



the  
Hitchhiker's  
Guide to New  
Eden

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# the Hitchhiker's Guide to New Eden

Volume I, v0.91

*A note from the author-*

*CCP Games, developer of [EVE Online](#), has a liberal policy when it comes to the creative efforts of their players. Regardless of that policy, the scale of this particular work necessitates a brief legal disclaimer:*

*This is an original work of fan fiction. New Eden, EVE Online, and all specific references to the fictional game world of EVE Online including but not limited to the Amarr Empire, Ammatar Mandate, Angel Cartel, Blood Raiders, Caldari State, CONCORD, Gallente Federation, Guristas Pirates, Intaki Syndicate, InterBus, Khanid Kingdom, Minmatar Republic, Jovian Directorate, Sani Sabik, Sansha's Nation, Serpentinis, Sisters of EVE, and the Society of Conscious Thought are principally the intellectual property of CCP Games against which the author makes no claims. This document is purely for entertainment purposes and will not be used for resale by its original author.*

*That being said, this was written primarily out of admiration and respect for the vibrant fictional universe of EVE Online and the men and women (both official CCP writers and fans) whose imaginations have raised it up from a promising kernel of oddly-worded but intriguing video game backstory in 2003 to the vast and compelling setting that it is today. What you have in front of you is an attempt to paint an encyclopedic panorama encompassing the whole of this massive universe in cohesive, original prose. This is not a compilation of official chronicles, short stories, and books (for that I strongly recommend downloading SantaClaw's "The Book of EVE"), but an entirely new narrative that draws from those sources and admittedly takes some liberties with the prime fiction in order to fill in the gaps left after eight years of growth. I haven't covered everything, but I have endeavored to include all the major topics of EVE lore.*

*There are different philosophies at work within the EVE fiction and roleplay community and I know that some fans may disapprove of this handling of the story by a mere player, and that's all well and good. Whatever your stance may be on the "validity" of this work, I nevertheless hope you can take some pleasure from the reading, as the writing has given me much enjoyment and afforded my mind a bit of an escape in bleaker hours. Until I see you in space, fly safe.*

*Ken, YC113*

## Kenreikko Valitonen

*For Herko*

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## Preface

# It's a Big Cluster

((That's what the man said. He was a pod pilot by the name of Night. Could just be the Happy Chip™ talking, but I tend to agree with him.

Some of the most fun I've had playing EVE Online has been in the arena of roleplaying. [Que :lolrp: giggles.] It is of course thrilling to fly around and shoot people and get lost in the **serious business** of Internet Spaceships, but by far the deeper and more compelling aspect of the game for me is its rich, dark, and seemingly endless story. The size and complexity of EVE lore is, much like the size and complexity of the game itself, an impediment to entry. There is no less steep a learning curve for newcomers to the EVE RP scene than there is for the player on their first day trial account asking in Rookie Help where they can find the undock button or how they can navigate their Ibis with a joystick. While there is a healthy catalog of official and player-written guides aimed at helping the wide-eyed newbie get through his or her hopeless first few days flopping around inside the loony bin that is the biggest single server MMO in existence, there is far less available to help that person find their character's place in the mosaic persistent universe of New Eden.

This document is meant to help fill that gap and patch up a few other holes in the process. Written from an in-character perspective, but by no one character in particular, it is in part a guided tour of the star cluster, part tutorial, part attempt at inspiration, and part (not so) covert face lift of the Prime Fiction (PF) to fit my own particular perspective. There are plenty of things here that are not explicitly presented in the official chronicles, short stories, or books, and there are plenty of things that do appear in those sources that I have not included. I make no excuses for this, but to the aspirant RP junkie I offer you the above caveats out of warning. As I've learned, there is a lot of room for your imagination to play around with on the interstellar stage, but straying too far from the "ground rules" of EVE canon is likely to get you smacked around a bit with a large trout. It stings, trust me. And you smell like fish afterward. Nothing you will find herein breaks any of those rules outright, and I have gone to some trouble to tow the party line on most topics, but you will find embellishment and liberties taken in significant amounts. While this was done with the best of intentions, I'm sure it will earn me a fair dose of flak from the bitter RP vets, but hey folks, don't panic.

I was once told that I should find my niche, meaning the sort of ship and role in a fleet I find the most fun, in EVE in order to really enjoy the game for a long time to come, and I believe that advice to be true. If you don't really love playing the healer, don't train for logistics ships. Go for the stealth bomber or battleship or whatever gives you the biggest thrill. I say the same is true on the roleplaying side of the game, where it can sometimes be even harder to find the thing that yields peak returns in entertainment value for your investment of time and energy. It is my hope that any new EVE player (or a veteran looking for something new) can pick up this guide and by the time they have finished reading be filled with ideas about where their character came from, where they are, and where they're going that are not only satisfying to that player but also tightly synced with the established lore. If this document helps just one player find their niche in the story, I will consider the effort in writing it time well spent.

Did you remember your towel? I hope so, because--))

Space is a big place. It is really, truly enormous. We've only expanded to fill about five thousand solar systems, a tiny dot in the incredible vastness of the universe, but even that relatively minor neighborhood of suns contains more room and more things than any person could ever possibly experience, no matter how long they live. Yes, space, even just *our* space, is far larger and deeper than most people are able to conceive. And it is filled to the brim: empires that span hundreds of stars, human populations measured in trillions, ships the size of small moons, a diversity and richness of cultures that routinely fail definition or categorization in total, the highest pinnacles of righteousness and the bleakest nadirs of the spirit, sometimes found in frighteningly close proximity. Space is one hell of a big place, so yes there is plenty of room for you, if you're ready to let go and embrace eternity.

It is perhaps too easy to paint a portrait of New Eden in broad strokes. Often you will hear of the imperial powers and the so-called pirate factions and the conflicts that exist between them as if these are monolithic entities to which one may feasibly assign a single name, a set of characteristics, and a clear agenda. This is convenient for generalizations and stereotyping, of course, but you must remember that even the smallest of the 'great' powers are interstellar nations unto themselves with billions of people in hundreds of colonies spread throughout known space, and all of them are far more fragmentary in both their shape and goals than their propaganda would have you believe. Indeed, even Amarr, a civilization boasting perhaps the most centralized and united system of traditional political and social authority focused on the semi-divine personage of their Emperor, is in fact an often strained alliance of five powerful aristocratic families influenced by a legacy of ecclesiastic rule and orbited by several client states. Others will try to tell you that the cluster consists of the State here and the Republic there, but the truth is not so simple. What from the outside may appear to be a precious stone cut down to a finite number of angled surfaces is in fact a dense crystal containing a matrix of infinite variety in culture, language, morality, and politics.

Bearing these things in mind let us start at the beginning; not the dawn of the Empyrean Age or even the Yoiul Conference, but on Earth more than twenty-one millennia ago. No one in New Eden can say truly with any authority where humanity originated, but it is quite certain that the races of Man did not evolve independently on the planets they today recognize as their home worlds. What is now lost beyond the mists of legend and even to the allegory of myth is the true name and location of the cradle of humankind. Some have claimed that it is a place, presumed to be a single planet or star system, called Earth that lies on the far side of the EVE phenomenon. Archaeological evidence from the smattering of prehistoric anachronistic ruins found throughout the cluster suggests that an interstellar human civilization more advanced than our own once thrived in a region of space far removed from New Eden and that our local neighborhood became available to those ancient starfarers through a tremendous rift in space. Whether the EVE gate, so-called for the three glyphs inscribed on the ruins that surround the phenomenon, was or is a wormhole in the modern sense or to where or when it once led is not known, but across its threshold humanity stepped, or so goes the theory, into our local cluster somewhere between fifteen and seventeen thousand years ago.

In reality, of course, Earth is little more than the half-forgotten name of some long lost paradise in speculative fiction and fantasy hologames. The vast majority of rational people will question the existence of normal space on the other side of a once-navigable EVE gate, let alone whether humanity ever knew the light of such a place or still does. New Eden is the real world. And it will take more than enough of your energies and effort to understand the real world, leaving alone pseudoscientific flights of fancy like ancient space travelers from beyond EVE. Turn your attentions to our local cluster and let us briefly make the rounds.

Traditional political power, specifically in the form of the expansive interstellar nation-state, coalesces in a few places within New Eden: Villore, Luminaire, New Caldari, Khanid, Amarr Prime, Pator, Tanoo, Yulai; these are the names of power in a great game of imperial influence to which otherwise enlightened observers with sophisticated opinions often fall victim. As capital systems, throne worlds, or galactic commons, these places are held aloft by the propaganda of a cunning few and accepted as the poles around which our modern world spins by the obeisance of a passive multitude. Yet as we have already covered, humanity in New Eden does not comprise a multipolar civilization, but a fractal one. Within each great bloc there are a few central identities encompassing a dozen or more sub-factions of varying alignments, and each of those is home to its own catalogue of internal cultures and foci of power. On and on the diversity of mankind blossoms as you watch, expanding from the generalities of the cluster to the differences in each region, constellation, system, planet, district, city, and neighborhood. Down and down the proverbial rabbit's hole you fall until you reach the truth that every individual in New Eden is just that: an individual disposed to certain patterns of thought and behavior based on all the layers of society and identity stacked on top of him but at his heart a sentient and independent being just as capable of radical choice and divergence as of conformity.

As for understanding how we arrived at the present state of affairs, admitting the multichrome tapestry that lies beneath the simple yet popular veneer of empire and pirate, we must look once again into the distant past. Wherever their first settlers came from originally, the home worlds of New Eden are now almost universally recognized (with the possible exception of Amarr Prime in some interpretations of the Scriptures) as having once been colonies. Archaeological evidence points to a time around fifteen millennia ago when several planets in New Eden were settled in a relatively short span, but none before or after this roughly century-long blip in the historical record. Afterward came what many mythologies, even those from traditions maintained as far afield as Saisio III and Matar, describe as "the Fall": a collapse of advanced civilization into a primitive struggle for survival. The ancient colonies were thrown back on their heels by some great catastrophe, the specifics of which can only be guessed at, and in those places where life was not totally extinguished their descendants would endure the long night in a regressed state, believing they were alone in the universe before space travel was again a reality in New Eden. These Dark Ages lasted for more than eight thousand years and those peoples who weathered them successfully nevertheless emerged marked and changed by the conditions on their world and the conflicts and upheavals of their private histories.

Convenience and standardization are trumpeted as the parents of our modern interstellar timekeeping schedule, the ubiquitous calendar of the Yoiul Conference that measures the years since it took place with the prefix 'YC', yet the origins of this system are a topic of some academic curiosity. Three years after the establishment of the Consolidated Cooperation and Relations Command or CONCORD (about 116 years ago), New Eden's freshly recast political titans, the five empires of this young cooperative, launched an initiative to remake the face of the clock itself. Competing arguments for an enforceable cluster-wide standard of time included those of biologists and sociologists that the human body's natural rhythm made the most sense as a universal yard stick as well as those of physicists and mathematicians that the measurable and regular movement of subatomic particles would provide the best possible foundation. As you well know, neither of these camps won the day. A group promoting the self-styled 'Traditionalist' model of time was far better connected and more influential than the others and their 24-hour, 365-day calendar with its quadrennial leap day became that used everywhere for space travel and communications. While any number of more regular but equally arbitrary systems could have been chosen, this one had a rather unique quality. You see, in the oldest stories of virtually every society in New Eden there is mention of a calendar of precisely that structure.

The universality of these numbers, perhaps based on the natural rotation and revolution of some long-forgotten planet and maybe even of humanity's mother world, highlight a fact that is sometimes swept under the rug by the xenophobic or misunderstood by the poorly educated. The fact is that no matter which planet we come from, everyone alive in New Eden is made of the same stuff and we are all of the same species: *homo sapiens*. We are all human beings. There are plenty who will argue that the Jovians have made themselves into something else or that other intelligences such as the rogue drones deserve to be recognized as separate and treated differently. Others still suggest that the variety of fauna found in the biospheres of the cluster's inhabited worlds support the theory of extant non-human intelligences. The fact remains, however, that for all the detailed imaginings found in sci-fi holoreels, we have never encountered anything that could be irrefutably described as sentient alien life. For all our travels and several false positives, we are still fundamentally alone.

Perhaps it is not so strange then that for all our progress and growth humanity has clung to its fragmentary nature. Lacking a xenomorphic identity equivalent to our concept of civilization to which we might point and say, 'Whatever we are, at least we are not them,' we still point at each other and, highlighting and conflating our differences in appearance, history, speech, or culture, proclaim roughly the same thing. There is a saying among the Thukkers, those restless Minmatar taken to perpetually wandering the far reaches of space, which aptly conveys this instinct in us. They say, "Me against my brother, my brother and I against our cousins, my cousins and I against strangers." Even where time and trends have allowed truly progressive and altruistic philosophies to take hold, such as the nobly-founded international assembly in Yulai, the realpolitik driving events is inevitably of the sort defined by coming together against a common threat. In the case of CONCORD, it was the mutual danger posed by one another that first drove Gallentean and Matari to find space at a table with Amarr and Caldari. Were it not for the rise of new villains, like the radical thinker Sansha Kuvakei or the pervasive influence of the great cartels, the Club of Five might have eaten itself up and fallen back upon rampant backstabbing and unchecked internecine aggression to achieve their ends. That is not to say, of course, that such things don't take place anyway behind the scenes.

There is probably no avoiding it any longer. For all this talk of trying to understand New Eden on a deeper level than the official authors of its histories would prefer for you, certainly you are interested in knowing more about the players in its great game. So let us treat that curiosity, spinning outward from the oldest to the strangest of them. We turn our thoughts now to Athra.



# Volume 1

Per Aspera Ad Astra



## Chapter I

# A Brief History of the Amarr

An empire in the truest sense, the Great and Bountiful Demesne of Her Sublime Highness Jamyl I, Empress of Amarr and New Eden, Sword of Athra, Defender of the Faith, Light Unto the Darkness, Holy Patroness of Dam-Torsad, Mistress Suzerain of Domain and Genesis, Lady Grand Emperor of Ardishapur, Kador, Khanid, Kor-Azor, Sarum, and Tash-Murkon, Stewardess Ultima to Aridia, the Bleak Lands, Derelik, Devoid, and the Imperial Quarter of Stain, Righteous Beacon of Providence, and Inheritor Ex Spiritus of Heimatar, Metropolis, and Molden Heath is built not only on the drive and faith of its Throne World elites but also upon the backs of countless conquered peoples, many of whom have long since been absorbed by a hallowed and long-standing practice of institutional assimilation into the Amarrian mainstream. Slavery of men, women, and children remains even in this advanced age a vital part of the Imperial economy and society. In fact, were the traditions and practices of slavery as they are today observed in most of the Empire to ever vanish, their absence would necessitate such a paradigm shift in Amarrian philosophy and the structure of the bureaucracy that the resultant civilization, if it could survive such a transformation at all, would scarcely resemble its present form. That form is, of course, the classic socioeconomic model of the stratified pyramid: a large body of compulsory and uncompensated labor forms the foundation for the increasingly narrower tiers of corvee servitude, commoner freemen, merchants, artisans, civil servants, soldiers, priests, minor nobility, noble holders, and the ruling elites above.

At the pinnacle of this structure is the singular apex of the Emperor or, as in the present circumstances, the Empress of Amarr. Per official doctrine, the first Amarrian sovereign to take this title was crowned in the incredibly distant past. Scholars pinpoint the date of this primeval coronation at 6879 standard years before the present (16470 by the old calendar). It is thus a point of pride often held up by Imperial patriots regardless of their social station or degree of education that the core institutions of Amarrian civilization have endured for more than six millennia, far exceeding the longevity and durability of all other nations in New Eden. Any realistic anthropological treatment of the subject reveals the fallacy in such a statement, but it is nevertheless a popular one. The means of selection, public image, and effective power of the Emperor has changed significantly over the ages and acquired the basic qualities of its current form around fourteen centuries ago during a time remembered by history as the Moral Reforms. To understand the system and people that the Emperor rules and represents, however, we may have to begin our analysis a little farther back still.

In the time of its "first emperor", the peoples to whom the modern Amarrians attribute their ancestry comprised a very small nation resident on an island continent upon a planet called Athra. For some three and a half millennia this tiny state and its neighbors coexisted, competed, and intermingled, forming an aggregate culture with alternating patterns of internal stagnation and change but never spreading beyond their island home. Several theories suggest that abundant local resources, insular geography, and social norms discouraging adventurous spirits helped to contain this ancient society until its discovery by members of a foreign seafaring race called the Udorians. Their arrival marked the end of a comparatively tranquil era and sparked a great shift in the trajectory of Amarrian thought about virtually everything. The Udorian Discovery smashed the idea that early Amarrians, as a people that encompassed their entire known world, existed in an idyllic state.

Fifty-six years after the first Udorian set foot on their soil, the swiftly centralizing Amarrian civilization was swept up in the fervor of a revolution in religious affairs and an idea was born that would eventually determine the shape of known space and the lives and livelihoods of countless trillions. The basic philosophy of the Great Reclaiming, a dogma wherein the chosen people of God are blessed with a mandate of spiritual suzerainty over all existence and charged with undertaking whatever effort necessary to seize worldly control over it, was first articulated during this time. Driven by the commandment of the heavens themselves with this imperative to spread the message of God and the rightful mastery of His people to furthest limits of the world, the people of that small continent, whose concept of those limits were suddenly rewritten in the span of just a few decades, began a campaign of conquest that would eventually cover thousands of light years. In later ages this would be expressed in a scriptural passage from the Book of Reclaiming that remains on the lips of many Amarrian fundamentalists and can still be heard in the oath of loyalty sworn by officers of the Imperial Navy: "I give to you the destiny of Faith, and you will bring its message to every planet of every star in the heavens: Go forth, conquer in my Name, and reclaim that which I have given."

This is precisely what the ancient Amarrians tried to do, of course, and they succeeded beyond all reasonable expectations. Their tentative trading relationship with the newcomers to their land was turned into a nautical line of communication for launching an overseas expedition of conquest. Within three hundred years the once docile peoples of the Amarr continent, invigorated by the expansionist message articulated in the increasingly influential voice of their monotheistic faith, transformed themselves from an isolated and primitive polity into a vast and powerful empire that held every Udorian nation under its heel. Less than two centuries later, there remained no nation on Athra that had not bent its knee to the inevitable rise of Amarr or been beaten in to submission for resisting. In addition to political dominance, this period, known as the Flowering of Amarr by Imperial scholars, also saw unprecedented technological advance as the Amarrians pushed military and civil engineering to new limits in order to first win and then govern their new empire. The scale of this dominion also enabled scholars from previously distant regions to find one another and draw new conclusions about the nature of the world and their place in it.

