minor Houses trying to compete for the favor of their liege House would run in a similar way.

One way to have all these powerful people working together would be to make them a sub-caucus of the board of directors. Perhaps they all have an interest in a particular domain, or perhaps they are interdependent on each other's specialties to maintain their position. Possibly they are all members of the same faction, with shared enemies.

STORY HOOKS

WHAT CAN REPLACE THE SPICE?

A spy master tells one of the directors she has evidence of someone attempting to produce artificial melange, or a substitute for melange. The evidence is circumstantial and does not point to any specific perpetrator. The matter, however, is grave. Any alteration to the supply of melange upsets the economic stability of the Known Universe, and CHOAM exists to keep the economy stable.

Could the Emperor himself be considering such a destabilizing course of action? Do his recent Spice Wars have any bearing on the matter? Or is some rival House responsible? Whether they are responsible or not, pinning the blame for this kind of action on an enemy would be an excellent way of eliminating them. It's just a matter of convincing the Emperor and the Landsraad of your enemy's guilt. Additionally, if the Emperor himself is behind this endeavor, he is likely to generously reward anyone who helps him to shift the blame.

REBELLION!

A serious revolt has broken out on one of the character's holdings. Rumors are circulating that it came about because the inhabitants of the planet were being badly mistreated by the ruling House. Is this true? How do the characters feel about it? Has some underling caused discontent by exploiting the population? Have enemies of the House instigated the rebellion and started the rumors?

Are the rebels' demands reasonable? Can the directors meet the demands, or will they resort to the use of force? Their choices will influence their standing in the Landsraad.

NATURAL DISASTER

House scientists have detected a huge meteor on course to strike a planet vital to the characters' interests. This could be one of their own holdings, or one belonging to another House which produces something they need to run their own monopoly. If the meteor hits, it will destroy half the planet along with the population and most of the production.

The player characters must decide whether to rescue the population or not, and how to preserve production or find another place to produce the goods or services they need. Unless, of course, they can find a way to deflect the meteor.

THE HOUSE AS AN ASSET

Only heads of Houses can take their House as an asset, and it is mandatory for them to do so. This asset gives access to any NPCs fulfilling the roles listed in the **Dune Core Rulebook**, p. 93–95. The gamemaster should create these as minor supporting characters in Architect play who will carry out tasks for the head of House, usually to the best of their ability. If the missions the supporting characters are sent on cause them harm, the gamemaster should receive Threat points representing the potential for the vassal to turn on their uncaring master.

HOUSE MANAGEMENT FOR THE CHOAM DIRECTOR

Having one or more player characters being CHOAM Directors affects House management, the system for which is found in **The Great Game**, Chapter 4**.** If you are using this optional system, in the income phase, the primary domain of a director's House will produce 6 extra Resources and 50 extra Wealth. This reflects the absolute monopoly directors have on certain goods or means of production and also covers the cost of maintaining House roles. A director may choose not to pay the upkeep on a specific role as usual, in which case, the NPC leaves House employ. A director's House must always be a Great or Major House. If it ceases to be so, its ruler will lose their directorship.

CHOAM-Specific Ventures

The following are new venture options available to any House with a CHOAM director leading it:

ASSIST SHAREHOLDER

Wealth: 10, **Skill:** Communicate, **Successes:** 2

By spending time and solaris to assist a shareholder in their own ventures, the House or individual who benefits is inclined to help your House in order to return the favor. With a successful **Communicate** test, the shareholder sides with or helps your House as much as they can without damaging their own interests. This assistance reduces the Difficulty of the later shared venture by 1.

CALL AN AUDIT

Wealth: 10, **Skill:** Communicate, **Successes:** 3

Your position as a director enables you to call down an audit on an enemy House. The auditing team from CHOAM and the Guild Bank land on the primary planet of your enemy, putting an immediate freeze on all economic activity and trade the House is currently performing, only allowing select industries to continue. That House cannot take any House management actions until the audit is concluded. The length of the audit can be played out using an Intrigue conflict.

FAVOR OF THE EMPEROR

Wealth: 10, **Skill:** Discipline, **Successes:** 1

The House has supported the Emperor in an unpopular endeavor, and he concedes he owes the House a favor. Once the favor is granted, the boon is gone. How this Imperial favor might manifest when called in is up to the gamemaster.

FAVOR OF THE LANDSRAAD

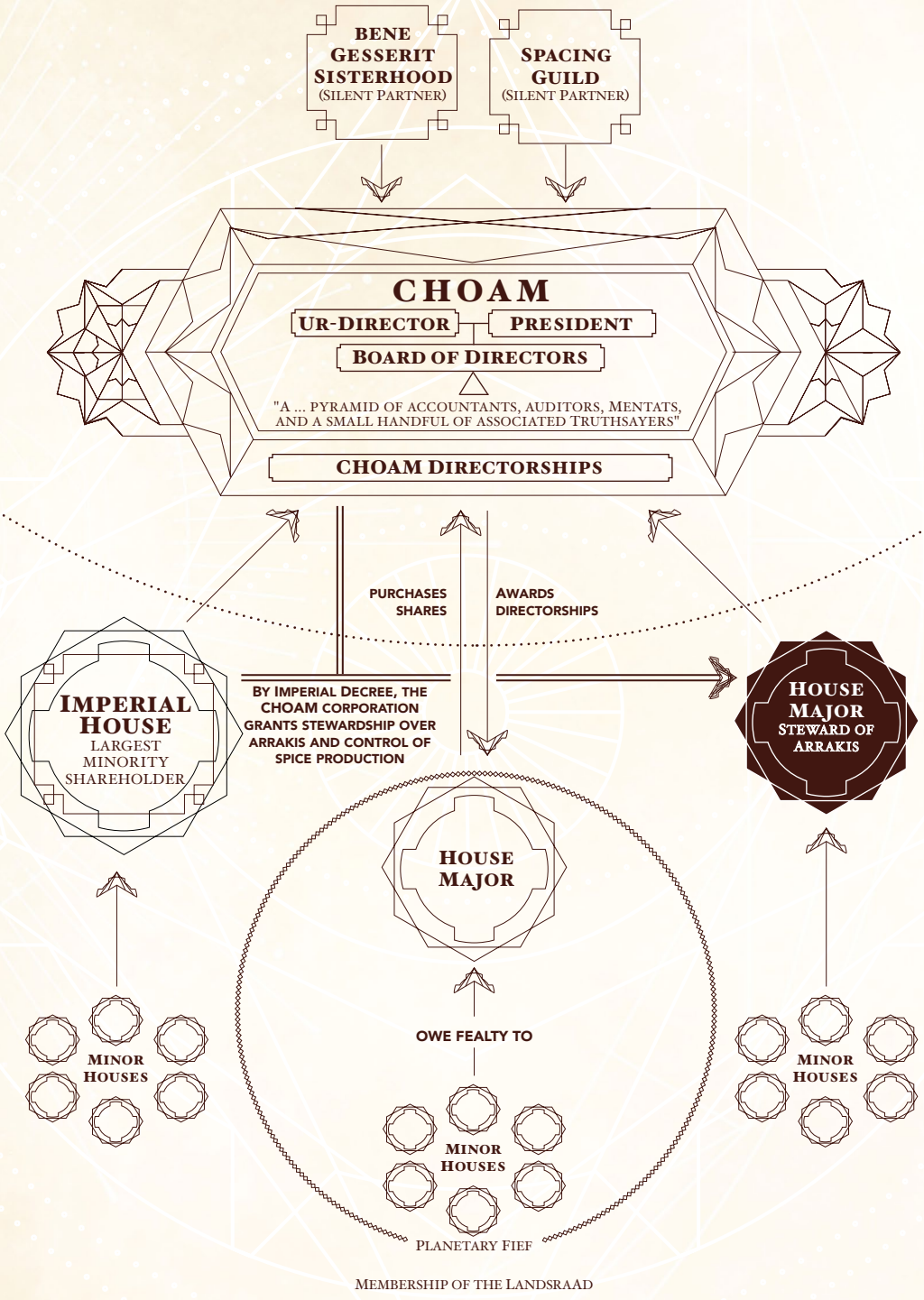
Wealth: 10, **Skill:** Discipline, **Successes:** 1

By leveraging their influence on the Inner Council, the House can place one motion of their choice before the Landsraad. There is no guarantee this motion will pass, but if it does pass, the Emperor will ratify it.