To treat the global empire that stood victorious upon Athra at the end of the First Great Reclaiming as a singular body free of fractures or discontent would be quite unfair to historical accuracy. That is, of course, how it is treated in Imperial doctrine. The fact is that even back then there were many competing and even contradictory forces at work behind the façade of unity. As they do today, alternative interpretations of the faith sprouted like weeds from the thick trunk of the official state religion, and occasionally, as they are today, they were pruned in an unceremonious declaration of apostasy and driven to extinction. Not all such offshoots have died away so quickly or easily, however, and it was during the Reign of the Faithful at a time before the Amarrians had achieved spaceflight, when one of the most successful of such cults got its start.

Sani Sabik. Popular among social elites on Athra, the Sani Sabik (meaning "bloodfriends" or "purest by blood" depending upon which version of the ancient Amarrian dialects you choose to translate it from) preached that there exists a certain class of people who are specially blessed by God, pure beings born for greatness, and that all others exist simply to feed, support, and breed these scions. Naturally, contemporary members of the Imperial aristocracy saw themselves as living examples of this scheme and a great many happily latched on to the Sani Sabik message, using it to validate the accumulation of even more power and their increasingly brutal treatment of virtually everyone else, whom they already considered little more than chattel. A pervasive obsession among the elites with extending life and achieving immortality only helped to cement the Sani Sabik version of reality.

Gaining influence over several decades among the ruling classes, the cult was eventually determined by the Imperial authorities to be a threat to the state. Some, including the Emperor, felt threatened by rumors of a Sani Sabik shadow government and plots to topple the throne, and it was swiftly branded as heresy and excised from the royal court and holder ranks in a series of bloody pogroms that lasted less than a year and liberated several thousand heads from their noble bodies. The cult was not eradicated completely, however, as we shall see later, but before it would again affect Imperial society so deeply the people of the planet Athra would become a people of the stars.

A proper treatment of who those people were (and in many ways still are) requires we understand the shape of their society on the eve of its ascension to the heavens. As a consequence of the ideas of the Reclaiming, virtually all Athrans of non-Amarrian ethnicity were considered unworthy of a status equivalent to God's chosen few. This was especially so among those people who resisted the faith and lordship of Amarr, resistance in itself demonstrating a profundity of sins, and the vast majority were subject to enslavement. Slavery in both ancient and modern Amarr is not merely about the economics of forced labor, but rather is an important element in the dogma and machinery of the official religion. Taking slaves is a religious duty, and the slave master is expected to provide ample sustenance, proper education, and genuine opportunities for spiritual growth to his or her charges in order that their souls be purified and their minds be brought closer to the presence of God, to better magnify His glory. While such "opportunities for spiritual growth" often included backbreaking and hazardous work with meager allowances for rest and succor, slaves were generally not treated like prisoners, but simply as the lowest rung of society, and the status of slave was not exclusive to non-Amarrians. Committing a grave sin could cause even a True Amarrian of the purest stock to fall into servitude.

Non-Amarrians, however, rarely if ever occupied the highest ranks in Athran society, although the case of the Khanid peoples stand out. Natives of Athra, the Khanid (in truth a sobriquet, the original name of the race is lost to history) adapted quickly to a world dominated by Amarr and became fast allies and fierce defenders of the growing Empire in its early years. As such they largely rose above slave status in a few short generations and enjoyed an honored position then as now, being known as the Empire's "little lords". Even today, there is no former subject race among the vast Imperial catalogue that has achieved as high a status as the Khanid, and their long and storied history of voluntary service to Amarr may be explain why their cultural identity, or at least as semblance of it, has avoided the effects of systematic indoctrination while so many others have been lost.

The longer a slave's service to his master, the deeper his knowledge of the Scriptures, the faster his willingness to betray an uprising to the authorities, the stronger his family's line became and the better his children's lives would be. Over generations, the active encouragement of assimilation, with the promise of eventual emancipation, and the brutal punishment of resistance and suppression of counteridentities shaped the institution of slavery in Amarr into a somewhat self-sustaining apparatus. Revolts were not unheard of, and holders constantly searched for new and better ways to extract quiescence from the perpetually agitated lower tiers of slaves, but obedience was rewarded sweetly and a class of "slave gentry" slowly emerged over the centuries. Well educated and skilled, members of this class were allowed to work unescorted, even in the presence of nobles, and they led more or less comfortable lives within the limits of their master's holdings. Over the ages, countless billions of families would rise through the strata of Imperial society in this way to emerge as free commoners, merchants, and artisans. Others would find a boost through military service, always dangerous and always respected, or by unusual beneficence on the part of their lord in thanks for exceptional or sacrificial service. Many would go on to become slave-owning households themselves.

Among this educated subset of slaves and freemen were the technical experts who would help plot the Empire's course toward space. Several hundred years of scientific discovery and innovation, made possible by a cohesive global society and encouraged at the time as a glorification of God's creation as well by the quest among competing holders to be the first to discover the secret of immortality, enabled higher standards of living than ever before and opened the eyes of the Amarrian elites to the true nature of the sun in their sky and the possibilities of flight beyond their atmosphere. More than two thousand years ago, the first Amarrian astronaut, his real name now forgotten but his achievement remembered in the likely exaggerated story fed to every primary school child in the Empire as the Parable of Echaras' Flight, "rose from the hard ground to touch the fleeting face of God" and, or so the story goes, ascended directly to Heaven.

While they did not meet God and his angels in high Athran orbit, what the Amarrians found in their local space as they began to carefully and meticulously study and experiment with space travel was quite unexpected. After more than a century as a spacefaring people, still beginning to explore and understand their solar system and speculate about the technologies that might someday enable large off-world colonies and carry them past the heliopause into interstellar space, they stumbled upon evidence of a large object quietly orbiting out beyond their furthest planet. Originally categorized as an asteroid, its image was eventually captured in a much higher resolution and the anomaly was revealed to be an ancient artificial structure, many kilometers in scale. This discovery forced the Amarrians to confront the crisis of identity that has faced every one of the peoples of New Eden in their own time and in their own way: the sudden realization that they are not alone in the universe and they are not the first to have wandered the skies.

The Amarrian answer to this impasse was to accept the relic as a signpost left for them by divine hands. Rapidly changing their priorities in space to study and physically reach this ancient structure, they soon learned of its purpose as a threshold enabling instantaneous travel across vast distances by means of folding space. This gate to the heavens, nicknamed Heaven's Gate by the Athran media, was still largely operational even after thousands of years, although it was unoccupied and none of its fascinating components could be easily reverse engineered without knowledge of the people who built them or the theories and languages with which they were familiar. So the Amarrians did what seemed most appropriate and applied religion to the problem. Science would have suited just as well, but to the ancient Amarrians, and in many ways to their contemporary descendants, there is little distinction between those two concepts.

For the amateur in either following, however, achieving a proper understanding of the mechanisms that make star gate travel work is an exercise in futility. Let it suffice to say that given the right conditions of gravity provided by nearby stars and planets, two linked star gates are able to provoke a stable singularity that exists simultaneously at two distant points (to a range of roughly five light years), bending space between them and enabling a starship to cross the gap in the blink of an eye. The problem the early Amarrians faced was not that they failed to comprehend this theory, but that there was no similar structure at the far end of the singularities generated by Heaven's Gate. They had been shown the door, but found to their chagrin that it lead nowhere. A great expedition was organized and launched at the order of the Emperor to travel at sub-light speeds to Hedion, the nearest star to their home system, and precisely construct a duplicate of the ancient gate in order to forge a complete circuit. The men and women who would undertake this great endeavor were assured a high standing in the afterlife and those slaves among them who volunteered for the potentially one-way mission secured a life of freedom for their descendants who would remain behind. For Amarr they secured a pathway to the future and an assurance of the Empire's destiny: to bring His message to every planet of every star in the heavens.

Emperor Heideran III's words upon the opening of the star gate link to Hedion in the old calendar year 21290 heralded the spirit of exploration and expansion that would eventually spur the Second Great Reclaiming. Addressing the people of the Empire directly he said, "In God's name, the Amarr have reclaimed the entirety of our world. Now, blessed with the divine mandate of God, we spread our reach unto other worlds: from nearby Hedion, to the distant Misaba, to the burning southern star Penirgman, and all lands in-between. They are our birthright, our duty, our Domain." Soon after, Athra would be rechristened Amarr Prime and greater changes still would rock the burgeoning interstellar Empire to which it was now the Throne World.

A short half century after the Amarr-Hedion gate link was completed, an Emperor came to the throne who would have a long-lasting impact on the power and influence of his office within the expanding Empire. Zaragram Ardishapur is a name largely forgotten, and when invoked at all is usually meant as a curse, but for nearly twelve decades the man who bore it reigned as Zaragram II, Emperor and leader of the Apostle Council. In Zaragram's time the Empire was guided by this conclave of political and religious elites, the Apostles, with the Emperor as their publicly venerated chief of council and the hallowed head of state, first under God. Within the ruling cabal itself, however, he stood only as a first among equals and required the backing of a sizeable portion of the Apostles in order to pursue his agendas. The official history teaches that Zaragram II was not content to rule the Empire through the Council, as was his mandate according to tradition, and shortly after his coronation began issuing religious decrees that contravened the Scriptures and attempting to rule by fiat. In his hubris, he overturned sacred traditions and surrounded himself with supplicants who elevated him through a campaign of increasingly megalomaniacal propaganda to a semi-divine status, calling him the God-Emperor.

He was, of course, assassinated. One grandiose offense after another, culminating in the enormously expensive construction of Mezagorm, a gigantic space station meant to be a proper home for the godlike Zaragram, forced the Apostles to act. Whether they played a direct role in the Emperor's demise is a subject of some debate, but after his removal, the Apostle Council seized political control of the Empire and beatified the man, the Emperor's own grandson in fact, whose hand took the life of Zaragram II before he was himself cut down. They proclaimed the royal assassin as Saint Tetrimon. Under the Council's authority, a religious police force called the Order of St Tetrimon was formed and set about removing the symbols of Zaragram's more than century-long reign, rooting out the apostasy of his following and purifying the Empire of his memory. The Scriptures were purged of those passages deemed to be apocryphal to the true faith and a vicious campaign against heterodoxy launched, effectively rebooting the official church as an institution controlled and shaped directly by the will of the Council. For more than four centuries, a series of toothless Emperors would occupy the throne and act only with the explicit consent of the Apostles.

The events of that era have long since been whitewashed and if they are discussed in the modern Empire with a cursory appreciation for truth and disclosure, they remain the subject of moral rather than academic instruction. An entirely different landmark is now preferred to characterize the young interstellar Empire. Several decades before Zaragram II's fall, the Amarr discovered humans living on a distant planet to which they assigned the name Ealur. Far superior to the Ealurians in technology, the Amarrians found it quite easy to classify their customs as barbaric and far from the sight of God. Whether any attempt was made to elaborate on these perceived offenses as a *casus belli* is not remembered, but the subjugation and enslavement of the Ealurians by force of Navy warships and regiments of the Khanid military orders are well regarded as the proper beginning of Amarr's Second Great Reclaiming, a campaign devoted to spreading the faith to the lost peoples of other worlds and "returning" them to God's favor in much the same way the nations of Athra were rolled over.

As an outlet for forces that might otherwise provoke internal tension, the Reclaiming became a valuable tool with which the Apostle Council focused the energies of upstart nobles and the most fervent and charismatic celebrants and directed them away from the Empire's core. There was a universe to return to God's glory, after all, and headstrong young men of military age are far safer on the frontier than mulling around the homeworld keeping an uncomfortably close eye on the Council and Order of St Tetrimon's accumulation of power and the Emperor's general lack thereof. The Imperial Navy, today the oldest and by far largest military space fleet in New Eden, grew dramatically during this time and its exploration corps achieved success and honor hand over fist as they forged a path for the Empire to quarters farther and farther afield and transformed the imperative of the Reclaiming into reality. None of the peoples they discovered could deploy a spaceborne force that was the equal of the Navy and it would be more than a millennium before the Golden Fleet would suffer real defeat on the field of battle.

Far less time passed, however, before the Apostle Council met its match. Regarded by theologians as the Fourth Tribulation of Amarr, the Moral Reforms, which lasted seventy five years from the first of their upheavals to the last, overturned the authority of the Council and removed the Order of St Tetrimon. A congruence of events, far too complicated to be adequately treated in a cursory glance at Amarrian history such as this, cut away at the invulnerable image of the Apostles and elevated the status of lesser nobles who, with the backing of the Navy and the cultural influence of Hedion University, were able to capitalize on several real and perceived setbacks in the inevitable advance of the Empire and make a grab for power. The result was the rise of a strong military Emperor who assumed the powers of the Apostles, subverted and then abolished their offices, and silenced dissenting voices that cried out in opposition. Two new administrative bodies were established during the Moral Reforms to help rule the Empire: the Privy Council, an advisory panel consisting of the leaders of the Empire's great noble houses and its several major administrative organs, and the Theology Council, a formal ecclesiastic hierarchy consisting of those progressive religious leaders supportive of the Emperor and whose first official task was the creation of a new scriptural canon that would cement the power of the throne indefinitely.

And cement it they did, for the position of the Emperor has remained virtually unchallenged at the pinnacle of Imperial politics in the roughly fourteen hundred years since. Many of the traits that Zaragram the Mad (Zaragram II) claimed for himself and which his enemies took as their cause célèbre: the emperor's purported access to divine counsel, a physical form that was the perfected example of the human body, the ability to proclaim law and custom at will, and the mandate of Heaven sealing his words and actions; became the de facto icons of the office. Officially the Moral Reforms are remembered as a great restoration of the "true" Imperial system and a return to a government shaped by Amarrian values. In fact, they were the slow birth of a new form of distributed quasi-feudal governance that bound the Empire's competing power blocs together beneath a central theocratic apparatus, answerable to the Emperor, and which largely solved the administrative shortcomings of the sprawling interstellar dominion. The Reforms also saw the codification of many long-standing traditions into the Imperial Creed.

Among those was the institution of the Imperial family. While the Apostle Council was perpetually orbited by a cloud of high officials and privileged advisors and agents vying for their place in an array of much-coveted billets, the Reforms brought about their organization into a formal court and realigned their loyalty and culpability to the new authority of the Emperor. When a new Emperor was chosen, he was expected to give up his family name and titles and remove himself from the power structure of his house by bringing his closest relatives and aides to the palace. There, his companions and confidantes occupied only a small segment of the larger court, most of which was still filled by the allies of previous

sovereigns, their positions secure for life. Thus no one Emperor was able to sweep aside the policies of his predecessors without good cause or an unusually strong shift in the tides of politics, and the Empire's enduring internal stability over the intervening centuries is credited to this conservative practice.

While the Order of St Tetrimon was declared and then effectively destroyed as a national organization during the Reforms (although it would endure in some form and eventually regain a shade of importance much later on), other groups with similar power were created in its wake or granted new force with which to affect the affairs of the Empire. Over the following decades, the Theology Council took on many of the functions of the old Order, setting itself up as the ultimate administer of justice and the focus of the Amarr legal system. The priesthood became directly involved in the enforcement of law and arbitration of disputes, and while the Civic Court was created to provide those administrative functions to the plebian masses, attending to cases of minor crimes and tort, all matters of genuine judicial importance fell within the purview of the Theology Council. Theologians also assumed oversight of the reformed bureaucracy, once a behemoth dwarfing even its current scale and which had fractured into several divisions during the Reforms, among them the Ministries of Assessment, Internal Order, and War, the Imperial Trade Registry, and the Civil Service (formed from the core of the pre-Reform apparatus). Not long after the historical end of the Moral Reforms, the Empire had coalesced into a more centralized, more stable, and inarguably more powerful state: an invigorated giant that had by no means forsaken the mission of the Reclaiming.

Expansion resumed under the watch of several powerful Emperors, and the Amarrians reached out beyond the central stars of what we know today as the Domain region. New peoples were encountered, some were simpering primitives who knew nothing of electricity, let alone FTL travel, and who "cried out for education and salvation", and others were cultured and advanced peoples whose peculiarities inevitably offended the sensibilities of the newcomers' God and purchased for themselves swift conquest and a future of servitude. The Empire swelled and embraced new worlds by the dozen, but its progress was always methodical, exacting, and formulaic. It was more than four centuries before the explorers of the Imperial Navy discovered humans living on the barren world of Mishi IV deep in the Aridia cluster, who though few in number would prove to be a gainful addition to the Imperial populous, and longer still for scouts to detect the spacefaring civilization thriving in the distant Pator system, whose people would eventually change the face of the Empire forever.

Their absorption into the Amarr Empire occurred at roughly the same time, but the stories of the Ni-Kunni and Matari peoples are dramatically different. Natives of an arid terrestrial planet with a relatively small carrying capacity, the pre-contact Ni-Kunni were already a cautious, conservative society. Only through rigorous conservation and sheer determination could they even survive on their homeworld, and a peculiar spirituality probably not too dissimilar to that of the modern Intaki flourished within their clan-based civilization. Before the Amarrians arrived, the Ni-Kunni had little in the way of advanced technology, inheriting virtually nothing of the remnants from before the Fall, though out of necessity they had produced their own array of innovations for desert survival. None of which helped them, of course, repel the eventual descent of Imperial Navy dropships or the Khanid cyber knight shock troops that they disgorged upon the dusty surface of Mishi IV, extending the providence of God and the glory of the Emperor to yet another planet of yet another star.

Pator was another such sun with another such planet, but both hung in the firmament quite a bit farther from the heart of the Empire than Mishi. The planet Matar, fourth in orbit around Pator, is a terrestrial world with continental landmasses and plenty of water. Its diverse biosphere and varied geology surely made Matar an attractive candidate for colonization in



the ancient past, and its meandering archipelagos, rugged mountain chains, rolling desert hills, and vast oceans remain favored subjects of art, poetry, and mysticism. Richer still was the tapestry of human cultures that flourished on the planet, in the skies above it, and in budding interplanetary colonies on five of its neighboring worlds.

A long shadow fell over the youthful dynamism of the Pator system almost one thousand years ago in the old calendar year 22355 on a date remembered simply as the Day of Darkness. Six long-range expeditionary squadrons of the Imperial Navy descended upon the system, each surrounding a massive transport craft designed to carry human cargo. Though capable of interplanetary flight and able to deploy moderately advanced military vessels in their local space, the Minmatar were completely unprepared for the scale of the invasion force. Their space stations were obliterated and their ships swept aside as one of the massive Amarrian transports descended upon their homeworld and each its five colonies. No objectively accurate account of that first raid is possible as the records of the battles and events of that day are invariably spoiled by political necessity. What we know for certain is that millions of Matari were taken from their homes and secured aboard the Empire's transports and, along with hundreds of millions more over the following century, were transported to the Empire where they provided a new influx of forced labor. Unable to effectively resist, Pator was reduced to little more than a slave factory, periodically raided for fresh stock.