The Relationship of the CHOAM Coporation to the Houses of the Landsraad

COMBINE HONNETE OBER ADVANCER MERCANTILE







Chapter 6
Blood and Riches

"Politics is a tangled web, an intricate labyrinth, an ever-shifting kaleidoscopic pattern. And it is not pretty."

— Count Hasimir Fenring

Summary

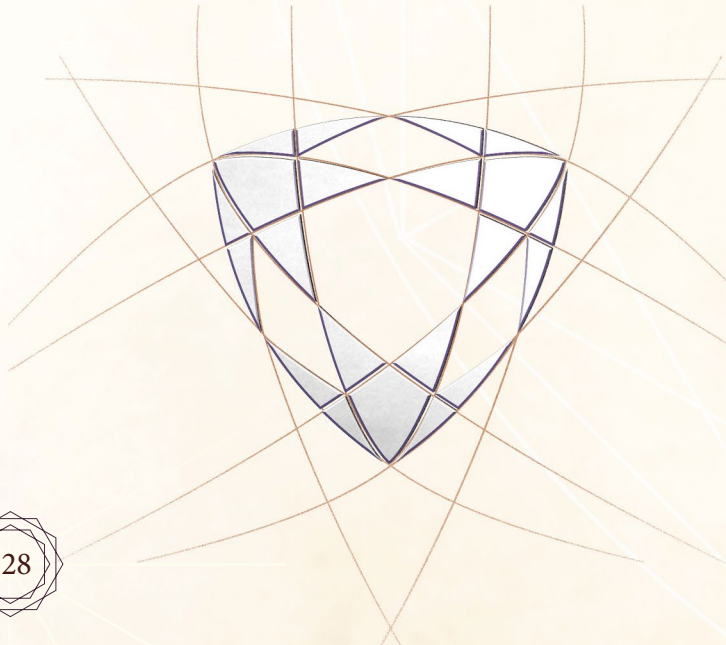
Two Great Houses, Novebruns and Thorvald, are competing fiercely over the mining rights to the mineral-rich Odinani system. As tensions between the two Houses escalate, they draw their allies into the conflict. The Landsraad worries the fight over Odinani III will spark an Imperial war that threatens the security and predictability of the status quo.

These fears pave the way for Emperor Shaddam IV to make the characters' House responsible for deescalating tensions and securing peace. He appoints a Judge of the Change from the player characters' House. For Shaddam IV, it's a win-win. If the characters succeed, he appears a wise leader. If they fail, hecan embarrass the characters for their incompetence, end the conflict violently, and give his ally, House Hagal, the mineral spoils.

Structure

'Blood and Riches' simulates the cutthroat politics of the Landsraad and the machinations of other competing interests. The gamemaster can utilize the adventure as written or as inspiration to mimic a dynamic conflict with political pressures outside player characters' direct control. This adventure also provides a timeline to highlight the story's scope and the urgency of necessary action. Given the more fluid nature of this adventure, it is recommended that everyone involved, both gamemaster and players, have experience with other **Dune: Adventures in the Imperium** adventures before running this one.

During the Prelude, Emperor Shaddam IV summons the player characters to Kaitain to appoint one of them as Judge of the Change. He empowers the Judge of the Change to end the Novebruns-Thorvald conflict. It does not matter how suited or unsuited the House is to the task. As far as the Emperor is concerned, the more unsuited, the better.



In Act One, player characters gather information on the conflict and arrange a summit between Houses Novebruns and Thorvald. This high-stakes political event takes place during Act Two and ultimately fails. Following the summit, during Act Three, the player characters have a week to use a combination of diplomacy, economic pressure, and military might to bring everyone back to the negotiation table. In Act Four, the player characters make a last attempt at forging peace between the parties using diplomacy or brute force, with the Emperor watching their every step.

Finally, in the Epilogue, the player characters stand before the Emperor. If they succeeded, the reputation of their House grows, earning them sway with either House Novebruns or House Thorvald. If the player characters fail, the Emperor embarrasses their House by deploying his Sardaukar to beat Novebruns and Thorvald into submission. He then claims the entire Odinani system for himself and grants all mining rights to House Hagal.

Stakeholders

This story involves two rival Houses, their allies, enemies, interested parties, the entire Known Universe, and most importantly, the player characters. With so many moving parts, the adventure can feel chaotic and overwhelming. This is by design. With that in mind, the gamemaster should also feel free to make any necessary changes to 'Blood and Riches' to best serve the needs of their players. More information on the various Houses involved in this adventure can be found in chapter 2 of **The Great Game**.

- **House Novebruns:** A mining House led by Lady Eulaia Novebruns.
- **Novebruns Allies:** The Houses who join the conflict and side with Novebruns are Houses Vernius, Lindaren, and Maros.
- **House Thorvald:** A mining House led by Earl Memnon Thorvald.
- **Thorvald Allies:** The Houses who join the conflict and side with Thorvald are Houses Richese, Alexin, and Spinnette.
- **Neutral Parties:** The Houses the player characters can rely on for intel and assistance are Houses Wydras and Mutelli.
- **Other Factions:** Beyond the Houses involved, the Spacing Guild, Bene Gesserit, and other factions listed under External Pressures have a stake in what unfolds.

The Timeline

The Odinani system includes four planets, though none richer in precious minerals than Odinani III. For a time, Houses Novebruns and Thorvald mined Odinani II, III, and IV simultaneously without incident (with Odinani I deemed too inhospitable for mining operations). But then, after House Novebruns discovered a particularly rich vein on Odinani III, this cooperation abruptly ended. Officially, House Novebruns staked their first claim while House Thorvald was still prospecting, but lease negotiations have bogged both Houses down. By the time they received their initial permits, both Houses had multiple claims staked with geologists, land experts, and lawyers fighting for mineral rights in court. That battle had remained in the courts until House Novebruns used their military to push House Thorvald off their claim.

The gamemaster can use this timeline as an at-a-glance digest of the unfolding conflict. Each day includes news headlines the gamemaster can use to mark the passage of time or as intelligence reports and idle gossip the player characters can discover during the adventure.

ONE WEEK AGO:

House Novebruns deploys three platoons to Odinani III to push House Thorvald off its claim. In response, House Thorvald uses saboteurs to destroy House Novebruns's mining capabilities. Both Houses declare a War of Assassins under the articles of kanly before the Landsraad High Council. CHOAM declares it will withhold all rights to the system until the conflict ends.

DAY 1:

The Emperor appoints a member of the player characters' House (most likely its ruler or heir) as Judge of the Change to end the feud between House Novebruns and House Thorvald.

- **HOUSE [X] NAMED JUDGE OF THE CHANGE IN NOVEBRUNS-THORVALD CRISIS**. In concert with the Landsraad High Council, the Imperial Court has appointed a Judge of the Change from House [X] to end the dispute between House Novebruns and House Thorvald.

When a Novebruns refinery explodes on Odinani III, Lady Eulaia Novebruns blames House Thorvald. In retaliation, she orders a Novebruns platoon to attack a Thorvald encampment.