Both the Ni-Kunni and Matari home systems were subject to military occupation and their populations subsumed within the institution of Amarrian slavery. For the conservative and insular Ni-Kunni, these things were quickly perceived as a net boon. The savior Empire brought knowledge of and power over the universe as well as the more immediate benefit of liberation from the harshness of life on Mishi IV, all for the the low cost of the Ni-Kunni peoples' original cultural identities. To the Matari mind, already steeped in richer, more liberal cultural waters, the conquest was the truncation of their rise from a primitive civilization to a dynamic union of enlightened, spacefaring nations and nothing short of the attempted annihilation of their bountiful culture and its replacement by a stiff religious doctrine that was not and could never be their own. The Ni-Kunni embraced their future as Imperial subjects. In more than nine centuries, the Minmatar have never stopped resisting.

It is little wonder then that there remain few things in New Eden to which we can point and say that this or that is genuinely possessed of the Ni-Kunni spirit, but an endless pantheon of Matari ideas touch virtually every corner of the cluster. Over the intervening age, the Ni-Kunni population exploded and a majority of their descendants adapted well to the Imperial system, rising through the social strata such that today relatively few people who claim even partial Ni-Kunni ancestry are ranked as slaves. The majority of them exist somewhere between the indentured classes and the nobility, although some enterprising Ni-Kunni families have achieved their own semblance of power by amassing great material wealth, the only alternative source of influence in Imperial society to True Amarrian blood. The millstone of the Amarrian faith ground away at the soft substance of Ni-Kunni culture to produce a smooth, unblemished surface that has with time acquired its own certain luster. With the same force, the Amarr ground away at the volcanic pumice of Matari culture, but its edges have not relented to reveal a cooperative surface. Instead, while they have broken away chunks at a time, the remaining core has been rendered rougher and sharper than even its original form.

Matari strength and Matari defiance were for generations two sides of the same coin, equally valued and reviled by the Amarr. The Minmatar are a genetically diverse people, far more so than the descendants of any other surviving colony from before the Fall. They are generally healthier, more resilient to disease and cancers, and live longer lives than others, or at least

so was the evaluation of the Imperial medical experts who assessed their potential as a chattel race. Their vigor made them highly desirable in almost all forms of work, but also made them more difficult to keep in line. It was with the large-scale integration of the Matari peoples into the Empire's labor pool that the Amarrian quest for cheaper and more effective population control mechanisms truly began. When those mechanisms failed, as they of course did from time to time, the slaver response was rarely short of the full measure.

In the sixth century of the Minmatar enslavement, just over 400 years ago, an uprising planned and initiated by Matari slaves of the Starkmanir tribe succeeding in taking the life of the Imperial Heir of House Ardishapur. Before he was killed, by the cybernetic hand of the very Heir he mortally wounded, and his body dismembered, its seventeen pieces later distributed around Ardishapur space to be displayed as an example of the repercussions of treachery, Drupar Maak plunged the point of a scepter that was the sacred symbol of Arkon Ardishapur's authority and high office into the Heir's own neck. In his dying breaths, Drupar called to his fellows to rise and seize the opportunity. Rise they did, attempting to overthrow their Amarrian masters and taking the form of the scepter and the name of its wielder as a new symbol of resistance that remains part of the Matari zeitgeist to this day: the khumaak. Idonis Ardishapur, Arkon's son and shortly thereafter the newly-made Heir, saw their revolt and raised them genocide.

Starkman Prime, an Imperial world close to the Matari home system of Pator so named for the majority tribal identity of the people used to populate it, was burned. House Ardishapur warships evacuated their loyal elites and then scoured the planet from orbit with volley after volley of brilliant laser fire, indiscriminately targeting population centers where large groups of Starkmanir slaves had gathered to celebrate what they perceived as an Amarrian retreat and their pending emancipation. The Ardishapur family then embarked on a campaign of destruction, eradicating Starkmanir enclaves throughout their holdings and hunting down and erasing any remaining traces of the tribe's traditions. This ethnic cleansing marked the Ardishapur family almost as deeply as its fateful run in with Lady Phanca three hundred years prior that led to the practice of severing the right hand of all Ardishapur males and replacing them with robotic prosthetics. It marked the Minmatar deeper still, effectively excising one of their civilization's constituent members and brutally cauterizing the wound. Yet an entirely different royal house and an entirely different sort of defiance would make an even deeper impact on the Empire not one hundred years later.

Today there are five great noble houses that comprise the Amarr Empire: Ardishapur, Kador, Kor-Azor, Sarum, and Tash-Murkon. Each house is nominally led by a single person who holds the esteemed rank of Imperial Heir, and there are thus five such Heirs at any one time, in addition to the Emperor who leads the house of the Imperial family. Given that royal flesh is considered the sacred property of God and the Imperial Faith casts a strict taboo against life-saving cloning and brain state transfer, even these elites still sometimes slough off the mortal coil. When an Emperor dies, which can be a rare thing as modern cybernetics and biomedical science extend the natural lives of the very wealthy and powerful for several centuries, his successor will be chosen from among the five Heirs in a complicated and hallowed series of events known as the Succession Trials.

The Imperial throne is not normally a hereditary prize as the next Emperor invariably comes from among the small group of Imperial Heirs and only rarely is the chosen Heir a blood relative of the previous sovereign. While allowances are made to adapt them to the times and state of contemporary society, by law the Succession Trials consist of several weeks of arcane rituals that must be performed in a specific order and under particular conditions, the majority of which are designed to test each Heir's individual ability to lead the Empire. From the traditional perspective, this ability shows itself strongest in the Heir whose faith and

knowledge of the Scriptures is least flagging and whose loyalty and dedication to the Empire is least impeachable. Other tests include the ability of an Heir to select strong candidates for competition in theological rhetoric and mortal combat, the victors of such contests proving by their demonstrated excellence that which is implied to exist in their patron. At the conclusion of the Trials a victor is determined, and the remaining four Heirs are naturally expected to commit suicide.

Only twice since the Moral Reforms has this final measure of devotion, through which the Heirs who have failed to achieve the throne are permitted to ameliorate their shortfall and demonstrate their loyalty and subservience to the newly identified right hand of God, been cheated. One such time was quite recently indeed, and you have certainly heard of the "death" and sudden return five years later of Janyl Sarum, a topic for some discussion on its own. The other occasion was just over three hundred years ago, a century after the Starkmanir genocide, and it saw not only the breaching of this bloody tradition for the first time in its history but also the creation of a new power in the cluster. Originally, you see, the five great houses of Amarr did not include that of Tash-Murkon. In fact, they are a relatively late addition to the pantheon of lords who inherited the power and privilege of the early Privy Council. Before the ascension of Emperor Heideran VII of Kador, the Lord's Peace be upon him, the Imperial Heir of House Khanid determined that he "will not be ordered by some whimpering fool to destroy [himself] when [his] work is unfinished". Rather than committing ritual suicide, Lord Khanid, exercising his privilege as a military commander, absconded with one of only two titan-class vessels in the Imperial fleet and seceded from the Empire to form the Kingdom that bears his name.

The Khanid Kingdom. There is understandably a great deal of confusion over just who or what comprises the state that was born of King Khanid II's defiance. His Majesty is, of course, of True Amarrian blood, but the name of his great house and that of the nation it controls comes from the ethnic identity of the majority of his subjects. The region of space given over to colonization by various Khanid military and religious orders in the early centuries of the Empire's interstellar expansion were incorporated within the limits of a new fief established during the Moral Reforms. The ruling family of this newly defined region, being of military stock, took the name Khanid both as in recognition of their subjects' history and as a propaganda message. By that time the name was synonymous with the cybernetically-enhanced warrior traditions of the eponymous old Athran race and was throughout the Empire both respected and feared. Before its rebellion, House Khanid controlled a larger private fleet and army than any other family of similar stature and the Khanid Heir was the most senior officer in the Imperial Navy's chain of command save the Emperor himself. And at the moment of secession, of course, there was no Emperor.

Through steel then, both that to be found abounding in His Majesty's spine and in the structure of the ships he commanded, was the Kingdom born and through fire was it baptized. The Empire is a giant, but it is slow and tedious. The young Emperor Heideran VII and the four loyal houses would take years to settle in to their new roles, and the military, the loyalist segments of which were eager to punish the traitor Heir, was hamstrung by the defection of many of its senior commanders to Khanid's cause. Waging a proxy war was judged the best available strategy by the Privy Council, and the Empire quickly turned its attention and affections on Dakos Khanid, brother to the new King and steadfast servant of Amarr.

Civil war raged in the nascent Khanid state for months as Dakos led a well-coordinated military and political campaign against his brother. Hand-picked by the Empire as the de facto inheritor to the Khanid title and the man who would restore that great house within the Imperial fold, Dakos received men and materiel directly from Amarr's forces and presented a

serious challenge to the Kingdom's survival. Only through subterfuge and fratricide was the King able to overcome this early threat, having Dakos assassinated, reputedly at the hands of a shadowy Khanid mercenary organization known as the Mashtori. Though the Empire has several times in the intervening centuries attempted to bring the Kingdom low and reclaim its lost territory, only a few border systems have ever changed hands. The King's early and heavy investment in military research and development initiatives has kept His Majesty's forces competitive despite being dwarfed by their Imperial counterparts. Beneath this umbrella of advanced, black-hulled warships and the notorious ferocity of the men and women who crew them, the people of the Khanid Kingdom have developed a culture that, while founded on Amarrian ideals, is something quite distinct from its parent.

Class and caste dominate Khanid society just as they do the Amarr, and the Kingdom features both the small club of landed elites and the multitudes of impoverished slaves and indentured freemen that can be found in the Empire. Slavery, in fact, is taken to an even further degree in the Kingdom, where the traditional sources of Matari and Ealurian labor, the former by far the most popular and preferred in holder circles, were cut off for many decades after the secession. Kingdom elites have been known to take slaves wherever they can be found, even raiding one another's properties and enslaving ethnic Amarr, Ni-Kunni, Khanid, and other peoples. In addition to the slave economy, the entire model of law and government used in the Kingdom was lifted from the Imperial system wholesale, and one can find Khanid facsimiles of the Privy and Theology Councils working beneath the surface to keep the Kingdom running and reinforce the King's public image as a wise and beneficent suzerain.

Here the differences end, however, and it is well worth noting that despite its traditionalist underpinnings the Kingdom enjoys a much more dynamic society than the Empire. This is thanks to the King's willingness and, as many who live beyond the reach of His royal censors will attest, need to permit open business and trade with other nations. At first this meant striking secret deals with holders within the Empire sympathetic to the King and by approaching those minor powers on the periphery of Amarrian space that, like the Kingdom, found themselves on the wrong side of the Empire's judgment. Eventually, a century and a half after the Kingdom was founded, the Amarr (and very shortly thereafter the Khanid) made contact with the cluster's other superpower of that time, the young Gallente Federation. Through the Gallente the Empire and Kingdom learned of the Caldari State, then still reeling after its expulsion from Luminaire, but a capable interstellar nation in its own right. A short decade later the Jovian Directorate revealed itself to the cluster, sparking a brief panic in the Empire and a surge in isolationist politics among the Imperial elites. With the Amarrians looking inward, distrustful of people they could not readily conquer and absorb, King Khanid II found himself uniquely positioned in the cluster.

By transforming the Kingdom's economy in several increasingly bold and, in Amarrian history, unprecedented acts of liberalization, His Majesty became the gatekeeper to the vault of Amarrian wealth in a time when the Empire's suspicious conservatism kept rumors of its abundant riches inflated far beyond their real value. For almost twenty years His Majesty's halls were gilded with Caldari and Gallente money as the Kingdom extracted an endless variety of goods and information from beyond the so-called Imperial Veil and resold them to the foreigners at a heavy profit. All of this ended, or at least returned to a reasonable equilibrium, with the Gallente-Amarr Free Trade Agreement of 23210, but the Kingdom was forever changed. Foreigners, and especially Caldari interests, saw Khanid space as a place to do business, and the King has welcomed outsiders with open arms, especially when they are the sort willing and able to fatten His royal credit accounts, an example the Khanid people have been more than happy to follow. As a result, the Kingdom's culture has evolved into a fusion of several influences in the modern age, most prominently the Amarr and Caldari.

## The Hitchhiker's Guide to New Eden

How this blending of societies was made possible goes beyond merely the events of first contact between the empires or the trade policy choices of a single ruler. Technology advanced dramatically in the time since the Khanid Kingdom was founded, especially in areas directly impacting interstellar travel and communications, such that despite having more than double the known human population as well as the number of multi-constellation states on the map, the New Eden that saw the Khanid golden age of trade begin shortly after Amarr-Gallente first contact seemed far smaller than the cluster that witnessed the King's flight from the Empire only 140 years prior. Jump drives enabled capital ships to make the interstellar leap on their own power, rapidly increasing the pace of expansion and democratizing deep space colonization, while fluid routers, utilizing industrialized quantum-entangled materials, made immediate communication possible at any distance for those who could afford the bandwidth. It was in this context that the Khanid Kingdom brought together the elements of many nations to forge its own identity. And it was not long at all before another nation within the Amarrian sphere of influence attempted to do the same thing, but its means to that end took the form not of trade but of war, for there was no other option.

## Chapter 2

# A Brief History of the Minmatar

The birth of the modern Matari nation is not a subject that can be easily encapsulated let alone attributed to a single set of causes or assigned a simplified listing of effects. The event itself, made possible through the Patriotic War of Emancipation of 23216 (known widely as the "Great Slave Revolt" in the Empire or simply as the "Minmatar Rebellion" in most other media markets), occurred at the congruence of several major events in interstellar history, but its roots reach much farther back to the shape and characteristics of the technological civilization that emerged in the Pator system thousands of years prior. Amarrian occupation and enslavement brought dramatic changes to that culture, changes that figured profoundly in the political geography of the independent Minmatar Republic and inspired that new nation's staunchest defenders. In order to understand the Minmatar you must accept this context: that the people who today call themselves Matari and espouse the countless traditions and customs of the civilization so named, are themselves very different from the people who did so when the warships of Amarr descended on the Day of Darkness. They have been lashed to the wheel of servitude and their faces struck by the whip of indoctrination for so long that what they remember of their once proud society is distorted through a lens of time, sweat, and blood.

In order to see the politics clearly, you must grasp the history of the matter, specifically that pertaining to the star believed to once bear the bleak designation CMS-17 and the hospitable, even welcoming, planet in its orbit that we now call Matar. Settled like the other homeworlds of New Eden around fifteen thousand years ago, Matar was particularly well suited to human habitation. Genealogical cataloging has shown that the peoples who colonized the world in the distant past came from very diverse ethnic backgrounds and, it is proposed, constituted a wide sampling of several different cultures from ancient humanity. In a theme that recurs throughout the cluster, Matar's permissive environment, featuring a hydrosphere rich in liquid water as well as an active geology and mineral-rich crust, helped not only human life but also human civilization on Matar survive the Fall and endure the ensuing Dark Ages that followed.

For the Minmatar, that interim period of comparatively primitive existence lasted around ten millennia. Athra had been thriving, home to several distinct cultures and among them the Amarr, for two thousand years by the time the historical record shows us a similar level of development emerge on the Matari homeworld. It is quite commonplace in the modern cluster to view the ancient Minmatar societies as not too dissimilar from their current successor forms, and the particular brand of tribalism that is practiced in the Republic today is frequently portrayed as the direct cultural inheritance of pre-spaceflight Matar. By propagating the popular perception of this paradigm, however, we are merely prostrating ourselves before propaganda. In fact, the so-called tribal inheritance of the Minmatar is something of a modern fabrication, a retroactive continuity cleverly constructed by the founders of the Republic to bind the disparate children of Pator together using the mythology and symbolism found in an endless series of accounts of passionate liberation-minded patriots and their struggle against the Slaver during the centuries-long night of Amarrian occupation.

Ancient Matar was home to several distinct civilizations, each of which has been claimed by one of the great modern tribes as its progenitor. The steep mountainous regions and the

watersheds of the rivers that ran from them were home to a segmented society of city-states ruled by kings and princes taken to great games of intrigue and influence, the supposed ancestors of the Krusual tribe. The steppes and deserts gave birth to the nomadic (and later on, mercantile) civilization that became the Vherokior tribe. In the planet's vast network of tropical and temperate archipelagos, there was a strongman and shaman for every island, and therein flowed the blood and essence of the Brutor tribe. Biting winds and heavy seasonal snows scoured the faces of the northern peoples, ingenious survivalists, who are now recognized as the forefathers of the Sebiestor tribe. The lesser tribes too have periodically claimed they are the direct progeny of one ancient Matari civilization or another, such as the distinct peninsular culture believed to trace its descent to the Starkmanir or the maritime peoples that form an important part of the more popular Thukker origin stories.

In an academic sense these links are little more than fantasy, however, conveniently drawn for the purposes of creating the various national and tribal epics, most of which were passed from generation to generation orally until the birth of the Republic and revival of proper Minmatar literature, that kept alive the idea of a Matari people separate from and not subservient to the Amarr. They serve an important political and cultural purpose, but they are, if not blatantly unhistorical, liberal embellishments on the truth. The archaeological record shows that ancient Matar was home to at least five distinct contemporary populations that slowly developed into agricultural and metal-refining civilizations between five thousand and three thousand years ago. By 20374, the year of major simultaneous diplomatic missions between Matar's largest league of island states (antecedents of the Brutor) and its pair of great continental empires (the Krusual and Nefantar), each of these civilizations had become aware of one another and had theretofore resolved most of their disputes, the majority of those pertaining to territorial integrity, through violence and subterfuge. According to tradition, the delegations sent to the two primary land empires carried a message from the ruling council of the island states entreating them to seek a new concordance among their great powers with these words: "Across the four seas, all are brothers. In such a world, why do the waves rage, the winds roar?" An age of relative peace and prosperity followed.

Technology flourished during the next millennium as the Minmatar nations explored the entirety of their home planet and became more familiar with its, and their own, true place in the universe. Given the apparent speed with which some particular technologies emerged during this period of Matari history, it has been postulated that the Minmatar discovered and successfully reverse engineered relics left on their planet from before the Fall. Electricity, wireless communication, and powered atmospheric flight all make their first appearances during a brief ten year span of time, just thirty years before the inaugural Matari spaceflight in 21413.

By the time of that event, their world had also developed culturally. Pan-human ideologies overcame the lingering influences of racialism and nationalism to produce a global Minmatar civilization, led by a qualified demarchy of the most capable and respected individuals at each level of society, which valued diversity and accepted a breadth of cultural variation and dynamism within its fold. It was this multi-faceted, yet singular, polity that looked to the planets and moons of the Pator system and perhaps saw the possibility of other technologies waiting to be rediscovered, more wondrous still than those they had already found on Matar. If ancient tech did in fact give the Matari a boost into space, a theory that remains in contention and is still rejected by die-hard patriots of the Republic in favor of a version of history wherein the Minmatar developed entirely on their own initiative and genius, it must have also conveyed some knowledge of the feasibility of FTL and interstellar flight. Whatever the case, the Minmatar wasted little time in growing from a planetary into an interplanetary people, and as it would happen, into an interstellar society within a few hundred years.

All Matari spaceflight before the arrival of the Amarr would be considered relatively primitive by modern standards. For flights between planets in the Pator system, the Minmatar did not successfully develop faster-than-light drives of the sort we now take for granted (although there is significant evidence that their scientists were on the right track toward developing them), but rather adopted an alternative form of propulsion with the use of acceleration gates. Just now becoming widespread in New Eden as a means of opening so-called deadspace pockets to routine traffic, modern acceleration gate technology has its foundation in these ancient Matari devices. Once operational, the gates opened the Pator system to full-scale colonization, and the Minmatar had established a total of five major off-world colonies in their home system by 22000. The discovery of two ancient yet operational star gates at the edges of the Pator system carried them further still, and these star gates were being used for tentative interstellar exploration by the 22300's with several permanent outposts deployed on their far sides by the time of the Amarrian discovery of Pator and their subsequent invasion.

The Day of Darkness. As we have seen, the Amarrian assault on Pator in 22355 struck the Minmatar like a hammer blow aimed at their heart. Acceleration gates in Pator were obliterated along with most Matari spacecraft and orbital structures, severing the physical links between the colonies and cutting off all access to the deep space outposts. The Day of Darkness was followed by nearly a millennium of midnight in which Matari civilization would undergo such dramatic change as to be virtually unrecognizable when compared to its forbearer. Many aspects of Matari culture, however, including major linguistic elements, several distinct creative and martial arts, and a pantheon of spiritual traditions, survived the wholesale assault of Amarrian indoctrination. Their survival is most often attributed in modern Republican media to the sacrifice and diligence across dozens of generations by countless Matari patriots, yet other cultures subsumed by the Amarr Empire have been unable to achieve this feat despite boasting members equally dedicated to preserving their civilization's distinctiveness. A more likely explanation is that the Minmatar simply had more time to insulate their memetic heritage, both consciously and unconsciously, than most other Amarrian conquests.

Far removed from the core of the Amarr Empire, Pator escaped complete conquest for more than a century after the Day of Darkness. During that time, the Imperial Navy launched periodic raids to capture slave stock and harried Matar's much weakened planetary defenses to ensure their target population remained suppressed. While to the Empire the distance to Pator was a simple problem of logistics that would solve itself as their star gate network and long-range supply systems grew, for the Minmatar it was probably the single most important factor in the preservation of their civilization. The era between the first massive raid and the complete occupation of Matari space saw rapid militarization of the homeworld, also seen to a lesser extent on the then isolated off-world colonies, and a shift in the mindset of individual Minmatar from optimism and open-minded curiosity to a peculiar sort of grim suspicion that was at once toxic to the unity of contemporary Matari society and ultimately vital to its long-term endurance. Regional and local civil defense councils, organized in the demarchic tradition, gradually took on greater importance as the planetary and continental governments were disarmed and dismantled under pressure from the invaders and it was these councils that would be elevated to an almost mystical status in later centuries for their part in organizing the ever more desperate defense of Matar.

Infiltration of early Matari converts into centers of resistance and the assistance of collaborators facilitated Amarrian slave raiding of the Minmatar population in the century before full occupation. Thus perpetual fear of espionage and sabotage spread throughout the free Matari enclaves on the homeworld, many of which were hidden away in mountain redoubts, island rainforests, or, as in one notable case, a massive riverine cavern complex. It



was in these places in particular, their inhabitants perpetually under siege and largely cut off from one another in the latter decades of the so-called Raid Years, that some historians believe the precursors of the modern Matari tribes took shape amid an atmosphere of increasing uncertainty and radicalization.

These communities were insular and exclusive, just as one's tribal affiliation is today a distinction most often inherited rather than earned, and it is believed that complex means of identification were developed to protect against spies, possibly including dynamic tattooing, leading to the hallowed traditions of body art found in the Republic today. Toward the end, so grave was the danger faced by these communities, that a ruling of the civil defense council was taken as absolute, mirroring the weight and force of a tribal council decision in present-day Matari politics. Still, while recognizing such connections as plausible, many experts refute the existence of direct links between modern tribal traditions and these ancient fortress states. It is widely believed among Republican scholars, however, that the leaders of these communities were aware of Amarrian intentions to incorporate their people within Imperial society and subsume their culture and that they initiated programs of "clandestine cultural preservation" to codify and conceal the core aspects of the Matari identity in a way that they might endure such an assault even over several centuries. And endure they did, emerging after almost a millennium as the Seven Tribes of Matar.

Today the Republic formally consists of four major tribes and political blocs: the Brutor, Sebiestor, Krusual, and Vherokior. Three others: the Starkmanir, Nefantar, and Thukker; though numbered among the main group in the classical interpretation of Matari tribal structure, exist apart from or under the limited protection of these four. There has been much attention paid, particularly by the anthropologists of Caille and revisionary ethnohistorians of Hedion, to the problem of defining the Matari tribal concept. In an etymological sense, the names of the major tribes have been shown to derive from the words for "people" used in several distinct pre-conquest Matari languages, although in the case of the Sebiestor the original meaning is closer to "true people" or "real people". In that each follows its own traditions, administers its own territory, and is able to enact laws that affect only its own members within the broader Republic, the notion of tribe is closer to that of a nation or civilization, and yet it tends to evade definition by those terms upon closer inspection. Perhaps the best answer yet proffered comes from a Matari source, the first president of the Republic University, who explained: "No tribe is a singular or parochial thing. They are vast, fluid, and heterogeneous. Any attempt to define them in an academic sense will always cause you to lose sight of the totality of the thing. To define a tribe is like trying to catch the wind in a bottle."

Genetics and race, however, were the measures by which the Amarrians defined the various peoples of Matar, and their groupings and the stereotypes that developed from them still roughly correspond to the seven main tribes: the stocky and diligent Brutor suited to hard labor ("the fierce") and the slight yet crafty Sebiestor suited to mental tasks ("the sinister"), for example. That the tribes, which are recognized as a positive force in Matari society thanks to the organization and continuity they impart, took on the aspects of fundamental social identity and organization during the Minmatar enslavement rather than before, they have been occasionally portrayed in the Imperial media as the by-products of Amarrian attempts to "enlighten" captive peoples. Some sources go as far as to claim that the tribal identities were knowingly shaped by Minmatar leaders loyal to the Empire as one of the early attempts at improving control over the huge Minmatar slave population. Although the tribes became rallying points for resistance in later centuries, contradicting such theories *prima facie*, Imperial scholars of Matari history (typically grouped within the broader field of Reclamation Studies), particularly among the Nefantar, cling to this version of events. Whatever the case, the quest for greater control over the Minmatar quickly grew in

importance for Amarrian holders after the complete conquest of Pator in 22480 and the wholesale capture of Matar's remaining holdouts.

By the second century of Matari enslavement, when their homeworld finally succumbed, several hundred million Minmatar had been forced into servitude. While many were brought into the Empire's core to supplement and expand the labor pool, a great many other became part of an aggressive campaign of expansion in the regions of space surrounding Pator. Many newfound worlds along the Imperial periphery in constellations that today fall within the borders of Heimatar, Metropolis, and Molden Heath were settled using Matari slaves as a majority of their colonists. Enterprising upstart holder families, unable to find space within the densely packed Domain region or unwilling to submit their dignity to the lordship of one of the great houses took to this wilderness readily, claiming planets (and, so they hoped, their fortunes) and settling them with abundant and locally available Minmatar. In this way the Amarrians did more for the growth of the Matari people as an interstellar civilization than the Minmatar themselves had previously managed. That is not to say, however, that the Minmatar appreciated the terms of such assistance (to use a term commonly chosen by Imperial scholars to portray these forces colonizations, often of planets with less than hospitable environments).

Rumors of secret organizations dedicated to resisting the Empire even after the complete collapse of Matar, an inherent resistance among the captive masses to their forced indoctrination in the Imperial faith, and isolated but intensely violent cases of open revolt dogged Amarrian holders. Simultaneously, Minmatar slaves were highly valued as excellent workers that learned quickly and could be adapted to nearly any task, provided their spirits could be sufficiently broken or turned. To reconcile the usefulness of the Minmatar with their independence of spirit, the Amarrians aggressively researched new means of population control and many theories were tested.

Physical violence and the threat of such was the classic means of slave control in the Empire during the period of the Second Great Reclaiming. As a deterrent, raw force had been sufficient to subdue and manage the Ealurians, the Ni-Kunni, and many other peoples long enough to stamp out rebellious urges and blend them into the Amarrian mainstream. With the Minmatar, these methods were only partially effective, probably owing to the militarization and emotional hardening they underwent during the slow and painful fall of Matar. When overused this system of institutional bullying, corporal punishment, and magnified reprisal violence typically resulted in turning whole groups of Matari slaves from reluctant and disgruntled servants into active rebels. Entire crops were lost.

While discussing this matter such turns of phrase may seem callous or insensitive, but you must remember that the Amarr did not consider their slaves to be fully human, and in many parts of the Empire that worldview still holds. Only through generations of service could a slave's family rise to a level worthy of being called "people". Accordingly, you are likely to consider many of the slave control methods developed by the Amarr in the last several centuries to be morally questionable. Understand that to the faithful and loyal servants of the Empire who developed them, these techniques were merely sound business practices or topics of genuine scientific interest, carried out within the context of the religious imperative to "save" and "uplift" conquered peoples. That they have had an indelible impact on the character of the Minmatar civilization and affect interstellar politics to this day, we must, however, give them a proper treatment.

Early on, the Amarr, ever hungry for new answers to the question of human endurance, longevity, and the potential for biological immortality, began large-scale experimentation on Matari slaves to test their capabilities and limits. These experiments were part of the larger

Human Endurance Program and they were as comprehensive and exhaustive as they were morally objectionable. Matari slaves were thrown into every imaginable situation of physical and emotional stress and forced to overcome these hardships under close medical scrutiny. Almost always, these tests were taken to their fatal conclusions in order to validate the limits of body and mind. Subjects were exposed to various toxins to evaluate their ability to metabolize poison. Others were made to undergo rigorous physical trials in order to save the life of a loved one (in a scenario that was designed to ultimately result in failure) in order to test the subject's "strength of spiritual resolve". More gruesome still, countless subjects endured amputations, vivisections, and lobotomies followed by cybernetic implantation in order to determine the effectiveness of new implant designs. As a result of the tests, the Minmatar were categorized as one of the "martial races" by the project managers and the Amarr military took notice.

Kameiras. Routinely unable to train and indoctrinate adult Minmatar for military use to an acceptable degree and in the desired quantity, the Imperial Navy initiated the Kameiras program to acquire potential soldiers from among the very youngest Minmatar available: unborn babies. Careful genetic screening and selection, resulting in the unceremonious abortion of pregnancies that fell below the standard, provided the Navy with healthy recruits who could be trained from the earliest possible point. Tutored from the age of six after a brief childhood under the watchful eyes of Amarrian nuns, these children underwent the rigors of physical training and indoctrination in the Imperial faith in a Subigo House. Entering operational units at the age of nineteen, the Kameiras were highly efficient killers on the battlefield and quickly developed a reputation for being notorious die-hards. Kameiras units remain active in the modern Imperial military and they are considered among the most effective and deadly infantry formations in the cluster, fighting viciously in defense of God and Emperor, often against fellow Minmatar.

Matari slaves were exceedingly popular in the Amarr industrial sector as well, and their use in huge numbers inadvertently led to the diaspora of a peculiar and now ubiquitous species of animal known as the slaver hound, a native of the planet Syrikos V. The immense plantations of that world have been controlled by a small group of wealthy holder families for at least one thousand years. Like several other agricultural worlds in the Empire that benefit from water-rich ecosystems and naturally arable soil, Syrikos V serves as a breadbasket for other more diversified Amarrian communities, and its farms are largely operated by manual labor in primitive conditions using the most ancient conceivable techniques. Syrikos V's holders import hundreds of thousands of slaves annually, and the world's total population is measuring in hundreds of millions. Most of the world's slaves live in open farming communities clustered around fortified cathedral-strongholds that are home to the holders and ecclesiastic administrators of the planet.

After Matari labor became widely available around 800 years ago, the slave population of Syrikos V grew so fast that neither an increase in the number of Imperial garrison soldiers and staff nor the more scientifically advanced methods of control that were just then becoming available were considered cost effective. The planet's holders turned to the native fauna as a cheaper solution. In much the same way as foreign predatory animals are unleashed in a region overrun by a nuisance species, slaver hounds were bred and domesticated in large numbers to corral and control the planet's huge population of forced laborers. Standing more than a meter in height, the animal has a carnivore's physiology and aggressive attitude, and as both an augmentation to the battalions of plantation guards and as free-roaming packs, slaver hounds quickly gained a reputation for violent savagery among the Minmatar on Syrikos V. The species' success in this role earned it the name "slaver" and it has since been exported for use throughout the Empire and beyond, where the slaver hound remains an icon of the long and continuing enslavement of Minmatar in New Eden.

When coercion, deprivation, and indoctrination failed as methods of control, the Amarrian response was typically quite brutal. As we have already seen, the rebellious plot of Drupar Maak and his co-conspirators some four centuries ago led to the almost complete eradication of the Starkmanir tribe as an answer for the slaying of Imperial Heir Arkon Ardishapur. The cinders of Starkman Prime smolder to this day as bleak testament to the bloody resolve of the Amarrian elites in the face of such defiance from their subjects. The Arzad Uprising, as the brief rebellion Drupar Maak initiated in 22947 is known in the Republic, resulted in more than the extreme pogrom against the Starkmanir, however, it also triggered a renewed interest in using the genetic and chemical sciences to bring captive populations in line.

Vitoc. There is an almost universal confusion in the mass media about the nature and history of the Vitoc method, especially in wake of the events of 10.06YC110. As the most successful and arguably the most morally-questionable means of controlling slave populations, Vitoc understandably fires the passions of commentators and patriots on both sides of the Amarr-Minmatar border and it is a topic of study and debate found in virtually every entry-level philosophy course in the cluster. Putting aside the rhetoric, let us endeavor simply to understand the subject. Vitoc is actually an ameliorative compound, an antidote in other words, that forestalls the debilitating and eventually fatal effects of an engineered toxic chemical substance known as Vitoxin. After Vitoxin is introduced to the body it produces no negative or uncomfortable symptoms for approximately 12 hours, and a regular dose of the Vitoc antidote will stave off the poison's effects indefinitely. If untreated, a human poisoned with Vitoxin will begin to experience joint discomfort (called the "aches"), muscle spasms (the "shakes"), light-sensitive pain concentrated in the eyes similar to a migraine (the "burns"), sensory hallucination and a loss of balance (the "turns"), and eventually respiratory distress and cardiac failure resulting in death. Compared to other ways in which Matari slaves were sometimes tortured and killed (often publically), death by Vitoxin, despite what may seem like a very unpleasant passing, has sometimes been called "peaceful".

Nevertheless, most Minmatar enslaved in the Empire were not suicidal and the Vitoc method was found to be quite effective in keeping groups of slaves in line during its first large-scale trials held several centuries ago. Shortly thereafter, the Imperial Navy, seeing an expanded application for the Matari and other slave races, began experimenting with starships crewed by slaves under the influence of Vitoc. When the program proved to be a success, despite the occasional crew who rebelled and chose to die en masse rather than continue to serve their oppressors, the Vitoc method found its way into widespread civilian use. Outlaw laboratories occasionally produced a cure for Vitoxin (you must remember that Vitoc only forestalls the effects of the poison rather than curing it), but each time the Empire's scientists reformulated their compounds, and the method remained effective for several centuries.

Until the modern age, the Vitoc method remained the most advanced form of population control adopted in the Empire. Using the drug together with the classic techniques of comprehensive physical security, the promise of violent reprisal, and collaborator assistance, the Amarrians finally brought the Minmatar to heel around two hundred years ago. A significant decline in cases of outright revolt and the rise of converted Imperial loyalist families among the Matari led to a span of several decades remembered among the provincial holders and slave industry magnates as the Quiet Years. Among the Minmatar this was a dread hour when it seemed that their cherished distinctiveness might ultimately be lost. In light of all that came after, however, the Amarrian term for those few decades of relative calm has become something of a joke, and the heirs of those holders who coined it are now quite likely to respond to any mention of that time with the sentiment: "Things aren't how they used to be." In 23180 the Gallente Federation, all the more liberal for having just endured a period of domestic hyperconservatism that led them into a bloody civil war, made first contact with the Amarr, and they were far from accepting of what they discovered.

## Chapter 3

# A Brief History of Luminaire

Most often painted in the polarizing hues of the almost century-long armed conflict called the Gallente-Caldari War (also known as the War of Independence in the State or simply the Great War in the Federation), the histories of the Gallente and Caldari peoples are widely portrayed as two separate topics that touch only under the terms of controversy, competition, and conflict. Yet the story of the Federation and the State and the people who forged and shaped those great nations leads us invariably back to a single star system and a time, centuries hence, when their ancestors rose from barbarous simplicity to achieve greatness through cooperation beneath the light of the same sun. Luminaire, a medium sequence yellow-white star designated VH-451 in ancient pre-Fall star charts, shone down for millennia on the children of Raata and Rouvenor alike. Any genuine appreciation for their descendants and the power they wield in present-day New Eden must likewise derive from a fusion of perspectives that allows us to shed a singular illuminating light on their shared heritage.

Like the other homeworlds of New Eden's great nations, Gallente Prime and Caldari Prime were first settled by humans around 15,000 years ago. Although archaeologists on both sides of the divide have over the years brought forward evidence supporting that one or the other of the two planets was settled first, the historical record holds no conclusive proof for either world having such precedence. With the sudden calamity of the Fall coming within one hundred years of their colonization, the ancient residents of Luminaire were hard-pressed and yet both groups survived in a unique case in the cluster of multiple colonies in the same star system successfully enduring the deprivations and regression of the Dark Ages. Yet each did so in their own way, owing much to the differences in the environments of Gallente Prime and Caldari Prime themselves.

Gallente Prime is classified as a hybrid planet, straddling the more common categories of temperate continental and temperate oceanic worlds. Its geography is dominated by a tremendous global ocean, sprinkled with more than a million tiny islands in several hundred archipelagos and interrupted only by the few large islands that pass for continents in the local sense. Much of Gallente Prime's habitable landmass sits in its tropical and equatorial regions and the population is therefore exposed to relatively warm year-round weather and only mild seasonal shifts. While storm systems can develop to extreme sizes and severity, prevailing winds usually carry them away from the major islands and their intensity is now mitigated by modern weather manipulation. Active volcanism not only brings new islands into being, but also ensures that most of Gallente Prime's dry land is rich in minerals and nutrients for supporting plant life, and the fossil record indicates that chlorophyllic flora were introduced to the planet contemporaneously to the initial human habitation and then rapidly spread by natural means. Given these conditions, it is little wonder that the Gallente homeworld is portrayed as something of a paradise.