- **NOVEBRUNS REFINERY EXPLODES ON ODINANI III**. Early this morning, a refinery exploded on Odinani III, killing sixteen and wounding twenty-two employees of House Novebruns. Lady Silta Defonsa, Consort to Lady Novebruns, offered her condolences to the victims' families and has pledged a full investigation.
- **NOVEBRUNS PLATOON ASSAULTS ENCAMPMENT.** A Novebruns platoon has assaulted a Thorvald encampment, killing nine and wounding twelve. Security officials claim it was retaliation for House Thorvald's sabotage.

DAY 2:

Dissidents on Ipyr seize several government facilities in open rebellion using weapons provided by Novebruns.

- **DISSIDENTS SEIZE IPYR FACILITIES.** Dissidents loyal to the late Kenji Thorvald have seized several government facilities on Ipyr. Earl Memnon Thorvald issued a statement linking the weapons used by the rebels to House Novebruns.

Earl Memnon Thorvald pressures his ally, House Alexin, to cut off food supplies to Menkar II and lands six platoons on Odinani III, including artillery and missile launchers.

- **THORVALD AGENT SPOTTED ON KERES.** Loura Dae, an advisor to House Thorvald, has been spotted on the Alexin homeworld of Keres. People close to House Alexin suggest that she is meeting with their chief aide, Godwyn Alexin, to discuss the situation in the Odinani system.
- **EARL MEMNON THORVALD ESCALATES VIOLENCE ON ODINANI III.** In response to the deteriorating predicament on Odinani III, House Thorvald has landed six platoons on the planet along with heavy artillery and sophisticated anti-aircraft missile launchers.

DAY 3:

Agents of House Thorvald intercept an arms shipment from House Lindaren to House Novebruns.

- **HOUSE THORVALD ADDRESSES LANDSRAAD HIGH COUNCIL.**This evening, House Thorvald addressed the Landsraad High Council, accusing House Lindaren of supplying arms to House Novebruns. Erka Udo, speaking in defense of the Lindaren, denied any involvement in the Novebruns-Thorvald conflict and threatened to formally sanction Thorvald for their baseless accusations.

Fighting in the Odinani system intensifies as House Thorvald commences bombardment of Novebruns installations. The High Council formally condemns both Houses.

- **40 KILLED IN ARTILLERY STRIKE.** Thorvald artillery struck a Novebruns depot on the northern side of Odinani III. Analysts believe at least forty were killed and two hundred wounded. Prominent members of the Landsraad have issued formal condemnations to both Houses.

DAY 4:

Lady Eulaia Novebruns orders armed ornithopters to fire on Thorvald artillery batteries. She also lands ten platoons to reinforce their weakened position on Odinani III.

- **LADY EULAIA NOVEBRUNS REINFORCES TROOPS ON ODINANI III.** In response to House Thorvald's naked aggression, Lady Eulaia Novebruns authorized the deployment of an additional ten platoons of House soldiers to Odinani III. Multiple armed ornithopters continue to fire on Thorvald artillery batteries in the Southern Hemisphere. As violence escalates, civilians flee the planet en masse to neighboring Odinani II and IV.

House Spinnette greenlights assassination operations against Novebruns military officers.

- **NOVEBRUNS GENERAL POISONED?** General Enab Korta, commander of the Novebruns expeditionary force on Odinani III, has died from cardiac arrest. After examining the body, Doctor Alvine Zhang, a graduate of the Suk School, has not ruled out poison.

House Alexin agrees to stop food shipments to Menkar II.

- **GODWYN ALEXIN STARVES MENKAR POPULACE**. Godwyn Alexin has issued a directive cutting off all food shipments to the Novebruns homeworld of Menkar II and all satellite holdings belonging to Lady Eulaia Novebruns.

DAY 5:

House Vernius sends five cargo frigates carrying humanitarian aid to Odinani III. All of them explode in orbit after leaving the Heighliner, killing thousands.

- **HUMANITARIAN AID EFFORT FAILS.** Earl Bronso Vernius has sent a small fleet of ships filled with humanitarian aid to Odinani III. However, the five ships exploded in orbit after leaving the Heighliner, killing thousands.

House Maros targets high-ranking Thorvald officials for assassination.

- **GOVERNOR KILLED BY HUNTER-SEEKER.** A regional governor was assassinated on Ipyr. With riots engulfing several cities, Earl Thorvald has declared planetary martial law and given security forces orders to use whatever means necessary to keep the peace.

- **THORVALD AND NOVEBRUNS FINED BY CHOAM**. The CHOAM Board of Directors condemned Houses Novebruns and Thorvald and issued severe fines as a penalty for the recent violence. Some CHOAM Directors have discussed economic sanctions, but the move faces steep opposition.

DAY 6:

After evidence surfaces that the Vernius frigates were destroyed by bombs attached to their drive engines, House Vernius blames Thorvald's aggression for their destruction. They declare open cooperation with Novebruns, offering weapons, equipment, and solaris. House Thorvald declares the frigates were not carrying humanitarian aid, but an invasion force. They offer no evidence of this, but it is enough to convince House Richese to join Thorvald's side. The Guild refuses to officially comment but quietly underlines the fact that everyone is very fortunate that no Guild property was damaged.

- **FRIGATE EXPLOSIONS LINKED TO EARL MEMNON THORVALD.** Investigators have discovered evidence linking House Thorvald to the destruction of Vernius ships over Odinani III. With public outcry throughout the Landsraad, House Vernius has sworn to send weapons and equipment to defend Odinani III from further Thorvald aggression. House Thorvald declares the ships were military targets, as they were actually carrying weapons and troops. However, they refuse to provide evidence of this intelligence. In a swift response, House Richese has stated it will send several warships to the system in defense of House Thorvald.

This article applies to *External Pressures: The Suk School of Medicine* if the player characters fund it.

- **SUK STUDENTS PROVIDE AID.** Students from the Suk School of Medicine landed on Odinani III today, intent on building an emergency field hospital. Maintaining their neutrality, they have pledged to assist any wounded soldiers or civilians, regardless of House. They credit the charity of House [X] for this chance to provide humanitarian aid.

House Richese, an ally of House Thorvald, sends ships and soldiers to the Odinani system.

- **HOUSE RICHESE SUPPLIES THORVALD.** Ships and soldiers from House Richese have landed on Odinani II, III, and IV to bolster House Thorvald's military assets.

DAY 7:

Fighting intensifies on Odinani III and spreads to Odinani II and IV.

- **FIGHTING SPREADS TO ODINANI II AND IV.** Reports indicate ground skirmishes on Odinani II and IV.

Houses Spinnette and Maros continue their covert assassinations of government officials and military officers.

- **TOP DIPLOMAT RUSHED TO SUK DOCTORS.** One of House Novebruns's top diplomats was transported from the Landsraad Hall of Oratory to the Suk School of Medicine for emergency treatment after becoming severely ill. She remains in critical condition.

- **HEIGHFORGE DIRECTOR KILLED IN SHUTTLE EXPLOSION.** Vedrick Hiago, director of the Heighforge in orbit of Ipyr, was killed this evening when his shuttle exploded shortly after takeoff. His husband, his chief advisor, and the craft's pilot were also killed. Sources suggest dissidents may be responsible.

DAY 8:

House Thorvald uses draconian measures to quell the rebels on Ipyr.

- **THORVALD DEFENSE FORCES SHOOT PROTESTERS.** Thorvald Defense Forces shot anti-war protestors to end an illegal demonstration. The action earned a formal condemnation from the Landsraad High Council. Still, many see this as a bureaucratic slap on the wrist as skirmishes between the Thorvald government and Kenji-loyalists continue to rage across Ipyr.

Fears of food shortages lead to violence and looting on Menkar II.

- **LOOTING ON MENKAR II.** Reports of violence and looting on Menkar II increase as fears of food shortages grow. Business owners turn to personal security suppliers to take the law into their own hands. Clione, home of the royal palace, has gone into lockdown amidst security concerns.

This article applies to *External Pressures: The Swordmasters of Ginaz* if the player characters do not secure a deal with Keda.