Caldari Prime, by contrast, is often depicted as a frozen wasteland. Sitting much farther out from Luminaire than the Gallente homeworld, Caldari Prime receives significantly less solar energy, although it is warm enough for liquid water to exist on the surface in its equatorial zones. Its axial tilt is also relatively greater, meaning the changes between seasons are exaggerated such that the relatively mild summer is contrasted with an intense and deadly winter. Snowfall and melt is quite limited however, as the planet's hydrology supports only localized precipitation in the area of Caldari Prime's small seas and lakes: the only regions

that are affected by the formation of rivers. Much of the planet is defined by huge expanses of tundra interrupted by craggy, unworn mountains and ravines, largely free from the effects of erosion by water, and relatively young evergreen forests. Before the age of space flight and the importation of new species, Caldari Prime was also deficient in terms of plant life, greatly limiting early agriculture. In one peculiar case, however, Caldari digestion seems to have adapted to overcome this problem as ethnic Caldari are able to consume the fruit and extract of the kresh tree, a plant that is normally poisonous to non-natives. In general, the tough conditions on the planet have led many to speculate that it was not suited to unassisted (so-called "shirt sleeves") habitation when it was originally settled, and the breathable atmosphere and "warm" temperatures known today came into being only several centuries after colonization as the product of ancient (and probably) automated terraforming.

At first glance these conditions should have presumably led to a delayed emergence of advanced civilization on Caldari Prime as compared to Gallente Prime, the former's settlers having been subject to particularly difficult challenges. In fact, the opposite happened, and while there is no definitive answer as to why human society on Caldari Prime reached the level of large-scale organization that it did much earlier than on its sister world, many theories exist. The bleak and often dangerous conditions of the Caldari homeworld required that communities remain close, their members depend on one another completely, and that the people accept some form of rationing and population control lest they literally out-breed their meager resources. These effects, it is postulated, helped ensure the preservation of pre-Fall knowledge that might otherwise have diffused over the planet's surface and encouraged organization and education in order to train and enforce the rules by which all survivors had to abide. Other possibilities include the preservation of advanced tech from the colonization era or ingrained cultural concepts from a long-forgotten ancestral society that resembled those that have developed in some modern deep space and hostile planetary colonies in New Eden. Whatever the causes, around six thousand years ago the first complex society, called Raata, emerged on Caldari Prime.

The Raata Empire. Formed, according to tradition, by the union of seventeen and twenty-three houses (possibly a reference to lines of descent or separate settlements that existed in the region dominated by the Kaalakiota Mountains), the foundations of Raata society were composed primarily of the K'vire and Deteaas peoples and members of the cultures that existed along their edges. Though modern literature tends to take a great deal of myth and allegory (such as the Raate national epic of Cold Wind) for approximate historical fact despite the exaggeration and distortion inherent in such accounts, archaeological records back up the concept of an expansionist civilization that split and which was later reunited in war with the inclusion of the Fuukiuye and Oryioni peoples. In some sources, the Raata Empire is thus referred to as Raata-Oryioni, indicating the extent of its influence both south and east of the Kaalakiota by the time of the Empire's official establishment in 17453.

Like the smaller nations that would inherit its legacy and in some ways resembling elements of the Caldari civilization of today, the Raata Empire was highly collectivist and decentralized. After the Cathura Rebellion, a two-year civil war that began in 17670 and led to sweeping reforms and deprivations under the terms of the peace agreement that ended it, no one person ruled the Raata and there was very little difference in the quality of life enjoyed by the Empire's leaders from that experienced by the common worker or farmer. In most places there seems to have been no proper leadership class at all, and decisions were made by ad-hoc groupings of citizens that disbanded as soon as the point of policy or dispute had been settled. Jurisprudence in the Empire took an inquisitorial rather than prosecutorial tack and was formulated under the Raata Code, a legal system that mandates a neutral agency that has the freedom to determine the facts of a case to the best possible degree of clarity (the facts then presumably speaking for themselves) rather than pitting parties against one

another as in the accuser-defender model. The Raata Code was well preserved and its style of justice endures as the foundation of the Caldari Business Tribunal, the ultimate judicial body of the State.

Stability was a hallmark of the Raata period for those who living within the Empire's borders. The conditions on the planet were not much easier than they had been during the millennia before, but the Empire gave shape and security to a culture that was well adapted to such rigors. Raata society progressed from rather primitive standards of subsistence agriculture and unorganized hearth traditions to a markedly advanced state during its long existence of more than three thousand years. The late Raata featured large cities supported by carefully constructed and maintain irrigation works that also fed a hinterland of herb farms and orchards, a body of complex and spirited literature and theater, and potent naval technology that enabled it to command the all-important equatorial seas and waterways that did not freeze over in Caldari Prime's harsh winters. Its success played a direct role in the Empire's eventual downfall, and when the end came, the Raata expired with nary a whimper. As its constituent cities and regions grew and took control of the harsh land, becoming centers of power in their own right, the old Imperial paradigm was simply obsolesced. While its name and symbolism would be inherited by smaller states in the Kaalakiota region, by 20998 the Raata as an all-encompassing institution was no more.

Whereas collectivism, conservation, and a willingness to sacrifice in the lean times were the hallmarks of early Caldari civilization and produced a small but stable and cohesive society, on Gallente Prime the opposite prevailed. All of the major continental land masses and tens of thousands of islands on that world were settled and became home to an endless parade of short-ranged nautical cultures during the Dark Ages. Because of its bouyancy, wood and especially the forests of larger, older trees that became more abundant after the first few millennia had a value higher than any precious metal or mineral in ancient Gallente society. For this reason and for their distinctive mode of transport, the early island societies of Gallente Prime (usually a different culture for every island) are known to historians as the Forest Peoples or the Canoe Peoples, commonly described as tree-worshippers. The individual tribes and even the occasional hegemonies that emerged during Gallente pre-history are far too numerous to treat in detail. Most scholars point to the use of longer and larger sea-going ships and the rise of agricultural, metal-using polities on the island-continents as marking the rise of advanced civilization on Gallente Prime.

Garoun is the largest such continent, and in 21656 (more than six hundred years after the last vestiges of the Raata Empire were swept away on Caldari Prime), a single man rose to rule all of its territory. Doule dos Rouvenor united the entirety of the continent and various island chains in its vicinity to create the Kingdom of Garoun, and as a student of the progressive philosophies that had emerged in the centuries preceding this achievement, his reign would be defined by great cultural and technological progress. Rouvenor sought to mark his reign with large-scale public works projects and he ordered the construction of new bridges larger than any before to span the short distances between the many islands off Garoun's coasts. The so-called "Caisson Culture" of organized labor, its birth and vitality an important milestone in the development of the ideas of citizenship and worker's rights among the Gallente, is believed to have gotten its start among the engineers and laborers who built those spans.

By the time Doule dos Rouvenor III (the king's grandson) took the throne almost six decades later, so great were the nation's accomplishments that all hailed the proclamation of a Garoun Empire that was to lead the world into a new age of enlightenment, properly called the Age of Rouvenor, of course. As a place where all men could gather and study the natural world, the human mind, and the moral imperatives of the universe without fear of persecution or

ensorship, the Garoun Empire became a center for scientific learning. Men looked to the stars and wondered at the complex interactions of their planet's many moons. Art and music also flourished under the reign of the Rouvenor Dynasty as playwrights and composers competed to better entertain the masses and the aristocracy alike, exploring new formats for presenting their fruits of their creativity and pushing back the boundaries of social taboos with both drama and comedy. Indeed, many were the bounties of Garoun during its golden age, and the Rouvenor crown boasted every advantage save one.

Military strength on an ocean planet like Gallente Prime derives from command of the seas. As it was primarily a continental power, the Garoun Empire's leadership lost touch with their nautical roots after only a few generations and the more aggressive though smaller nations took notice. Under pressure from a coalition of opportunistic island lords and pirates who had realized the combat applications of many of the Empire's innovations (the king's famous fireworks displays used primitive rockets that his admirals apparently never thought of aiming horizontally, for example), the Garoun Empire fractured in 21837 after its navy was crushed in three back-to-back battles. Its king was rendered impotent and the various barons and dukes of Garoun went their separate ways. Yet the glorious days of the Age of Rouvenor were not forgotten and each smaller court eventually became a focus for a newfound spirit of exploration and competitive research as one lord constant sought to out-discover or out-invent his neighbors for economic or military advantage. In the centuries that followed, men and women of adventure, science, and philosophy became commodities that were jealously cultivated by the inheritors of Garoun nobility.

With the invention of the simple refracting telescope by a now nameless eyeglass maker from Caille, created according to legend for the purpose of observing a love interest from afar rather than astronomical study or battlefield use, the Gallenteans would not only greatly expanded their knowledge of the heavens but fundamentally change the way they thought about themselves. In 22463, irrefutable evidence of an advanced civilization on the seventh planet of Luminaire was revealed to the people of the sixth. Although there was no known way to communicate at such a distance (long-range wireless communications, while known to the Caldari but rarely utilized, were still in their infancy on Gallente Prime), the discovery and knowledge that they were not alone in the universe left a deep imprint on the Gallentean mind. The literary genre of science fiction experienced a sudden explosion as Gallenteans imagined panoply of different alien races living on the worlds of their solar system and even beyond. Possessed by what contemporary media called "space fever", several nations, having already developed powered atmospheric flight, redoubled their investment in aerospace sciences and a new imperative for global cooperation was heralded by Gallentean leaders.

The next century and a half was in many ways the realization of the dreams the Gallenteans had imagined for themselves shortly after discovering the civilization that they would come to know as the Caldari. For the Caldari, it was an age of one unexpected and uninvited turn after another, to which they adapted skillfully if reluctantly. In 22517, contact was made between representatives of the Gallente global space flight agency and a Caldari farmer, who spent his free hours as a radio hobbyist and whose transmissions served as a beacon toward which the first Gallente landing craft to arrive on another world descended. Benefiting from knowledge gained through sporadic Caldari transmissions deciphered over many years, the leader of the Gallente landing party, a handsome, decorated military officer selected for his diplomatic talents as much as his impressive physique, attempted to say, "We are humans. We come in peace. Take me to your leader." The Caldari brewed him some tea and, presuming they were stranded, explained that if the newcomers wished, he could convene a community council and see what resources were available to help get their flying machine aloft again. It was the first in a great and storied history of miscommunications.



That is not to say that every interaction between Caldari and Gallente in those early years was misdirected. In fact, the people of both worlds quickly came to the understanding that they were very much of the same species. Intermarriage, or at least intimate relations, between natives of Gallente Prime and Caldari Prime was recorded as early as 22520 and children of mixed heritage soon followed, born into a universe where the people of either planet could speak to one another readily and travel between their two worlds with increasingly regularity. The Caldari learned that they were not alone in the universe and the Gallente learned that Caldari Prime was home to examples of very advanced ancient technology whose quantity far exceeded that left on their own world. Puzzles left by ancient pre-Fall tech on Gallente Prime could at last be solved when they were matched with corresponding Caldari relics. The greatest such mystery was that of faster-than-light travel and the use of man-made singularities for extremely rapid interstellar jumps. By the mid-22500s, the people of Luminaire had theorized (correctly) the basic structure of wormhole-generating star gates (although they did not benefit from an intact example as did the Amarr or Minmatar) and by 22588 the first joint project to build one was well underway.

Caldari culture experienced unprecedented transformation after contact with the Gallente, much of it of the assimilative variety as the Caldari found their world dramatically altered by the advent of space travel and high speed information flow. The Gallenteans of that era were quick to presume that because they had "discovered" the Caldari and were far and away the leading figures in joint space flight research and exploration in the early days (owing more to the abundant resources and wealth of Gallente Prime than to any real intellectual advantage), that their society was naturally superior. Many Caldari seemed to agree, at least through their passivity to such assertions, as the concepts of conspicuous consumerism, the lifestyle of abundance, and democratic ideals of individuality and unlimited personal freedom were allowed to seep into the Caldari zeitgeist, theretofore a brilliant example of a specialized, isolationist cooperative that celebrated efficiency and contemplation and made a taboo of waste, indulgence, and independence.

Thus the old philosophy of "no more than one's share" and the ideas of the tightly-regulated autarkies that made up Caldari civilization in the pre-contact era began to give way to the culture of "as much as you desire" and the economics of laissez-faire. The cultural influence of the Gallente in Caldari life increased even more with the arrival of a massive delegation of predatory Gallente corporations on Caldari Prime in 22631 that referred to itself euphemistically as the "Cultural Deliverance Society". The "Society" saw their Caldari neighbors as a great untapped reservoir of customers and took advantage of a newly-signed treaty that rolled back restrictions on investment in the Caldari home markets by outside groups to set up their operations. As one contemporary Caldari source explained of the so-called deliverance, "They bring many things we are told we want, but nothing that we know we need." In the wake of these corporations, Gallente activist organizations of various flavors also made the leap to Caldari Prime, intent on "saving" the natives from poverty (mistaking asceticism for lack of wealth), or from themselves (mistaking cultural distinctiveness for backwardness), or from Caldari Prime (mistaking their harsh native land for an undesirable prison), or from any other conceivable political or cultural danger.

Likely the greatest and longest-lasting impact the infusion of Gallentean ideas had on Caldari civilization during this period was the introduction of the concept of the modern corporation. The Caldari, of course, had their own models for commercial cooperation, but these more closely resembled the structure of a guild or mutual insurance society than an organized body of people working together for mutual profit (or the profit of the body's leaders). In 22684, more than six and half centuries ago, the first Caldari corporation of the new style—Isuuaya—was founded on Caldari Prime. In later centuries it would be remembered as the forefather of all great corporations of the Caldari model.

Gallente society also underwent changes during the early decades of spaceflight and was no less influenced by foreign ideas than were the Caldari. Global institutions were gaining power on Gallente Prime just as unfettered, semi-direct democracy by a highly-educated populace became possible for the first time. As a result, the people of many Gallente nations pressed for reforms. In some places where the legacy left by the Garoun Empire was an aristocracy that clung to monarchic power, governments were toppled or recast as constitutional rather than autocratic duchies. Elsewhere, the trend toward political and economic conglomeration and a rejection of the warfare that plagued the post-Garoun world led to the birth of new multinational power structures, established in the spirit of universal peace and prosperity, culminating with the creation of a global representative council that would serve as a model for the Federal Senate in centuries to come.

Amid this atmosphere of continuous change and adaptation on both worlds, the people of Luminaire took to the stars. While the construction of the first few star gates branching out from their home system was financed and managed by government agencies, this soon became a field in which private actors could also participate. New Caldari corporations and Gallente interests alike saw their destinies written in the heavens, and the space industries of both home worlds took off in earnest with the realization that they were nearing their maximum carrying capacities as a still-growing population overran even Gallente Prime's abundant resources and the influence of consumerism combined with the opportunities of importation and off-world colonization made the old paradigm of staunch conservatism less popular on Caldari Prime. So they built new star gates at a furious pace and boldly went out into the void, exploring in their travels strange new worlds and finding new life and new civilizations.

Intaki is visible from Gallente Prime as a brilliant red star. The Gallente deep space exploration ship *Sojourner* finally entered Intaki's gravitational influence in 22794, some two centuries after the framework for the first star gate out of Luminaire was put in place, and upon closer inspection its crew discovered that the bright red sun had in fact, for all the years Gallente mystics and astronomers wondered at it, been shining down on a thriving human society. Shortly after entering orbit above Intaki's fifth planet, a huge terrestrial world whose equatorial zones are scorched by intense heat but which supports teeming jungles and warm seas in its northern and southern extremes, the *Sojourner* dispatched landing parties to its surface. There they found a large and vibrant pre-industrial society that greeted them with surprise, curiosity, and (happily) rather little hostility. A contemporary Intaki source described the Gallentean-Caldari crew of the *Sojourner* as they demonstrated their technologies to an Intaki religious leader: "Though they brought many wondrous things among their gifts as well as steel as light as paper and marvelous alien fabrics, the Idama regarded their long journey, in the accomplishment of which they had spent four years, as the greatest tribute which they rendered, and indeed their complexion proved that they came from beneath another sky."

Discovery of the Intaki people, an extrasolar civilization as old as those of the Luminaire system, was hailed as the greatest event of the previous thousand years. What shocked everyone then was the subsequent discovery of the equally large and vibrant Mannar civilization fifteen years later in 22809. Suddenly every star in the sky was seen as the potential home system of a new human race. The pace of exploration redoubled (facilitated by the development of the modern intrasystem warp drive by the Sotiyo-Urbaata Conglomerate in 22821) and new ideas about the nature and destiny of humankind began to take hold among the Gallenteans in particular, whose plutocrats were, as ever, all too happy to extend "cultural deliverance" to these newfound markets. In this context, the Intaki and Mannar societies began the long process of globalization, economic unification, and technological and political revolution that were part and parcel of being discovered and

routinely visited by "aliens". Meanwhile, all that was peculiar about these newfound peoples became popular in mainstream Gallente society, and over the following centuries the three civilizations would blend to an extent never seen between the Gallente and their Caldari cousins.

Unrestricted exploration and settlement was the hallmark of that era in space flight. Whereas in the Amarr Empire, expansion into new star systems was limited to one system at a time and was tightly controlled by the Imperial bureaucracy, the Luminaire diaspora took place everywhere at once and with little or no centralized control. People took to space and founded new colonies for any one of countless reasons: Caldari exiles and corporate investors, Gallentean cultists and defiant monarchists, ideologues and dreamers, soldiers and artists. The Intaki and Mannar too soon began their own exploration and colonization efforts with the Intaki being particularly quick to embrace space technology after the 22900s, settling many worlds in the modern day Placid region.

As adventurous spirits pushed back the boundaries of deep space, philosophers and academics made a reverse journey to new foci of scholarship. Paramount among these in a historical sense, although by no means particularly superior academically, was the University of Caille in the great Garoun metropolitan district of the same name on Gallente Prime. Caille rose as a beacon of progressive thought and a leader in liberal arts, linguistics, and political education in the early 23000s, and much like today, one could find representatives of all races, creeds, and backgrounds walking the gardens and halls of its main campus. It was on that campus that new ideas about the political destiny of Luminaire and all the inhabited stars of the known world began to evolve, leading to an event that would change New Eden forever.

The Federated Union of Gallente Prime was established by ratification of the Federal Charter in 23121 by the representative bodies of the Gallente, Intaki, and Mannar homeworlds along with the somewhat reluctant Caldari, forced by the circumstances of astrography to join or risk marginalization. This signified the formal interstellar political union of the four known civilizations of New Eden, a union whose founding principles promised a future of enduring freedom and peace for all who lived beneath its eagle banner. Much more than a simple treaty organization, the Federation was created to satisfy what many politicians and interest groups thought was the necessary next step in protecting and developing the increasingly widespread and dynamic interstellar society that its constituent members comprised. While each signatory world maintained its own form of government and retained primary legal and military jurisdiction within its own gravity well, the new Federation was mandated to coordinate the relations between them by formulating legislation that represented the aggregate will of the peoples of all member worlds and it was empowered with the right to form international police and military agencies to enforce that legislation.