- **MERCENARIES WANTED.** Earl Memnon Thorvald and Lady Eulaia Novebruns attempt to recruit graduates of the Ginaz Sword School and veterans of the Ecaz-Moritani War to join the fighting.



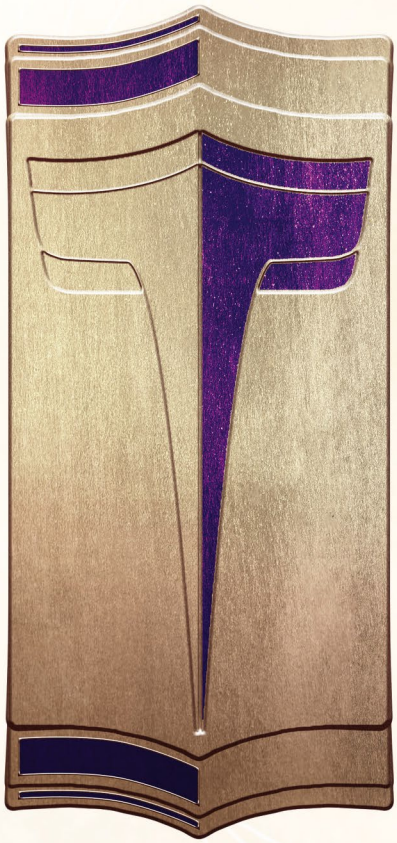
DAY 10:

Lady Eulaia Novebruns narrowly avoids an assassination attempt.

- **LADY EULAIA EVADES ASSASSINATION.** Lady Eulaia Novebruns was evacuated from the royal palace on Clione after an assassin attempted to kill her with a hunter-seeker. Security captured the culprit, but no name has been released. Officials believe House Thorvald is behind the attempt.

House Novebruns imposes a blockade of the Odinani system and commences orbital bombardment of enemy positions.

- **LADY EULAIA APPROVES BLOCKADE.** Shortly after being taken to a secret location, Lady Eulaia Novebruns approved the blockade of the Odinani System. Assisted by House Vernius, she has deployed the bulk of her fleet to the system and has commenced orbital bombardment of enemy positions.



DAY 12:

Civil unrest intensifies on Ipyr.

- **KENJI LOYALISTS BOMB WAR ACADEMY.** Kenji-loyal dissidents bomb Ipyr's War Academy as Defense Forces combat hit-and-run attacks on Thorvald military installations. House Thorvald fights battles on two fronts with military campaigns abroad and at home.

Looting and food riots continue on Menkar II.

- **2000 KILOS OF FOOD AND MEDICINE STOLEN FROM ROYAL DEPOT.** As the Landsraad High Council votes on a dual relief package for Thorvald and Novebruns, food riots on Menkar II turn violent. Angry citizens attacked a spaceport and broke into a royal supply depot to steal 2000 kilos of food and medicine.

Thorvald attacks Novebruns forces in orbit above Odinani III.

- **THORVALD AND RICHESE ATTACK NOVEBRUNS ARMADA.** In a coordinated counterattack, the Thorvald fleet, with support from House Richese, attacked the Novebruns armada in orbit over Odinani III. Casualties are estimated to be in the thousands.

DAY 14:

If the player characters fail to achieve their objective, the Emperor orders Sardaukar soldiers to the Odinani system to end the Novebruns-Thorvald crisis.
Both House Novebruns and Thorvald endure mass casualties and return to their respective homeworlds.
Emperor Shaddam IV gifts all Odinani mining rights to House Hagal.

- **HOUSE [X] FAILS THE EMPEROR AND THE LANDSRAAD.** After two weeks with no progress, Emperor Shaddam IV has been forced to deploy his elite fighting force to the Odinani system to quell the violence. The Sardaukar attacked indiscriminately until all military units in the system surrendered. The Imperial Court has revoked all previous mining permits and has granted exclusive leases to House Hagal. Any future mining of the Odinani system must be subcontracted through House Hagal.

PRELUDE
WAR DRUMS

The player characters' shuttle descends on Corrinth City. It dips below the peaks of skyscrapers and glistening towers to land on a velvet-clad platform outside the opulent Imperial Palace. Count Hasimir Fenring awaits them. Once they disembark, he escorts the group to the Emperor's throne room.

Emperor Shaddam IV sits perched on the front edge of his Golden Lion Throne like a hawk on the hunt. The Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam stands near the throne. The blue-green light of a nearby ion torch casts a harsh shadow across her face. Also in the throne room is Beely Ridondo, the Court Chamberlain, and various representatives of the Landsraad High Council.

After Count Fenring announces the player characters, the Chamberlain unravels a massive scroll.

- "By the grace of Shaddam IV of House Corrino, ascendant to the Golden Lion Throne and Padishah Emperor of the Known Universe, be welcome. We are witnessed by members of the Imperial Court, representatives of the Landsraad High Council, and a sister of the Bene Gesserit. The Emperor has spoken.
- "You shall end the disunity between House Thorvald and House Novebruns as Judge of the Change. You shall have fourteen days to adjudicate this matter to the satisfaction of the Landsraad High Council. Do you accept?"

Acceptance grants one of the player characters (presumably the ruler, an heir, or envoy) the temporary title of Judge of the Change. The Landsraad High Council and the Emperor can appoint a Judge of the Change to monitor changes of fief, kanly negotiations, or formal battles in a War of Assassins. This arbitral authority may only be challenged before the High Council and only in the presence of the Emperor.

With the title comes sweeping authority to settle the conflict between House Thorvald and House Novebruns. However, they must still negotiate a deal both Houses will accept, or fighting will break out again. While the player characters' House serves as Judge of the Change, they receive living quarters within the palace and an office at the Landsraad Assembly Hall. For the next fourteen days, any agent acting in an official capacity for the House is considered a 'guest of the Emperor.'

Count Fenring has placed surveillance devices throughout the assigned living quarters and office. Player characters can search the rooms for listening devices and spy-eyes they may (or may not) want to disable with an **Understand** test.

- If the players succeed in a Challenging (D2) **Understand** test, they find electronic spy-eyes in their office and palace suites. These are meant to be found by anyone who cares to look properly for them.
- If the players succeed in a Dire (D4) **Understand** test, they find the inconspicuous listening devices.

JUDGE OF THE CHANGE–HOUSE MANAGEMENT

The gamemaster may run a House management session detailed in Chapter 4 of **The Great Game** as part of the adventure to integrate mechanical benefits representing the House's authority as Judge of the Change.

STATUS

The House gains a bonus of +10 to their current status rating; acting as a Judge of the Change brings a measure of renown to the House. If the House successfully settles the conflict, this bonus remains. But if the House fails to broker a peace, they not only lose this bonus but an additional 5 points for a total drop in status of 15.

WEALTH

Grant a single windfall of +50 to the House's income. As a Judge of the Change, the House has temporary access to Imperial funds.

Conflict Status

The gamemaster can either choose the current state of the conflict or roll 1d20 roll to determine it.

D20 ROLL	Current Conflict
1-7	House Thorvald Ascendant: House Thorvald sabotage has hampered Novebruns mining operations across Odinani III. House Novebruns is bogged down in repairs and is in no position to begin mining the newly discovered vein.
8-14	House Novebruns Ascendant: House Novebruns has a solid legal argument for the mining rights because they were the first to stake the claim on the newly discovered vein. They have used their legal advantage to slow permit approvals for House Thorvald.
15-20	Equal Footing: Neither House Thorvald nor House Novebruns has an advantage, and both Houses are ready to mine the newly discovered vein.

External Pressures

The Houses of the Landsraad are not the only ones with a vested interest in the conflict between Thorvald and Novebruns. The gamemaster can choose to add external pressures to the adventure, such as the Bene Gesserit or the Spacing Guild. This adds flavor to the story and is best utilized if a player character is part of the faction or has strong ties to it. The following detail offers suggestions of potential sub-plots and additional encounters the gamemaster may add to the adventure.