Based on a Gallentean colonial model, three branches: the legislative, executive, and judicial; constituted the new Federation's government under the terms of the Federal Charter. Though they have grown dramatically since the early years of the Federation with the addition of many supporting agencies and hangers-on, these three branches and their primary offices have served in their original roles more or less uninterrupted since the founding. The Federal Senate is composed of popularly elected representatives of the Federation's many sub-districts who meet to debate and pass laws. The President of the Federation is likewise popularly elected and serves a single five-year term (the term limit was raised to two only in the last few years) as the senior most officer of the executive branch, charged with ensuring that the Senate's laws are enforced and that the Federation's members are secured against both natural and man-made threats. Finally, the senior judges of the Federal Supreme Court function as the highest appellate court in the union, ruling on the validity of laws when they

are challenged by citizens and serving as a mediating agency between the other two branches. While the specifics have been modified and upgraded over time to suit changing conditions, the Federal system has endured the fires of war, revolution, the inclusion and loss of member worlds, and dramatic social and cultural change in the cluster in the more than 200 years since it was set up and it is considered a successful model, mirrored by the governments of many of the free planets of the modern union.

One place where you will not find it mirrored, however, is on the Caldari capital world, New Caldari Prime, where the leaders of the State's controlling megacorporations convene their Chief Executive Council far from Luminaire and their ancestral origins on Caldari Prime. How and why the Caldari, charter members of the Federation, split from the union, were driven from their homeworld, and went on to become a separate polity and military superpower in the cluster is a topic of great significance for not only did it transform the history of the last two centuries but it continues to shape policy and events to this day. It is a continuing story that began 194 years ago when a Gallente exploration vessel stumbled upon something that shouldn't have been there.

Corporations (of the all-encompassing, vertically and laterally diversified megacorporate type) were already well entrenched in Caldari society by the time of the Federation's founding. Since the days of Isuuaya centuries before, corporations had been growing in power and influence on Caldari Prime such that by 23155 their combined wealth and resources far exceeded that of the nominal Caldari government, a vaguely democratic regime established long before and propped up by the substantial ethnic Gallentean population living on Caldari Prime. A majority of the homeworld's ethnic Caldari residents were by that time employees of one such megacorporation or another and essentially received all the basic services of government: law, security, health and social support; directly from their employers. The corporations were able to achieve this degree of integration and influence in daily Caldari life, effectively emulating the role of government in many places, thanks in part to their aggressive capitalization on the booming space and colonization industries. In fact, so profitable was exploration and settlement and so crucial were those enterprises to their continued operation and growth that the Caldari megacorps were unwilling to share even basic knowledge of their exploits with traditional governments, least of all that of the Federation.

In early 23155, a Federation-flagged research ship happened upon an unregistered Caldari deep space colony in a system that was thought to be uninhabited. Within a matter of days, the existence of more such colonies came to light, and it was quickly apparent to the Federal government that the Caldari megacorps had been engaging in covert exploration and colonization for decades if not centuries and they controlled dozens of previously unknown star systems and untold resources through a network of secretly constructed star gates. Gallente activists were troubled by the revelation of potentially millions of colonists living under direct corporate rule who were being "robbed" of their democratic voice, a universal human right nominally protected under the terms of the Federal Charter. The Federal government was even more concerned with the amount of wealth being diverted into Caldari corporate coffers that should have been subject to taxation not to mention the size and power of the secret police forces and paramilitaries used to patrol and regulate these colonies. Things came to a head with the further revelation that as many as 100 years earlier a pioneer task force operated by the Sukuuvestaa Corporation had made first contact with an entirely new non-Luminairean civilization deep within their secret gate network that was as old and large as the Intaki or Mannar: the Achur people of the Saisio system.

Federal leaders called on the Caldari government to force the corporations to turn the colonies over to the Federation's authority. Already angry after years of Federal interference

in their affairs and sensing the approaching crisis in which they would either be marginalized and dismantled or forced into radical action, the megacorps chose to act first and quickly. A council of executives from the largest and most threatened corporations ordered their paramilitaries to seize control of government facilities and communications on Caldari Prime, and having done so, announced the nullification of the Federal Charter in corporate matters and the effective secession of the Caldari people, a majority of whom lived within the sphere of influence of one of the corporations, from the Federation. Calling their council the Chief Executive Panel, they proclaimed a formal political union of the megacorporations and the establishment of a free Caldari State under this union's leadership. The executives then ordered their ships to secure the star gates leading from Federation space to the secret colonies, where by far the greater proportion of the new State's military infrastructure was located. Responding quickly, the Federation's space fleet moved into position around Caldari Prime, establishing a blockade and electronic screen of the planet that halted transorbital traffic and significantly hampered communications.

Indecision reigned for several days as neither side made a decisive move against the other. The Federation's military position was complicated by the large Gallente population of Caldari Prime and the public's desire to see a peaceful resolution to the crisis, while the Caldari executives struggled to coordinate their reaction to the blockade through heavy electromagnetic damping. In what would become a recurring theme throughout the next several months, extremism prevailed in breaking the deadlock. Caldari partisans sabotaged the primary pressure dome of the underwater city of Nouvelle Rouvenor on Caldari Prime, the largest ethnic Gallente settlement on the planet and a city renowned not only for its feats of architectural engineering but its vibrant and progressive culture. Catastrophic failure of the dome led to the deaths of more than 500,000 people in just under ten minutes. Systematic bombardment of Caldari Prime by the orbiting Gallente fleet, targeting centers of heavy industry, began at once.

Wartime politics erupted into Gallente life and support for the once obscure Ultranationalist Party skyrocketed as its frontmen appeared in interstellar broadcasts appealing to the emotions of grief and revenge and calling for full-scale retaliation. Traditional pacifism was attacked and those who called for a limited response or even still suggested a peaceful settlement were denounced as traitors. Under pressure from radical activist groups spurred on by Ultranationalist instigators on several major worlds and within the military, the Federal government was forced to hold a plebiscite, and within a week of Nouvelle Rouvenor's destruction and the Federation counterstrike on strategic targets, the Ultranationalists had gained a functional majority in the Federal legislature and were able to exert effective control over the presidency and thus the military. Jingoistic propaganda began to appear in media markets across the Federation while the Caldari megacorporations were still reeling from the turn of events, their ground forces dispersed into the wilderness by the threat of bombardment and their ships still unable to break the blockade of the homeworld. Under the direction of the U-Nat regime, a Federal ground invasion and occupation was rapidly planned and put into motion.

At this moment of greatest peril, the chief executives of the infant Caldari State took stock of the losses already suffered by both sides and of the far greater horrors that would result from a total war and considered making an appeal to peace. In a pivotal event, the details of which remain highly secretive to this day, known as the Morning of Reasoning, the CEOs of the six most militant Caldari megacorps ousted those panel members who were willing to compromise with the Gallenteans, forcing them to perform the Tea Ceremony (a ritualized form of honorable suicide) and seizing their assets to be divided among the remaining few. The resulting smaller and far more hawkish executive panel knew it was impossible to fight the Federation head-on for control of the homeworld, but they were not interested in simply

handing the planet and its people over to an increasingly radical and racially-charged Federation. Instead, a daring evacuation plan was put into effect to recover as many Caldari citizens from the planet as possible and safely transport them to the State's deep space colonies.

In late 23155, combat resumed in earnest as Gallente ground forces, which had forward deployed special operations teams on the planet and harassed Caldari forces with sporadic orbital strikes for months, assaulted key installations and the Federation Navy resumed heavy bombardment of Caldari Prime, first targeting infrastructure and then simply terror bombing urban areas. Meanwhile, nimble one-man fighter craft, many supplied from factories in the State's deep space colonies, were able to use surprise and speed to break through the much larger and bulkier ships of the Gallente blockade at key moments to permit transport ships passage off Caldari Prime. Nearly half of the Caldari population remained on the planet two weeks after the invasion began, and the Federation's forces were closing in despite a bitter defense of the few remaining functional spaceports on the surface that kept the evacuation efforts going as the Caldari High Command desperately looked for a way to hold the Gallenteans at bay long enough to get the rest of their people out.

Finally, the Caldari admiral Yakiya Tovil-Toba took matters into his own hands. He organized a desperate end run, jumping his converted fighter carrier base ship and a few dozen smaller craft to Gallente Prime. The Federation was caught off guard, expecting the Caldari to dedicate all their forces to the defense of the homeworld. Tovil-Toba managed to knock out several Gallente ships and installations in the confusion before the Federation Navy could react, and he then led their fleet on a merry chase among the moons of Gallente Prime for seven days before the last of his fighters was shot down and the FTL drives on his carrier so badly damaged that they would no longer function. His final order directed the huge carrier down toward Gallente Prime itself, its final transmission, broadcast in the clear and picked up by both the Caldari High Command on the homeworld and the Gallente fleet that pursued him as far as the mesosphere was simply this: *Haakkin k'len*. "We will return."

Tovil-Toba's carrier was a large vessel, more than a kilometer in length, and it broke apart into several segments while entering Gallente Prime's atmosphere. Its heavily damaged primary drive core, which had been spilling radiation into the ship's compartments for days, sealing the fate of the crew even before the admiral's final order, was part of the segment that impacted the planet's surface near the metropolitan district of Hueromont. Although the drive did not go critical, the explosion of the impact wiped out a huge portion of the city and caused a radiological hazard in an area of hundreds of square kilometers. In the initial fireball and the after effects it is estimated that more than two million people died. For the Gallente, this was a national tragedy more painful even than Nouvelle Rouvenor. For the Caldari, it was the birth of a legend, the ultimate sacrifice of Tovil-Toba and his crew, who are to this day revered as national heroes. For the Caldari High Command it was just the distraction they needed to complete the evacuation of the homeworld and fall back to deep space colonies.

Hueromont's legacy was the ultimate survival of the Caldari State and the precipitous downfall of the Federal Ultrationalists. As the battle lines were redrawn in space with the Federation military now in complete control of Caldari Prime and pursuing the megacorporation forces to their industrial hinterland within the secret star gate network, a series of setbacks and scandals caused average Gallenteans to become increasingly dissatisfied with the U-Nat regime. The destruction of Hueromont was considered an unforgivable military failure, portrayed by U-Nat propaganda as the consequences of weakness among the old guard, and it led to a purge of Federal military officers under the direction of Ultrationalist jurists. This witch hunt ended many promising careers (not to

mention a few lives) and the officers appointed to replace those driven from service in the purge were selected mostly for their political loyalties rather than leadership skill. In space, the Federal Navy lost momentum and struggled under the command of these U-Nat yes-men to challenge the still militarily inferior Caldari.

Meanwhile, otherwise loyal Federation citizens on Gallente Prime and a few other major worlds who were publicly opposed to the purge and to the war in general became a target for a new censorship program quietly set up by the Ultrationalist Party and enforced by its so-called Eagle Brigades, constabulary troops nicknamed "C3s" for "capture, convict, condemn" because of the speed with which the citizens they arrested were hurried through the legal apparatus to prison cells and gallows. The crackdown on free expression was most apparent on Intaki Prime and among the colonies of the Intaki diaspora, headquarters of the pacifist movement in the Federation, where Hueromont was blamed not on Admiral Tovil-Toba or the Caldari in general but on the Federal government's misunderstanding of Caldari pre-war grievances, its mishandling of the war, and its submission to the U-Nat power grab. Many Intaki people spoke out publicly against the validity of the war, and some went as far as to openly sympathize with the Caldari. In a famous mass demonstration in Centurion Square in Caille, tens of thousands of pro-Caldari Intaki citizens marched against the Federal government. The crowd was brutally suppressed by the Eagle Brigades and five thousand Intaki "ringleaders" were rapidly convicted of treason.

Sensing that a mass execution would tip the public's favor away from the war and require the use of even more violent suppressive techniques elsewhere in the Federation, the government exiled these ringleaders to deep space. The Intaki Exile, as it has come to be known, was one of the few actions taken by the Ultrationalist regime during the outbreak of war that would later be upheld by successive governments. The exiles, joined by many family and friends, departed the Federation under military escort and settled in a region of space beyond Placid that was just then becoming accessible by star gate. In time, banned from settling on planetary bodies of any kind, these Intaki would construct a series of great space stations, the first of which were built with money laundered through wealthy sympathizers still living in the Intaki heartland while later generations were funded from the exile's own business dealings. Banished from the Federation but by no means unhappy about it, these Intaki proved to be skillful opportunists and they went on to create the progressive libertarian alliance known to most modern readers as the Syndicate.

Other Intaki (and a few ethnic Gallenteans and Mannar) pushed their opposition to the war to a yet further degree and actively took up arms against the Federation. Initially these Intaki, mostly opinionated youths with no real concept of the horrors of war, arrived in State space in small numbers and were incorporated within regular Caldari combat units. As their numbers grew and fears of infiltration crept in to the minds of the naturally xenophobic Caldari leadership with the appearance of Intaki military defectors asking to fight for the State, a separate unit was established under the command of Muryia Mordu to receive all Intaki applicants arriving from Federation space: the Intaki Volunteer Legion, later reformed as the mercenary company known simply as Mordu's Legion.

Amid rumors of human rights abuses, some quite horrific, by the occupation force on Caldari Prime and a growing mistrust in all aspects of daily life for the once golden yet increasingly power-hungry and paranoid Ultrationalist Party, the Gallente people soon sought a new direction. The change of power, which is still referred to by almost all Gallente sources in more delicate terms than that which properly describes it: coup d'état; took place amid a groundswell of opposition to the U-Nats and ushered in the modern era of Progressor and Sociocrat politics. A wave of violence swept the Federation as reprisals were carried out by ordinary people against those officials who had bent to pressure from the Ultrationalist

Party during its rise to power and against their fellow citizens, including most Eagle Brigade volunteers, who had willingly supported the suppression of civil freedoms on the grounds of wartime necessity.

Awaiting trial for crimes against the state and humanity on his home planet of Mannar Prime, a former U-Nat propagandist, whose true name is still unknown thanks to the anonymity rules of the Mannar judicial system, famously explained to his court-appointed psychologist: "Why, of course, the people don't want war. Why would some poor slob on a rural colony want to risk his life in a war when the best that he can hope to get out of it is to come back home in one piece? Naturally, the common people don't want war; neither in Mannar, nor in Intaki, nor, I am sure, in Saisio, nor for that matter in Luminaire. That is understood. But it is the leaders of the nation who determine the policy and it is always a simple matter to drag the people along, whether it is a democracy, or an autocracy, or a parliament, or a corporatist oligarchy. Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the union to danger. It works the same way on any planet." He was executed two weeks later. It is worth noting that in recent years conspiracy theories have occasionally been floated on the GalNet suggesting that the destruction of Nouvelle Rouvenor was actually the work of hardcore U-Nat operatives, carried out as part of their ruthless bid for power, but nothing to that effect has ever been proven.

By mid 23156, although the most extreme voices were largely driven out of Federal politics, the tragedy of Hueromont had galvanized the Gallentean heart and in a practical sense the Federation could not tolerate a military competitor growing along its periphery that continued to fight and would forever aim at invading Luminaire and retaking Caldari Prime. By the time the Federation had recovered from its second mini-revolution in two years, the State had also regained its footing, producing a new generation of nimble one-man fighters and pushing the limits of military innovation in hopes of overcoming the Federation's unquestionable superiority in men and materiel. Both nations locked horns. The conflict would not be resolved quickly.

In fact, the war, as you surely recall, went on for more than 90 years, long outlasting the U-Nat regime that fanned its flames and smoldering until well past the establishment of CONCORD. Successive generations to those Gallente and Caldari officers who led the blockade and breakout from Caldari Prime were born, raised, trained, and killed within its context. As both nations continued to grow, expanding their star gate networks and establishing new colonies (or discovering them—the Federation would later add the Jin-Mei peoples of the Lirsautton system to both their union and war effort), combat migrated from the proximity of Luminaire and the central systems of Crux to ever more distant front lines, and the war, despite periods of resurgence over the decades, faded from the headlines. In the war's later years, an eerie *détente* developed between the factions, who remained technically and on occasion functionally at war while private interests on both sides quietly sought rapprochement and even cooperation on a small scale. It was not until the Battle of Iyen-Oursta in 23251 (YC15), an unusually large engagement that saw the first heavy use of modern weapons systems such as specialized frigates and drone swarms, that the two belligerents were finally brought to the table by the collective outcry of their respective populaces (who no longer really understood nor cared about the war) and a lasting peace was secured.

Had events taken an alternate path in those first fateful months, New Eden might have been spared the tragedies of Luminaire, the Intaki Exile, and the insatiable arms race that followed, and our world might look very different than it does today. History is past, however, and the Gallente-Caldari War with all its attendant strife and loss is an inescapable



fact, as one Intaki scholar put it: "the bloody cilice collectively woven by ten thousand admirals and demagogues that each child of Luminaire must wear". Through its trials was forged the Caldari State, an interstellar civilization possessing every gift but its own homeworld (until the specter of conflict reared its head again three years ago). The power of the Caldari megacorporations was magnified such that each is now akin in wealth and influence to its own interstellar nation. Shocked by their own government's actions in the early years of the war, the Gallente people recoiled from the economics of unlimited commercialism and the philosophies that had transformed cultural identity into a commodity, elements of the Federal economy and society that were blamed (whether they deserved to be or not) for having failed to uphold the spirit of Federal Charter and for provoking Caldari separatism.

Meaningful change in the policy and practices of the Federation did not take until the end of the war to reveal itself. By 23180, the year the Gallenteans made contact with the Amarr Empire, the Federation was already a more principled, more mature, and in some ways a more militant nation than it had been just thirty years prior. Gallenteans were becoming a people who would stand up and fight for freedom for freedom's sake alone, the lessons of the U-Nat years seared into their collective memory and inclining them to an inherent distrust and distaste for any non-democratic system. As such, the Federation greeted the discovery of an autocratic interstellar dominion as vast as Amarr with a tempered curiosity. Contemporary accounts show none of the wonder and fantastic optimism that resulted from first contact with the Intaki or Mannar, and while regular trade was opened between the superpowers (especially via the Khanid Kingdom), culminating in the Gallente-Amarr Free Trade Agreement in 23210, diplomatic relations between them gradually soured as the Gallenteans learned the full extent and intentions of the Imperial policies of conquest and Amarr's systematic enslavement of other peoples.