THE BENE GESSERIT

War, especially among the Great Houses, directly threatens the Bene Gesserit breeding program. They want to prevent any excessive violence that might lead to the loss of future genetic pairings. Reverend Mother Celestin Wilhelmina Sarraf (or another Reverend Mother they know, such as Qadira Lariel Narilan from **Agents of Dune** and **Masters of Dune**) contacts the player characters to insist on regular updates (at least once per game session). If the player characters provide these updates, the Sisterhood lends the services of a Truthsayer to the House. If the House ignores the Reverend Mother's request, the Sisterhood will sell one of the House's secrets to the highest bidder per game session.

THE SARDAUKAR

If a Sardaukar player character is working with the House they can learn additional information from their fellow Sardaukar. They can discover the Sardaukar are conducting military exercises in preparation for invading Odinani III. Their contact recommends the Sardaukar player character advise the House against using military assets to end the conflict. They may get caught in a crossfire or impede Sardaukar operations. If the Sardaukar player character prevents the House from deploying any military units during the adventure, they may earn a promotion within the Sardaukar.

THE SPACING GUILD

When it comes to Landsraad politics, the Guild maintains their neutrality. However, the transport of warships, troops, and equipment makes war profitable. Senver, an agent of the Spacing Guild, urges the player characters to incite violence between Thorvald and Novebruns so they will use their militaries to assault each other. If the player characters can prove that their actions fomented military aggression between the Houses, they will earn a 'Favor of the Spacing Guild'. This boon adds a single success to any test made with a Guild agent. Once used, the boon is considered spent.

THE SUK SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

The Suk School believes the Novebruns-Thorvald conflict presents an opportunity to test their students under actual battlefield conditions. Shay, a recent graduate, petitions the House to fund a humanitarian expedition to Odinani III. They intend to set up a neutral field hospital where they can tend to the wounded. The expedition costs 20 Wealth (or a substantial amount of solaris) and earns the House the temporary trait 'Charitable'. If the House refuses, it earns the temporary trait 'Uncharitable'. The temporary trait lasts until the end of the adventure.

THE SWORDMASTERS OF GINAZ

A Ginaz Swordmaster named Keda offers the services of her regiment for as long as the player character remains Judge of the Change. The House must pay 10 Wealth (or a significant amount of solaris) to secure the deal. If paid, the Swordmasters function as bodyguards, giving the players two Momentum. If the player characters decline, Keda finds employment within House Thorvald or Novebruns, granting the gamemaster two Threat.

THE TLEILAXU

The Tleilaxu thrive where chaos reigns. Azarz, a Tleilaxu Master, decides to capitalize on the recent political destabilization and activates an agent in the entourage for the Judge of the Change. Once per scene (four total), player characters must make a Challenging (D2) **Discipline** test to discover the infiltrator. Success reveals a House servant, guard, or courtier to be a Face Dancer. The gamemaster can customize the Face Dancer or use the archetype detailed in the **Dune Core Rulebook** (p. 278).

ACT I
OPENING MOVES (DAYS 1–4)

The player characters must begin by gathering intelligence on the conflict between House Thorvald and House Novebruns and trying to get both to the negotiation table. They can achieve this through agent play, architect play, or a combination of the two.

If the House lacks diplomatic agents or the gamemaster wants to lend a hand, Count Fenring suggests two talented individuals the House can hire to assist. Neither agent works for free, but once the player characters pay their fee, they remain loyal to the House and do not act as secret betrayers. However, this does not stop them from reporting back to Count Fenring. Players must succeed on a Challenging (D2) **Discipline** test to ensure the agent's discretion.

- Desmond Ricci of House Mutelli prefers to use diplomatic persuasion when dealing with conflicts. He studied under Iba Stanis, House Mutelli's most accomplished mediator and the person credited for building the House's reputation for political acumen.
- Imani Beshara of House Wydras specializes in espionage. She honed her spycraft under the tutelage of Madame Hyacinth, the Master of Assassins to House Wydras, and prefers to use people's secrets against them.

The gamemaster can customize either character or use the archetypes listed in the **Dune Core Rulebook** for the Assassin (p. 272), Envoy (p. 277), Mentat (p. 284), or Spy (p. 292).

GATHERING INTELLIGENCE

The gamemaster can provide intelligence reports to player characters not familiar with House Thorvald and House Novebruns via a diplomatic advisor or spymaster briefing. Player characters can also use a Simple (D0) **Understand** test to acquire the information.

The Great Game contains more information on House Novebruns (p. 52-53) and House Thorvald (p. 60-61), including their history and agenda. The secret knowledge for each House should remain hidden until players take appropriate steps to learn it. They might do this by playing out short scenes with their contacts.



HOUSE NOVEBRUNS INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Banner and Arms: A cut gemstone in cave brown.

Domains: House Novebruns specializes in mineral extraction, smelting, and ore processing. They have expert knowledge of geology, ecology, and seismology, with an extensive catalog of information on various planets throughout the Known Universe.

Homeworld: Excessive mining operations have turned Menkar II into a mostly barren wasteland, leaving less than half the planet habitable. The royal family rules from Menkar II's moon, Clione.

Recent History: Novebruns has mining operations on many worlds, often renting out specialists or taking short-term contracts to assist their neighbors. However, most of House Novebruns's mining holdings have come from aggressive takeovers of Minor House claims. A growing number of Minor Houses would like to see House Novebruns lose its good standing with the Emperor.

Noblis Familia: Lady Eulaia rules House Novebruns, a stern woman concerned chiefly with productivity and profits. Her Consort, Lady Silta Defonsa, is an older and more ephemeral woman than her wife. Many believe Silta to be the more reasonable of the two. Together they have a fifteen-year-old genetic son, Nevel, heir to the throne.

Primary Advisors: General Enab Korta is the head of the Novebruns armed forces. He is a ruthless individual with a propensity for violence.

Secret Knowledge: House Novebruns is overextended and has fallen behind on the upkeep of its mining equipment and refineries. They have used creative accounting to hide their losses from the Emperor and the CHOAM Board of Directors.

HOUSE THORVALD INTELLIGENCE REPORT

Banner and Arms: A hammer in indigo and yellow.

Domains: House Thorvald specializes in smelting and refining precious alloys. Their secondary domains include specialized military units, courtesy of the War Academy on Ipyr.

Homeworld: Ipyr is a habitable planet dominated by extensive hills and mountain ranges. Other holdings include the Heighforge, a refinery in the orbit of Ipyr.

Recent History: After the death of their matriarch thirty years ago, the leadership of House Thorvald fell into question. The two heirs to House Thorvald, Kenji the elder and Memnon the younger, wanted to rule. Kenji drove his sibling into the mountains of Ipyr. Despite being outnumbered, Memnon survived, rallying the nobles to his banner. He secured the earldom of House Thorvald and executed his older brother but lost his wife and children in the violence.

Noblis Familia: Earl Memnon Thorvald rules Ipyr but has become bitter ever since his sister, Firenza Thorvald, the fifth wife to Emperor Shaddam IV, died after only six months of marriage. Since then, Memnon has become a recluse. The heir to House Thorvald is Memnon's niece and Kenji's daughter, Fabrizi, who appears devoted to Memnon's rule.

Primary Advisors: Warmaster Vercing Koji and Master Loura Dae advise House Thorvald. Koji is a veteran of the Ipyrian Civil War and a respected duelist. Dae is a Mentat and Vice-Chancellor of the War Academy.

Secret Knowledge: Those loyal to Kenji consider Memnon's rule illegitimate. They hope to install Fabrizi on the throne. Intelligence suggests they are well-financed, well-armed, and on the verge of initiating a sustained global rebellion. No one is sure if Fabrizi is part of the conspiracy, but many suspect she is.

GETTING TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE

Through architect or agent play, using their assets creatively, the player characters must make arrangements for negotiations by summoning agents from each House to Corrinth City. They could also travel to the Houses' respective homeworlds or the Odinani system. Information they have learned might become an asset that can be used to leverage compliance from each House.

CONVINCING HOUSE NOVEBRUNS

Corrinth City: Zarl, a military envoy from Minor House Lanell, is in Corrinth City to procure military assistance for House Novebruns. He is also a semuta addict and frequents the city's drug parlors. Player characters can blackmail him with this information or purchase a large quantity of semuta from the black market to bribe him. Leveraging either requires an Average (D1) **Communicate** test to convince House Novebruns to attend the summit.

Clione: Lady Silta Defonsa and her son, Nevel, host a formal dinner for the player characters. Silta composes herself with elegance and pragmatism, reasonable in her concerns, and open to compromise. As servants remove the main entrée and serve the sorbet, a hunter-seeker emerges from the darkness. Characters may attempt to intercept it with a Daunting (D3) **Move** test. If successful, they grab the hunter-seeker before it hits Lady Silta. Failure results in Lady Silta's poisoning. Though not lethal, it does incapacitate her for the rest of the game session. Treating the poison requires a Daunting (D3) **Understand** test (a focus in poisons will help). Any effort to help Lady Silta results in House Novebruns agreeing to the summit.



Odinani III: When player characters land on Odinani III, House Novebruns mercenaries mistakenly assault them. The gamemaster can use the House Guard archetype on p. 283 of the **Dune Core Rulebook**. Blades are their preferred weapon, but they also use maula pistols and some personal shields. Their number should equal the number of player characters, plus two. The Novebruns military hierarchy is apologetic and motivated to attend the summit in the aftermath.

CONVINCING HOUSE THORVALD

Corrinth City: Loura Dae convenes an emergency session of the Landsraad to call for sanctions against House Novebruns. Player characters can approach her in the Hall of Oratory and ask her to commit House Thorvald to the peace summit. She will agree if the Judge of the Change assists her by testifying to the Landsraad about the destruction committed by House Novebruns with a Challenging (D2) **Communicate** test.

Ipyr: Player characters, or their agents, land on Ipyr to secure Thorvald's involvement in the upcoming peace talks. During their meeting with Earl Memnon, dissidents loyal to the late Kenji launch a protest in front of the palace. To assist the Earl, characters may

- Draw their weapons and quell the rebels with a Challenging (D2) **Battle** test.
- Attempt a Dire (D4) **Communicate** test with the angry dissidents to calm them.
- Threaten the mob with a Challenging (D2) **Discipline** test, shooting into the air, or perhaps invoking their title as Judge of the Change.

Earl Memnon appreciates any attempt to deal with the dissidents and agrees to the summit with an Average (D1) **Communicate** test.

Odinani III: When the player characters descend on Odinani III, Thorvald anti-aircraft cannons mistake their shuttle for a Novebruns ornithopter and fire. The characters must make a Daunting (D3) **Move** test to avoid being hit. Success allows them to land the craft safely. Failure results in a crash landing. If a character succeeds on a Challenging (D2) **Move** test, they suffer the 'Bruised' trait. If they fail, they become 'Injured'. In the aftermath, the Thorvald military apologizes for the attack, and Earl Memnon agrees to send a delegation to the summit with haste.

ACT II

THE SUMMIT (DAYS 5–6)

The objective in Act Two is to convince the two Houses to agree to a ceasefire. Player characters must pick a location and, more importantly, secure it. Each location has a Difficulty ratingbased on standard precautions like sweeping for bombs and deploying poison snoopers. The gamemaster can raise or lower the Difficulty rating based on additional measures the player characters take. While the easiest location to secure is that of their homeworld, other locations may include the support of other factions.

LOCATIONS

- **Homeworld:** the player character can secure their House's homeworld with a Simple (D0) **Understand** test.
- **Guild Heighliner**: The Spacing Guild refuses the House's request unless convinced with a Daunting (D3) **Communicate** test and 10 Resources (or a significant amount of spice) in bribes. Guild agents remain present for the duration of the talks.
- **Wallach IX:** The Bene Gesserit are eager to act as hosts. They provide a well-tended, serene, and exceptionally private garden. Player characters can secure the space with an Average (D1) **Understand** test. To find recording devices they may (or may not) want to remove requires a Dire (D4) **Understand** test.
- **Informal Locations:** Player characters may prefer informal negotiations while participating in an activity such as hunting Maros deer on Grenbelle, yachting on Kaitain's Golden Rivers, or attending a theatrical performance on Artisia. These settings are trickier to secure and require a Challenging (D2) **Understand** test but lower the Difficulty rating of **Communicate** tests by -1.

PEACE TALKS

Lady Silta Defonsa, Consort to Lady Eulaia Novebruns, leads House Novebruns' delegation. House Thorvald sends their chief advisor, Loura Dae. Each delegation also has armed security accompanying them, as well as a few secretaries and servants.



HOUSE NOVEBRUNS'S POSITION

House Novebruns staked its claim on Odinani III first and, therefore, believes it is entitled to sole mining rights. It also accuses House Thorvald of sabotaging its refineries, targeting its supply depots, and assassinating General Enab Korta, Commander of the Novebruns expeditionary force on Odinani III, and it demands compensation. It paints any actions it took against House Thorvald as defensive and as a matter of self-preservation.

In truth, House Thorvald did not sabotage the Novebruns' refineries. House Novebruns had fallen behind on the repair and upkeep of its facilities on Odinani III. Lady Eulaia used the refinery explosion as the pretext for her military to push a Thorvald encampment off the claim. House Thorvald has been targeting their support depots, but there is no evidence linking them to the death of General Enab Korta.

HOUSE THORVALD'S POSITION

House Thorvald insists House Novebruns stalled its ability to acquire the proper permits and stole legal claims from it. It also accuses House Novebruns of shooting first, escalating the conflict, and arming Kenji-loyal dissidents to destabilize Ipyr. It believes House Novebruns stole land and profit from it, justifying its assault as a reclamation of legal claims.

In truth, House Novebruns did bog House Thorvald down in lease and permit paperwork while it got its mining operations in order. Otherwise, House Thorvald would have legally acquired sole mining rights.

DISCOVERABLE SECRETS

Player characters or their agents and assets can unearth this secret knowledge through covert means. Examples include seducing a member of the delegation's entourage, intercepting communications, or infiltrating House operations. They can investigate the paper trail or facilities using architect play, or directly with supporting characters in agent play. The following additional information can be obtained, which can be used as assets in negotiations.

- House Thorvald has sabotaged some mining capabilities of House Novebruns, even if it had nothing to do with the refinery on Odinani III.
- House Novebruns armed Kenji-loyal dissidents on Ipyr, using House Lindaren for delivery.
- Earl Memnon Thorvald sent Loura Dae to Keres to pressure his ally into cutting off food supplies to Menkar II.
- General Enab Korta's autopsy revealed a toxin often used by agents of House Spinnette.

NEGOTIATIONS

Neither House is interested in compromise at this point and would prefer to continue to fight it out. Player characters must succeed in an Epic (D5) **Communicate** test from both delegations to get them to agree to a ceasefire. If player characters can offer an incentive or threaten blackmail, the gamemaster can lower the Difficulty by -1. However, with tensions high, this ceasefire will only last a few days, regardless of any promises either side makes.

Given the difficulty of reaching a consensus, it is likely that negotiations will fail at this point. Even if the player characters achieve a ceasefire, this does not prevent the allies of Novebruns and Thorvald from continued provocation.

ADDITIONAL OBSTACLES

Player characters may want opportunities to engage in combat during the negotiation. The gamemaster can use these adventure hooks as written or as inspiration.