## Chapter 4

## The Elusive History of the Jove

No other people in New Eden are as poorly understood as the Jove. Their nation, formally known as the Third Jovian Empire, is (most likely) led by the faceless organization called the Directorate, and the identity of this ruling body often stands in as a name for the entire state. Both the Directorate and the people of the empire it controls are extremely reclusive. Rarely seen, we do not know with certainty how many Jove there are, but we do know that they are experts of bioengineering and over their long history they have pushed the far limits of medical science and genetic manipulation, redefining what it means to be human in New Eden. Indeed, the Jove are often portrayed as something other than human beings, and the extreme body modification practiced in certain New Eden subcultures is sometimes attributed to the Jovian example: a perpetual quest to perfect and specialize the body and mind so that both, transcending the evolutionary roots of the human genetic code, are better suited to the tasks and lifestyles of the technologically advanced post-scarcity conditions of the modern cluster.

Jovian science has been a significant motivator in our own progress over the last hundred years or so. Some of the greatest technologies of our day, such as the hydrostatic capsule that enables a single person to command a starship by the direct interaction of their brain and its subsystems, are Jovian inventions. Yet we do not know how far the Jove have progressed their technologies, or even if they are the original innovators at all, since virtually everything we think we know about Jovian history and current affairs is obscured by a veil of secrecy that encircles all their dealings. Although the Directorate is a founding member of CONCORD, outsiders are not permitted within Jovian space or aboard their starships except on rare and unpredictable occasions, and most diplomats and scholars warn that any "fact" one learns about the Jove is as likely to be the product of social engineering on their part as it is to have derived from a verifiable truth. Lacking any alternative, however, we are forced most often to take uncorroborated reports and hearsay as the closest approximations of reality when considering the history of the Jove.

One of the few things known for certain about these strange people is that they are all dying. An ailment referred to simply as the Jovian Disease afflicts virtually every member of their race despite centuries of research spent trying to find a cure. No one, at least none outside the hidden world of the Directorate's inner circles, knows the origins of this ailment nor the true prognosis for the Jove as a whole, but we do know that it was the primary reason for the downfall of the Second Jovian Empire and their flight from the Heaven constellation and the former capital system of Utopia around 1000 years ago. The Jovian Disease does not have a known biological vector of any kind but is instead an endemic genetic disorder of the Jove and of which there have been no documented cases among people of non-Jovian descent.

Manifesting psychologically and psychosomatically in its victims sometime in mid-life, the Jovian Disease is not so fast-acting that it has threatened the immediate survival of their society, but Jovian fertility rates and average lifespans have been affected such that the overall population is but a shadow of its former size as a result of the pandemic. Once symptoms start to show, a seemingly random occurrence although stress and high rates of activity have been speculated as aggravating factors, it is only a matter of a few days or weeks before a victim begins to mentally shut down and loses his or her grip on reality. Some are quickly driven to suicide by the deep and intense depression brought on by the

disease while others endure its emotional assault (for most Jovians the only time in their lives they will experience the kinds of emotion we take for granted in daily life) for months until they expire, their bodies simply ceasing to carry on as the mind, wracked by intense delirium, forsakes itself of the desire for continuity.

Thus while they are by far the most technologically advanced and historically gifted of the peoples of New Eden, having achieved interstellar spaceflight many millennia before even the Amarrians, the Jove are a pitiable people, the living specter of a former greatness that surpassed anything that has been realized since. In order to better understand what little we know about the Jove, their former glories, and their modern mindset and place in the larger picture of the cluster, we must consider their journey from a human to post-human existence. Many are the examples among the Jove of what we might achieve given sufficient time, resourcefulness, and willingness to press the possibilities of science to their natural limits, and many also are the examples of what evils we might thereby unleash.

The Jove in New Eden very likely began as did the rest of its great cultures: as colonists. Almost nothing about the original Jovian homeworld is known outside of the Directorate and we know nothing at all about the genetic heritage of the people who settled it, but we do know that the Jove returned to a state of high technology much sooner than any other people, suggesting that they retained a great deal of pre-Fall knowledge on which they could quickly capitalize or possibly that they never experienced a period of regression during the Dark Ages at all. Not long after New Eden's civilizations were cast into the long and barbarous night, the Jove were again on their feet, utilizing advanced machinery and electronics and exploring space. Precisely when the Jove broke out of their now-forgotten home system and took to the stars is unknown, but by their own accounts the first of their ancient interstellar empires was founded approximately 9000 years ago.

A group of Jove that are today remembered only as the Elders (not to be confused with the Matari spiritual leaders of the same name), were political leaders during the First Jovian Empire and they were behind the initial projects dedicated to the modification and improvement of the human genome. At that time, the main goal of such experiments was lifespan extension, and before the advent of the Jovian Disease such was their capability in achieving this that it is believed an individual Jove could live unaided for up to one thousand years, much of which was spent in a healthy and vigorous state before the effects of aging eventually claimed them. By comparison, in the Amarr Empire, even employing a huge catalog of the finest cybernetic enhancements, the most aged holders and emperors in living memory only endured for a few centuries with the handicap of advanced senescence constantly impairing the latter decades of their lives. Building on their successes in artificial longevity, the greatest Jovian minds went on to experiment with every conceivable medical element of human life and achieved astonishing things over the subsequent millennia, virtually all of which are forgotten to us or remain hidden behind the curtain of Jovian silence.

At some point, however, we believe they went too far. The scientists of the First Jovian Empire, with the active support and approval of the Elders, toyed with increasingly more bizarre mutations of the human genome, learning how to not only change and improve physical features and biological processes but to directly affect an individual's psychological makeup. Among their test groups they successfully demonstrated the suppression of basic emotions that were considered destructive to society, such as aggression and sexuality, turning erstwhile political upstarts and people inclined to making chaotic lifestyle choices into passive citizens with higher productivity and a tendency toward scientific pursuits owing to their more clinical outlook on life. Delivering the fruits of their research to large groups became possible through the use of nanoengineered retroviral aerosols, and at some point it is believed that the Elder caste attempted to use these technologies to pacify the entire

Jovian population, an act leading to upheaval and a revolution that brought down the old order and the First Jovian Empire with it. The ensuing time of chaos, and very possibly civil war, is remembered by the Jove as the Shrouded Days.

During the First Jovian Empire, the cultural themes that recur in virtually all human histories seemed to have been quite active. Spirituality, philosophy, and politics were grounds for conflict and the motivating factors for change. Yet by the time of Miko Bour and the Second Jovian Empire that he founded around 3000 years ago, the Jove were a very different people. Much of their genome had been irreversibly altered in unknown ways as a result of the unrestricted experimentation and psychosocial manipulation practiced under the rule of the Elders, and those Jove who remained after the cataclysm that brought down the previous regime were dedicated to understanding and repairing (or in some radical cases, expanding on) these changes. Most Jove born since the establishment of the Second Empire have not possessed the ability to conceive or nurture aggressive thoughts. Strangely, many are unable to form and hold opinions as we know them. Moreover their bodies are not the same and physical impulses and desires are greatly reduced or at least redirected from otherwise natural human cravings. The Jovian mind quite literally hungers for scientific knowledge and lusts after the explosive revelations of discovery.

Today, therefore, social differentiations among the Jove derive not from the concepts of geography, language, gender, or race, as they do in virtually all other human societies in New Eden, but from the consequences of this widespread and liberal use of genetic and social engineering over thousands of years. Modern Jovian civilization can be roughly separated into two camps: the Statics and the Dynamics. Statics represent those genetic and memetic elements that tend toward stability, maintenance, and internal factors. The Static mind is one that proudly adheres to the belief that the Jove have overcome the errors of the Shrouded Days and refocused their science to achieve the pinnacle of the human form and that they need to make no further modifications. Clinging to traditions apparently left over from earlier Jovian empires, Statics are sometimes also called "Nostalgics" by their kinsmen, and the name of their philosophy has been translated as "God-thought", owing to the laconic air of unquestioned superiority with which they often address others and especially non-Jovians. Most of what passes for the leadership caste in the Directorate comes from this branch of their society.

Contrasting this are the Dynamics or Modifiers, enthusiasts and explorers who crave new insight and novel experiences. While the Static mindset locks knowledge away, hoarding it to a pathological degree, an adherent of the Modifier philosophy can barely grab hold of a new idea before dashing off to investigate a half-dozen resultant leads. Almost all Jovians who have made contact with the outside world are from this group. Among the Dynamic community one will find the most extreme genetic modification taking place, and the enduring myths of visitation by non-human sentience in various New Eden cultures were almost surely sparked by the stray wanderings of ancient Modifiers who failed to properly introduce themselves. While such unfettered experimentation has long been cited as the probable cause of the Jovian Disease, it also holds the promise of salvation from that dread condition, and the Jove seem to put great stock in the prospects of Modifier laboratories such as those belonging to the Genolution Corporation. It is also worth noting that Modifiers typically succumb to the disease at a much younger age than Statics, perhaps owing to the pace of their existence and the diversity of experience inherent in their lifestyle.

Subgroups exist within the Modifier camp, each pulling Jovian civilization in a different direction. The Existentialists embrace the tenant that the human form is suboptimal for most tasks except social interaction and they explore the open-ended possibilities of continued bioengineering, routinely experimenting with things that others would rather leave alone. As

early pioneers of mind-machine interface technologies they are believed by many experts to have been at the root of modern pod technology, which it is speculated was part of a failed (or possibly ongoing) project to literally transform a human being into a living starship. This line of research has led them to embrace the concepts of infomorphism, and there are rumors that a sizeable portion of the Jovian population, comprising a majority of Existentialists, has migrated from the biomechanical to a purely electronic form of life, existing as raw data within a vast computer network somewhere deep in Jovian space. Rarely seen by outsiders and apparently disinterested in the affairs of other nations, the foreign media has turned this faction into something of a bogeyman over the last few decades with rogue Existentialists serving a clichéd role as sci-fi villains such as the eponymous cybernetic monster-building genius in the classic thriller "The Colony of Doctor Iyoro".

Puritan Jove have taken the opposite tack, rejecting everything and anything that was done to Jovian DNA during the First Empire and actively seeking to undo the effects thereof. These Jove hope to return to their genetic and cultural origins, and many go to great lengths to cosmetically hide evidence of their Jovian ethnicity, which usually betrays itself by a complete lack of body hair, almost translucently pale and glassy skin run through with dark veins, and a taught facial musculature that pulls the fine features of the eyes, brow, and lips back to create the peculiar Jovian gaze. The strangeness of their physical presence is often compounded by the use of extreme cybernetics and there is great variance in the outward appearance of Jove depending upon their function and rank and even from one decade to the next in history. Puritans, however, are typically indistinguishable in their physical appearance from average citizens on the streets of Caille or Dam-Torsad and have been known to go to great lengths to emulate the cultural and linguistic peculiarities of the people with whom they interact. Puritans are also thought to have been the faction behind the establishment of the Academy of Aggressive Behavior, an institute dedicated to restoring the "lost" animalistic instincts in its Jovian students that has become the fledging ground for the Directorate's military recruits. Some of the most dedicated Puritan Jove are thought to have also embraced "classical" forms of reproduction, rejecting the long-standing Jovian models of clinical parenthood.

Specifically, most Jove are born in a laboratory, and judging by the charismatic charms the average Jovian citizen exudes, most seem to have been raised there as well. Since the nearest approximation in Jovian society to the concept of family is the bond that exists within a research or exploration team, typically an expert and two apprentices, it is perhaps not so unusual that the Jove grow rather than birth their children. While there is virtually no verified information about Jovian reproductive science (to say nothing of early childhood education), those few people who have traveled inside the borders of the Directorate report the existence of fetus farms where unborn young are cultivated in embryonic tanks and carefully monitored for genetic abnormalities. It is presumed a great deal of unchecked mutation still affects the Jovian genome and of a dozen fetuses cultivated, only one or two will be brought to term. If accurate, this attrition rate, combined with the scourge of the Jovian Disease and their suppressed sex drives, may explain the relatively small overall size of the Jovian population as compared to the cluster's other superpower states, and the value of each healthy Jovian citizen to the future of the Directorate.

Despite its disadvantages in population, the relatively small territorial size of the Third Jovian Empire as compared to its precursors, and the pervasive shadow of the Jovian Disease, the Directorate wants for nothing in terms of hard or soft power in modern interstellar relations. Jovian capabilities in technical espionage are believed to be far superior to anything even speculated about in the laboratories of the cluster's main intelligence services. Monitoring devices suspected of belonging to the Directorate and ingeniously secreted into the cluster's inner sanctums of power that are otherwise impenetrable to conventional infiltration have

occasionally been found over the years. Senior intelligence officials privately admit that their organizations have also from time to time identified suspected foreign agents in positions with privileged access to administrative and military information only to have their targets vanish without a trace as they moved to apprehend them, leaving behind data trails sanitized to such an extent that no known intelligence agency could have been responsible. These "spies that never were" are believed by many to have been Jovian plants. Through their uncannily timed if unreliable appearances and interventions and the speed with which the Directorate has responded to certain changing events in the past, the reach of the Jovian intelligence network is widely speculated to be nigh absolute. Most power brokers in New Eden simply accept the likelihood that the Jove are watching and listening and there is little that can be done about it.

In the same vein, although somewhat less insidious, is a Jovian institution that remains one of the most influential in the highest levels of power in New Eden: the Society of Conscious Thought. Founded by the philosopher Ior Labron some three centuries ago before the Jove had made themselves known to the rest of the cluster (although we strongly suspect they knew about us), the SoCT began as a organization of religious study, or at least what passes for that in the Jovian paradigm. Its first incarnation was in effect a council of scientific moral philosophy that attracted many distinguished figures of the Third Jovian Empire to its membership. In a few short decades its influence had swelled and the Society became active in politics, eventually gaining such power as to be considered a shadow government pulling the strings of Jovian society behind the façade of the nominal leadership of the Directorate. This did not last, however, and the Society's opponents eventually brought it back down to size. In the years since, the institution has reimagined itself several times, emerging around 120 years ago as an elite educational organization distributed among several monolithic self-sufficient settlements called kitzes that are spread throughout the mostly uninhabited and unregulated reaches of deep space. When student applications were opened to gifted non-Jovians in the last century, the Society quickly became famous throughout New Eden for providing an unmatched education. Many of its alumni, no doubt influenced by their time behind the closed doors of the Society's kitzes, have gone on to careers as innovators and leaders at the cluster's highest levels.

Military strategists of the other superpowers likewise accept that the Directorate's space fleet is unrivaled, categorically superior to any other force in the cluster, and there is little that their defenses can do in the face of Jovian weapons fire. The Jove are masters of starship engineering and high energy physics and as pioneers of pod technology, their starships are universally commanded from hydrostatic capsules by pilots with centuries of institutional (and sometimes personal) experience. Against an all-capsuleer force with thousands of years of advantage in armament development, there is little hope of a conventional space fleet surviving an encounter with a Jove Navy task force unless it outnumberes the Jove by many dozens if not hundreds of times, even then expecting tremendous casualties. Some speculate that this balance of power has shifted in recent years with the rapid increase in capsuleer pilots among the naval forces of the other great powers, but the Jove Navy is still considered a terrifyingly powerful formation, although the Jove have only once in modern history been forced to bring it to bear. In the Amarr Imperial Academy, the resolve of young military cadets in the face of certain defeat and death is tested in simulations pitting them against Jovian vessels. Far from exaggeration, however, these no-win simulated circumstances are based on actual Amarrian experience in combat against the Jove Navy.

The clash of Amarrian and Jovian forces in 23216 was in itself a dramatic event, but as it occurred at what many scholars have described as a crossroads of history and the consequences of this single battle between these two powers in the system of Vak'Atioth would resonate so far and for so long afterward, we must attempt to summarize the events

leading up to it. For decades before the battle, the Amarr Empire had been in decline. King Khanid II had fractured the Imperial military and been successful in establishing a rival state on the border of the Empire, defending it against the Emperor for more than a century. On the periphery, the historically methodical expansion of the Empire into new constellations had slowed nearly to a halt, and beyond its space entirely new interstellar nations, advanced in technology and rivaling the greatness and bounty of Amarr, had recently been discovered and could not be readily conquered. Those few in the Empire with both the access to a sufficient breadth of information and the inclination to think about their world free of the blinding handicaps of religious indoctrination and self-censorship privately admitted the momentum of history had forsaken Amarr. It was an age for younger powers and different ideas.

These opinions were not in the majority, however, and were certainly not made public. In fact, the Empire, always resistant to influences that contradict the official version of reality propounded in the Scriptures and maintained by the power of the Emperor and his privy councilors, found itself in that year in the midst of a great counterthrust by traditionalism. Much attention was paid in Amarrian state media early in the year to the complaints of Gallentean trade representatives. Operating within the Empire under the terms of the landmark free trade agreement signed by their two nations six years before, the Gallenteans struggled against bureaucratic hurdles imposed upon them by the Imperial Trade Registry that in some respects actually made it more difficult to do business than before the agreement. In frustration, a Federation Customs officer angrily remarked during a conference that a prominent holder, closely involved with the burgeoning interstellar trade since his estate served as one of the primary points of cross-border exchange at the time, was "at best ignorant of all progressive reason". The holder replied matter-of-factly: "What you say is true. We have learned none of your evil ways." This sound byte, often accompanied by vehement anti-Gallente commentary, aired repeatedly on ACN and subsidiary media outlets in the Empire.

Yet a small but dedicated Amarrian progressive reform movement had, in fact, grown up in the years since the Khanid rebellion (and the Kingdom's economic policies) made the idea of defying the monolithic will of the Empire in favor of one's personal opinions and benefit achievable, however difficult for the average person to realize. Imperial state media counterattacked against such blasphemy, building on the storyline of the trade dispute to paint free commerce (and by extension normalized relations with the Federation) as a failure that was inherently damaging to Amarrian prosperity and "revealing" outside influences to be responsible for the slackened pace of Imperial expansion. This portrayal was used to identify and vilify elements of progressive philosophy throughout the Empire, affiliating them with the supposedly insidious meddling of foreigners and the persistent low-level resistance of escaped slaves and apostates that nipped at the fringes of Imperial rule. Thousands of scholars and liberal holders who had gone through their own "private revolutions", quietly changing their attitudes about politics, society, and even religion, were called to account by their conservative peers, denounced as defeatists and sinners, and many were driven to disgraceful retirement or suicide by unrelenting slander from the fundamentalists.

Riding a wave of resurgent patriotism in the well-scripted official media, and spurred on by traditionalist holders longing to reinvigorate the masses and their own power base in the spirit of the Reclaiming, by mid-23216 the Empire's leadership caste was chomping at the bit. Consequently, under the leadership of Minister of War Mekioth Sarum, the Imperial Navy launched a new campaign of conquest amid much fanfare and celebration, hailing the reclamation not only of yet more territory but of Amarr's hallowed past and true identity. The campaign's target was the planet Eanna of the Hror system, a world inhabited by an enclave of escaped Minmatar slaves on the edge of the Empire that was claimed by no competing power although its residents traded freely with the Federation. Although the War Ministry

evaluated the strength of free Matari forces at that time to be strategically negligible, Eanna was portrayed as a staging ground for "unrestricted guerrilla warfare" against the Empire and thus a perfect candidate for Reclaiming. Hror was to be a campaign little different from the Imperial conquests of the distant and hallowed past, and it proceeded, despite fierce opposition from outside the Empire, in the grand and impressive fashion of those good old days.