- **Vernius's Lone Wolf:** After the Vernius aid ships explode over Menkar II, Ryga, a member of House Vernius, crashes the peace talks with a maula pistol in hand. Her husband was the captain of one of the destroyed frigates. Independent of her House and full of rage, she shoots at the head of the Thorvald delegation, Loura Dae. The player characters see the assailant coming with a Daunting (D3) **Discipline** or **Understand** test, and they can attempt to save Loura with a Challenging (D2) **Move** or **Battle** test.
- **Spinnette's Assassin**: Shrix, a House Spinnette assassin, poses as a servant and attempts to poison Lady Silta but kills a House Novebruns Mentat instead. The guards respond by immediately attacking the Thorvald delegation. The player characters can face the aggressors with a Challenging (D2) **Battle** test, or they can threaten them into submission with a Dire (D4) **Discipline** test. The Spinnette assassin escapes unless the player characters can catch them using a successful Daunting (D3) **Discipline** or **Understand** test.
- **Fenring's Gang:** To ensure the summit fails, Count Fenring hires a gang of criminals to rob the Novebruns and Thorvald delegations while making it appear as if the player characters were the culprits. The player character can thwart the robbers' plans by defeating them with a Challenging (D2) **Battle** test. A Daunting (D3) **Understand** test connects the criminals to a syndicate on Kaitain.

ACT III
THE BRINK (DAYS 7–11)

With allies of House Novebruns and House Thorvald reigniting the conflict, the player characters have a few days to plan the second round of talks. They can use a combination of diplomacy, economic pressure, and force, but they must also secure the compliance of the allied Houses.

GETTING BACK TO THE TABLE

Player characters can convince a House to return to the negotiating table with a successful Daunting (D3) **Communicate** test. The gamemaster can lower the Difficulty by -1 if there was a ceasefire. Incentives or threats the characters use can also modify the Difficulty. Each House included in the summit requires a separate roll. Conversely or concurrently, player characters can use military assets to enforce the ceasefire on Odinani III. Military assets can strongarm delegations to the table with a Daunting (D3) **Battle** test. However, further negotiations with anyone forced to attend will suffer a penalty to the Difficulty.

The gamemaster can also use these adventure hooks to expand the adventure in Act Three.

- **Black Market Mercenaries:** Penthar, a black marketeer specializing in mercenaries, offers to sell a platoon of mercenaries to the player characters at an exorbitant price. These are Soldier assets with a Quality of 1. Player characters can make a Challenging (D2) **Communicate** test to barter for a lower price. If they succeed, Penthar acquiesces, selling the assets services for 10 Wealth. If they fail, the cost is 20 Wealth. Wealth is detailed in House Management in **The Great Game**.
- **Coup d'Uncle:** While on Ipyr to secure House Thorvald's involvement in the second round of peace talks, Fabrizi Thorvald, niece to Earl Memnon and heir to the Thorvald throne, invites the player characters to a clandestine meeting. She insinuates that if the player characters assassinate her uncle, she will agree to retract Thorvald's claim on Odinani III once she assumes power.
- **Clione Assassins:** On Clione, while attempting to convince the Novebruns to rejoin the negotiations, Lady Eulaia introduces player characters to a captured Spinnette assassin. Lady Eulaia asks how she can make peace with those who seek to kill her. Player characters can make a Challenging (D2) **Communicate** test to convince Lady Eulaia that Lady Silta is safe under their protection, or they can confront House Spinnette.

ACT IV

Hail Mary (Days 12–14)

The player characters have one last chance to achieve peace. They can either bring all sides to the table through force or attempt another diplomatic negotiation.

The Art of Diplomacy

After bringing the Houses back to the negotiating table, the player characters have little time to secure an agreement. While negotiations will be very difficult, the player characters can use each House's secrets they have discovered against them as assets to reduce the difficulties of some tests.

House Novebruns's New Position

House Novebruns will be reluctant to split the profits from Odinani III equally, but might be convinced with an Epic (D5) **Communicate** test. It is more inclined to buy out House Thorvald's claim if the price is right. A Daunting (D3) **Communicate** success convinces Lady Silta that House Thorvald's asking price is fair. On the other hand, it takes a Dire (D4) **Communicate** success to persuade Novebruns' to sell its claim to House Thorvald.

House Thorvalds's New Position

House Thorvald can be convinced to split the profits from Odinani III equally with a Daunting (D3) **Communicate** test. It is less inclined to buy out House Novebruns's claim, still believing it's rightfully Thorvalds', but it could be persuaded with an Epic (D5) **Communicate** success. However, it is open to selling its claim to House Novebruns. The player characters can negotiate a fair asking price with a Challenging (D2) **Communicate** success.

Other Diplomatic Options

Other diplomatic options include having the Houses settle the matter via a duel between their two best champions. While this will end the immediate hostilities and give the player characters a victory, the blood feud between the Houses will continue, no matter the result of the duel. Another option could be a Challenging (D2) **Communicate** or **Discipline** test to present an alliance through marriage. Wedding Fabrizi Thorvald to Nevel Defonsa Novebruns would keep Odinani system profits in the family and oath bond the Houses to protect one another. It is not impossible that Fabrizi and Nevel might petition to found a new Minor House to manage the area on behalf of both Houses.

The Art of War

If the player characters have determined that violence is necessary to achieve peace, they will need to assemble their invasion force. Each player must select a single character to serve as their military commander for each objective, and it is this character's Drive and Skills that determine victory or defeat. If the characters have the element of surprise on their hands, the players gain 2 Momentum. Finally, the characters must make an Average (D1) **Communicate** test to deal with the Spacing Guild to transport their army, paying whatever fee the gamemaster feels is appropriate. The cost may require them getting more funds from the Emperor.

The gamemaster may play out the attack using a few tests as detailed below, or use the full warfare rules. If using a warfare conflict, the area should be divided into at least six zones and the assets available to each side are determined by the gamemaster.

Running a Warfare Conflict

Using the details in the **Dune Core Rulebook** (p. 180–183) and **The Great Game** (p. 116), the gamemaster may like to run a full warfare conflict for this final Act.

The gamemaster creates a battleground of approximately 30 zones in a grid, placing the defender's home base in the center. The home base represents a palace, spaceport, or military installation. The gamemaster can also give a trait to each zone, such as 'Fortified' or 'Exposed,' to represent different obstacles and terrain. The defender then places half their units in their base and deploys the rest within three zones of that area.

When the player characters launch their attack, they arrive in any group of connected zones at the edge of the zone map, away from the defender's base. For the first two turns of the conflict, any ground forces are considered in the process of landing and cannot move or attack. The defender's air units can fire on them.

On the player's turn, they may move units, destroy the opponent's assets, and raze zones as normal. The conflict continues until one side is destroyed, withdraws, or surrenders. If a side chooses to withdraw, their units are in flight and cannot attack or move. A withdrawal action takes 2 turns, after which they escape.

ATTACK ON ODINANI III

The House's military arrives to find a sea of burning space debris surrounding Odinani III. House Novebruns and House Thorvald, along with their allies, battle in orbit and on the planet.

The player character's commander must make an Average (D1) **Move** test to navigate the fleet through the blockade.Failure results in the lost element of surprise, and the gamemaster gains 2 Threat. Landing requires a Challenging (D2) **Move** test. Failure results in anti-aircraft fire hitting the descending force, which gains the 'Grazed' trait for the duration of the fight and/or the loss of warfare assets. A Daunting (D3) **Battle** ensues to push the Novebruns and Thorvald armies back, creating a neutral zone. Failure gives a 'Wounded' trait and/or the loss of warfare assets. Finally, an Average (D1) **Communicate** or **Discipline** success commands the two armies to lay down their weapons and surrender.

Two consecutive failures result in mass casualties among the assault force and the capture of the House's chosen military commander by House Novebruns or House Thorvald.

ATTACK ON CLIONE

The Spacing Guild deposits the player characters' House military in the Menkar system near Clione.

The player commander must overcome Clione's orbital defenses with a Challenging (D2) **Battle** test. Failure results in the lost element of surprise. The gamemaster gains 2 Threat. An Average (D2) **Battle** test success seizes the spaceport. Failure results in the royal guard buying time to fortify the palace. The gamemaster gains an additional 2 Threat. Next, the player characters must neutralize the royal guard stationed outside the throne room with a Daunting (D3) **Battle** test. Failure means the player characters gain a 'Wounded' trait and potentially lose warfare assets. Finally, success on an Average (D1) **Communicate** or **Discipline** test secures House Novebruns's surrender.

Two consecutive failures result in mass casualties among the assault force and the capture of the player characters' House's chosen military commander by House Novebruns.

ATTACK ON IPYR

If the player characters' military assaults the Thorvald homeworld, they arrive with the planet on the brink of civil war.

The commander must assault the Heighforge and lay waste to the orbital defense canons and shipyards with a Daunting (D3) **Battle** test. Failure results in the lost element of surprise. The gamemaster gains 2 Threat. Bombarding with a Daunting (D3) **Battle** success paves the way for a ground force incursion. If failed, the Ipyr fighters deliver an aggressive counterattack courtesy of the War Academy. The gamemaster gains an additional 2 Threat. A Dire (D4) **Battle** test is then required to storm the royal palace and defeat Warmaster Vercing Koji with his remaining soldiers. Success means the eradication of the enemy forces. Failure means the player characters gain a 'Wounded' trait and potentially lose warfare assets. Finally, success on an Average (D1) **Communicate** or **Discipline** test secures Earl Memnon Thorvald's surrender.

Two consecutive failures result in mass casualties among the assault force and the capture of the House's chosen military commander by House Thorvald.



EPILOGUE

THE GUNS FALL SILENT

On the fourteenth day, the Emperor summons the characters. This time, instead of being escorted to the Golden Lion Throne, they are taken to a shuttle and, via Guild Heighliner, delivered to the Emperor's flagship in orbit of Odinani III.

Wearing a dress uniform emblazoned with commander-in-chief insignia, the Emperor stands on the bridge of his flagship, gazing through a wide window. Beyond it, a pockmarked Odinani III burns black with smoke. Space debris hangs around the planet like a thin mist. The shattered remains of warships hang suspended, silent, and slowly sinking in orbital decay. Count Fenring, Beely Ridondo, and a unit of Sardaukar are also present.

IF PEACE IS RESTORED

The Emperor offers his congratulations.

- The Emperor turns toward the group and grimaces. "It would seem felicitations are in order." Servants emerge from dark corners with flutes of sparkling wine. "Many doubted your success, but I told them to trust my judgment. I told them to trust my Judge of the Change. And here we are. Two warring Houses, united in understanding, with peace and order restored to the Known Universe. Well done, my friends. Well done." The Emperor raises a glass and toasts the characters.

IF THE PLAYER CHARACTERS HAVE FAILED

In this scenario, Earl Philip Hagal is also present.

- The Emperor faces the window with his back to the group. "I was hoping my Judge of the Change might be able to make these two warring Houses see reason. I was patient. Trusting. But here I stand, staring at a burning rock. I should have done this from the start and saved myself the colossal waste of life and resources."
- The Emperor gestures to his bashar, and Imperial warships descend on Odinani III. The Sardaukar weapon ports glow before guns fire, laying waste to the remaining Thorvald and Novebruns forces. "I, Shaddam IV of House Corrino, ascendant to the Golden Lion Throne and Padishah Emperor of the Known Universe, do hereby call an end to this War of Assassins between Houses Thorvald and Novebruns. I claim this system, in its entirety, on behalf of the Imperium and grant its stewardship to my loyal friend, Earl Philip Hagal." The room erupts in applause. "We thank you for your service. You may go now."

CONCLUSION

The player characters return to their homeworld either in triumph or in defeat. But both outcomes have the potential to create new, engaging stories.

WHAT IF THE PLAYERS WERE SUCCESSFUL?

The player characters' House receives invitations from House Novebruns and House Thorvald to work more closely together, which reduces the Difficulty of all future interactions with the two Houses by -1. The Landsraad takes note of the achievement, and the House improves its reputation either by earning the trait 'Dependable' or by gaining another 10 Status.

WHAT IF THE PLAYERS WERE UNSUCCESSFUL?

Both House Novebruns and House Thorvald blame losing out on the spoils of the Odinani system on the player characters' House. The Difficulty of all future interactions with the two Houses increases by +1. The Landsraad also views the player characters' House more critically after this failure. The House either earns the trait 'Idle' or loses 10 Status.

WHAT ABOUT ADVANCEMENT POINTS?

The gamemaster should follow the guidelines listed in **Dune Core Rulebook** (p. 139). However, they should also consider granting a bonus point if the player characters convinced Thorvald and Novebruns to sign the armistice. They should also get an additional point if they did so through diplomacy rather than bloodshed.

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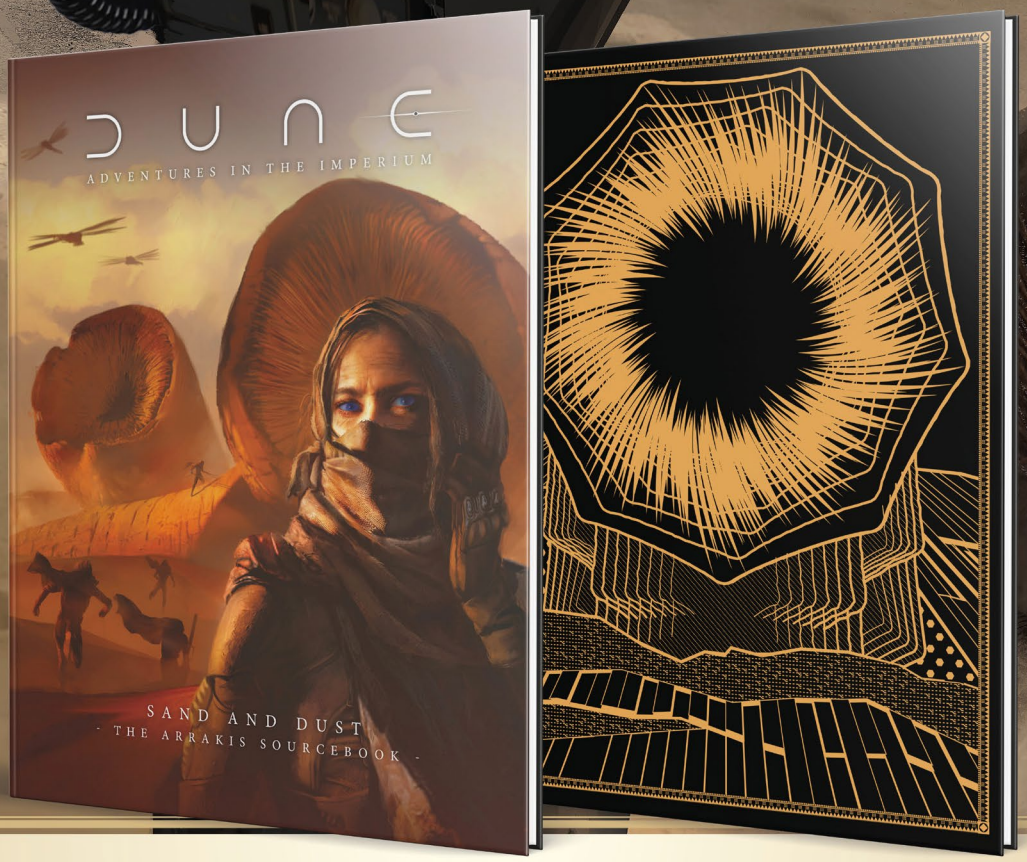
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