It proceeded in every way, that is, except for the wholesale bombardment of Eanna. Commodore Faus Akredon, leader of the elite task force sent to reclaim Hror, saw fit to simply scour the planet with tachyon weapons fire after meeting unexpectedly tough resistance in space. Reaction from the Gallente Federation to the assault and subsequent genocide was disapproving to say the least. While the Federation had no vested political interest in Hror, it was an economically fruitful trading partner and non-threatening neighbor, and the Gallente people almost universally reviled the system of enslavement that everyone knew Amarr would impose upon the defenseless Matari survivors. Although the Gallenteans, still engaged in open war with the Caldari State, did not have the political capital to launch a military intervention nor the manpower to actually challenge Amarr on a larger scale, their diplomats made it clear that the Federation would not recognize Imperial sovereignty in Hror. As was learned years later, behind the scenes of these events, the Federal Intelligence Office, which had been carefully laying plans and infiltrating agents into the Empire for some time, took the invasion as a cue to ramp up its efforts in providing support to rebellious factions among Amarrian slaves and persecuted freemen. The Caldari State, at that time nowhere near as closely affiliated with the Empire as it is today, paid little attention to these events. The Jove, of course, summarily broke off all contact with Amarr.

Severing all diplomacy was a strategic move that the Directorate had first employed some sixty years before when it abruptly stopped all communication and interaction with the young Gallente Federation after the outbreak of civil war and the bombing of Caldari Prime. That move went unrecognized at the time as the Federal government, wary of Jovian power and cautious of the Directorate's motives, had not publicly acknowledged its relationship with the Jove. The immediacy of the Jovian reaction caught the Gallenteans off guard and records of the Federation's contact with this strange and advanced people from regions not yet known were buried. Existence of the Jovian Directorate did not become public knowledge in the Federation until 23193, when the Jove revealed themselves to the entire cluster and the true age and extent of their civilization became known for the first time. What is apparent from the Directorate's actions in both 23155 and 23216 is that the Jovian mind is one that not only struggles to harness aggression, but embraces a complete rejection of violence. When the Federation descended into internal conflict and when the Amarr reasserted their expansionist vision, the Jove saw in them a people not yet worthy of a place among the stars at their side.

None, in the Amarrian opinion, are so privileged as to be able to deem the chosen people of God unworthy in any respect, and the Empire took this sudden silence on the part of the Directorate as an insult to the unimpeachable will of their Emperor. The slight was compounded by activist pundits in the Federation media who were more than happy to praise the Jovian action, calling on their own government to follow suit. The row came to a head when several high priests of the Theology Council were killed amid a slave uprising at a mining colony, and an Imperial Navy blockade force destroyed an unarmed Gallente vessel transporting Federation Senator Vale Garrett through Amarrian space en route to recover a Gallente pilot caught up in the revolt. Inexplicably, Jovian interference was blamed for the uprising, and as the celebratory storylines from the successful conquest of Hror faded, the rabid Imperial press pounced on the Jove. Loyalist subjects filled the airwaves with "from the street" calls for the Navy to defend the Emperor's honor and remain true to the dedication of those souls sacrificed in order to realize the heavenly commandment of the Reclaiming.



Respected theologians, meanwhile, produced *casus belli* by indicating how certain portions of the Scriptures required the Jovians be punished for their offense. The Emperor himself and the highest ranks of the holder classes remained silent in public, however, as the faint candle of modernization and liberalism in the Empire flickered desperately amid the swirling winds that roared: "War!"

War was an exceedingly popular notion in the Empire when the Imperial Navy's most elite formation, the more than 200 main line battleships and escorts of the Golden Fleet, left anchor and assembled for a massive operation. The prestige of the Emperor was at an unprecedented peak as his grandest fleet, under the command of Commodore Akredon, set out with a mission unparalleled in Amarrian history. The fleet's orders were nothing less than to affect the Reclaiming of the entire Jovian Directorate. Whereas the Khanid Kingdom was defended by ships of Amarrian design and in many cases Amarrian manufacture, preventing by the superiority of their craftsmanship a swift victory in battle against His Majesty's forces, Imperial officers assured themselves and the Empire's few remaining voices of caution that the focused tachyon beams of their battleships would melt the defenses of any vessels of foreign make, regardless of their number or the deviance of their design. Some senior strategists on Amarr Prime were already speculating about the Reclaiming of the pesky Gallente Federation that would naturally follow from the defeat of the Jove as the Golden Fleet set course for the Jovian system of Vak'Atioth.

Small in strategic importance, Vak'Atioth (today simply Atioth) was home to several Jovian research outposts but contained no major colonies or military installations. Historical analysis of the campaign suggests that the Amarrians chose it as their point of attack seemingly at random and possibly intended to purge the system outright as Akredon had done at Eanna. As Mekioth Sarum's Ministry of War had access to pitifully little intelligence about the disposition of Jovian forces, he seems to have made the assumption that those forces were of little importance and made the further, and much more fatal, error of mistaking the Jovian abhorrence for violence for the inability to harness it altogether. The Golden Fleet, of course, entered Jovian space precisely where the Directorate expected it to, the fruits of their unrivaled intelligence network revealing the details of Amarr's war plans even before its own officers were made aware of them. Most expensive and best equipped of the Empire's fleets, the armored plates enveloping the hulls of the invasion force's battleships and cruisers reflected the blood red light of Vak'Atioth as they entered the system, their golden radiance contrasting the matte browns and blacks of the Scriptural passages inscribed in massive letters along their sides. Most experienced and best trained of the Empire's officers and men and led by one of their greatest heroes, the commanders and crews of the fleet had every confidence of victory. Akredon addressed his men directly from the bridge of the flagship *Redemption* to impress upon them the glory they were about to win for God and Emperor and the history they were about to make.

History they made, indeed, as they maneuvered boldly into a well laid Jovian trap. The Golden Fleet was intercepted near a research station above Vak'Atioth I by a task force of Jove Navy frigates not long after making their incursion into the system. The Amarrians assumed a broad formation that would bring as many of their heavy energy weapons to bear against the numerically inferior Jove as possible, and the *Redemption*, a prototype built on the Apocalypse-class, initiated the battle with a concentrated volley that appeared to cripple one of the Jovian craft. Instantly the Jove Navy frigates scattered, breaking off into small flotillas of four or five and moving in tightly synced formations at incredible speed. They plunged into the Amarrian ranks, unleashing close-range fire while simultaneously dodging the heavy, but slow-aiming weapons of the Imperial battleships and outflying the Amarrian escorts that attempted pursuit. Before the Golden Fleet could react, its flagship was struck seemingly out of nowhere by an intensely bright beam weapon so powerful that it completely

ignored the huge battleship's shields and armor, punching through the hull and spilling energy throughout the interior and, after a brief pause, out a gaping exit wound in the once grand warship, thus ending her usefulness to the Emperor.

With their flagship catastrophically killed by enemy fire, an unprecedented event in Imperial Navy history, and Akredon either dead or cut off from communications, the Amarrian chain of command was strained nearly to its limit. There were no "actions on" in the Imperial Navy's standard operating procedures for this kind of immense counterstrike by an enemy. When the second blast hit, and then the third, targeting the battleships of the fleet's vice commanders and likewise reducing them to wrecks in a single volley, all semblance of order in the Amarrian ranks collapsed. Half of the fleet seemed to make a snap consensus decision to rush the barely-detectable Jovian capital vessel that was raining instant death down on the Imperial ships-of-the-line, while the other half sat in place trying to pick off the enemy's frigates, which were decimating the Amarrian cruisers. Neither attempt had much effect, and within minutes it became clear to the senior-most Imperial admiral left alive that the Golden Fleet was grossly outmatched. He sent a final transmission to Amarr Prime before futilely setting his battleship on a collision course with what he thought to be the Jovian mothership. Likely struggling to find the right words to describe the situation, words by which he surely knew his honor and likely his house's future would be sealed, he transmitted: "We have met the enemy, and found him... strange. We attend to our duties."

Duty, in the sense appreciated by members of the Amarrian military, means unhesitatingly laying down one's life in the righteous cause of God and Empire. Fewer than a dozen ships of the more than two hundred that entered the fight on the Amarrian side fled the battlefield in Vak'Atioth even though the Jovians employed no warp scrambling technology and the tide of battle was clearly weighted against the Imperial fleet from the first few shots. The men and women of the Golden Fleet, the best trained and best equipped in the Emperor's service, attended to their duties and perished in alien space. Those few who dared retreat back to the Empire were, naturally, executed for cowardice and their families reduced to the lowest class of slave. It is believed at least one ship escaped to the Khanid Kingdom, although the fate of its crew is unknown. Jovian casualties are estimated to have been minimal. In the turmoil that would follow, a time when a professional, proven fighting force like the Golden Fleet would have counted for a great deal serving at the core of the much larger but more provincial Imperial armada, Emperor Heideran VII is anecdotally recorded as having shouted down the Imperial Minister of War during a tense Privy Council meeting, saying, "Sarum, give me back my Fleet!" referring to the invaluable ships and men lost at Vak'Atioth.

The fact remained, however, that they were lost. The thunder and swagger of Amarrian hubris and the quiet resolve of the Jovians combined with their enormously superior technology left the great behemoth of the Imperial Navy temporarily decapitated in mid-23216. Though the Jove Navy mounted no counterstrike into Imperial territory, an act of invasion likely being anathema to the Directorate's military policy, more than enough damage had been done. A far larger fleet was gathering under the Emperor's banner to ensure the success of the Jovian Reclaiming and to save face by making good on the debt the Empire owed to the blood and valor of Akredon and his Golden Fleet, but this force would never see action against the Jove. Only a matter of days after the Battle of Vak'Atioth, the Amarr Empire was facing a much bigger problem much nearer to home.

## Chapter 5

# Rebellion, CONCORD & the New Age

Uniiija Krur, a Nefantar political commentator active in the early decades of the last century once remarked that history would ultimately remember not the unity and struggle of the Matari people to free themselves nor the sacrifices they made to forge an independent Minmatar Republic, but that the future would instead look back on that endeavor as one wherein the policymakers of foreign powers saw fit to intervene and by the support and efforts of such outsiders were the Minmatar once more made a free people. In some respects, Krur's prediction has come true as the Gallentean role in supporting the resistance movement in the Empire remains a central theme in most educational media on the period, but the bravery and ingenuity of the Matari rebels, who in 23216 took up foreign-supplied arms against their Amarrian masters and achieved what none thought possible, has not been forgotten nor should it go understated as we attempt to grasp the totality of change brought about by the Great Minmatar Rebellion. In its wake was born not only a vast interstellar nation, forged wholesale from the ashes of Imperial colonialism, but also the new balance of power that has defined our universe for more than a century. We consider now the clenched fist raised in defiance and the open palm extended in brotherhood and how both have made New Eden what it is today.

Since the signing of the Gallente-Amarr Free Trade Agreement (GAFTA) in 23210, civilian space traffic was freely permitted between the Federation and Empire, by far the cluster's largest nations in terms of population and number of systems. Travel between the two was not easy at first, however, as the Khanid Kingdom, in protest over what it correctly perceived as an attempt by Gallentean business interests to get around Khanid profit-taking, clamped down on Federation-flagged transports utilizing its space lanes to access the Empire. Yet new direct stargate connections were soon opened via the Genesis region and trade expanded at a steady pace. The agreement and its consequences were not without their domestic opponents, of course, and liberal activists in the Federation and their equally conservative counterparts in Amarr made both public and private objections over the success of a pragmatic policy that they saw as drawing their respective nations too close to their ideological opposites.

Whereas in the Empire, the agreement carried the force of the Emperor's will as a matter of Imperial law and all subjects were thus compelled to abide by its terms, however reluctantly and obstructionist in their compliance, the behavior of the Gallentean establishment was less homogenous. Private corporations took full advantage of the new opportunities presented, but the government, representative of the broader consensus of all citizens and responsive to activist lobbies, was less inclined to view the slave-holding and militaristic elite of the Empire as trustworthy trading partners. While with one hand upholding the agreement by safeguarding Amarrian civilian ships within Federal territories (mostly consisting of missionaries in those years), with the other the Gallenteans used their intelligence and covert operations apparatus, well honed by the ongoing war with the State, to learn the true extent of slavery in the Empire and the ultimate implications of the Imperial Creed for the future of the Gallente-Amarr relationship. Remorse for the cultures subsumed and consigned to the dust bin of history by the Empire's aggression and genuine sympathy for those that still struggled against assimilation grew among the officers and administrators of the Federation, and the FIO's passive intelligence gathering mission quietly transformed into active support for the weak yet genuine voices of Amarrian liberals and Matari guerrilla fighters.

Yet by the time of the Hror campaign and the Battle of Vak'Atioth in 23216, Gallente support for resistance forces within the Empire had already seemed to peak. The Emperor's internal security agencies were making a mockery of Gallentean spycraft and although the Amarrians had yet to trot out evidence of Federal interference in their affairs for public display, an act that would threaten the GAFTA and potentially turn a cold war hot, leaders in the Federal Intelligence Office seemed content to cut their losses, declare the rebel aid initiative a success, and reassign the resources involved to the fight against the Caldari. With foreign support waning and so many lost in the invasion of Hror and assault on Eanna, a neutral world that had played host to Minmatar freedom fighters dedicated to attacking the Empire from without, the outlook on the eve of the Rebellion was bleak for those daring few who remained willing to stand against Amarr and shout into the void their defiance.

These freedom fighters, though not great in number or blessed by material advantages even at the peak of their influence, were truly a dedicated group. In the preceding decades, as the last gasps of the vanishing Matari identity echoed across the stars and generation after generation of Imperial indoctrination threatened to as last pull the children of Pator beneath the seamless golden cloth of the One True Faith, a counterstroke came from somewhere deep in the Minmatar soul. Disparate and tiny societies of escapees (and according to some sources, rogue communities of Minmatar that had somehow eluded enslavement for centuries) persisted on the fringes of the Empire, existing in the all too numerous and vast wildernesses of virtually infinite space. Forced to survive on the least of what the universe had to offer and hunted by zealots, these few free outposts were consumed by desperation as their fellow ethnic Minmatar became an all too common sight among the pirates that preyed upon them, and more and more of their shackled brethren in the Empire gave up the chains of slavery for the robes of priesthood.

Survival, not salvation, was the only hope these people had, and freedom the only dream to which they could yet cling. In the struggle to simply continue, many began to lose touch with what remained of their history. While what little still endured of the Matari essence in these communities slipped away into the necessities of a scavenged life, however, salvation is precisely what fate delivered. No one knows even today with any certainty who, or perhaps what, was behind the appearance of the force that snatched the Minmatar from the yawning jaws of obscurity and thrust them back into light, but few disagree on the name of this phenomenon: the Elders. They have been speculated to be, among a great many other things, immortal humans, aliens, rogue Jovians, a well-organized group of opportunistic ideologues, inventions of Gallentean intelligence agents, mass hallucinations, and in perhaps one of the most compelling theories, a singular long-dormant artificial intelligence safeguarding over so many centuries the core of Matari culture from before the Amarrian conquest of Pator. Whatever they were or are, the Elders emerged simultaneously in the free enclaves around 150 years ago and transformed them in a few short years into bases from which the restoration of Matar would be launched.

Ancient words and ideas, many of which can be traced to pre-conquest Pator, made an unexpected resurgence among the escapees living on the edges of the Amarr Empire after the appearance of the Elders. Records show that songs, dances, poems, and other forms of traditional art, forgotten for centuries after being banned and ruthlessly suppressed by the Imperial authorities, were once again performed in the classical styles in several of these colonies. In space, where a small nomadic culture had grown up around runaway slaves and Imperial Navy deserters of Matari ancestry, the complete Voluval ritual, a rite of passage that involves the traditional tattooing art of the Minmatar and which had been the target of brutal purges by the Amarr, was carried out for the first time in almost a millennium. How these iconic elements of Matari culture survived (admittedly not without undergoing considerable change) so many centuries of abuse is still a matter for debate, but each of the modern tribes

today lays claim to preserving one element of the old ways as a matter of pride and tribal identity. The Vherokior kept the Voluval intact. The Brutor transformed the old martial arts into a harmless school of rhythmic dance and translated them back again when the time came. The Thukkers guarded the philosophy of self-sovereignty and the tradition of the introspective spirit walk, installing them at the core of their tribal culture in the wake of liberation.

In the same decade that saw first contact between the Gallente and Amarr and all eyes focused on the drama of the great nations, the free Minmatar lingering in the periphery of events were quietly waking up, remembering what they thought it meant to be Matari, and finding themselves indescribably, even unnaturally, angry and hungry for vengeance. In the tumult of the Rebellion and the eventual creation of a Matari state, many of the details about this time were lost. At some point before 23200, however, several organizations had grown up among the free Minmatar that pursued this craving for justice to its natural end, and one in particular was ready to go to whatever lengths necessary in the realization of that desire. Calling themselves the Valklears, this group often sought out recruits from among the most ruthless denizens of the free colonies and those bands of vagabonds that preyed upon them. In fact, the ideal Valklear candidates appear to have been the hardest of criminals: murderers and terrorists; and many were drawn from the ranks of the condemned and given a chance to redeem their crimes through service. Instilled with an at least notional pride in their ethnicity and dedication to the idea of Matari independence, they were pointed at the hated Amarr and set loose, quickly proving to be very effective psychological as well as kinetic weapons of a budding insurgency.

Simple piracy was the explanation settled upon by the Imperial leadership for the spike in raids they first noticed just after the turn of the century. Among the other troubles facing the Empire, the increase in such crime along the borders was not at first seen as a terribly worrisome issue. The holders whose territories were threatened moved to repel the raiders, but as the years wore on it soon became clear that this was no passing trend or the work of particularly energetic but otherwise predictable pirate groups. Organized Valklear attacks on Imperial assets first targeted isolated colonies with light defenses, raiding them to liberate slaves who were then transported to the freedom fighters' redoubts for rehabilitation, reeducation, and employment in support of the cause. Several daring strikes in 23207-08 liberated a number of well-educated ethnic Minmatar whose families' long service to the Empire as technicians and shipbuilders had earned them their freedom. Many, with sufficient encouragement, turned on their erstwhile masters and became the foundation of the resistance movement's brain trust, outlining designs for military equipment that could be cheaply and easily constructed using what limited resources and facilities were available to the free enclaves.

Much maligned by those with access to more expensive alternatives, the weapons that emerged from the resistance laboratories in the lead up to the Rebellion and which were further developed in the decades after are greatly misunderstood as being based on obsolete science and thus inherently inferior. Whereas the Amarrians then, as now, used often finicky but impressive high-power focused energy weapons and nanoregenerative armor almost to the exclusion of all other tactical options, the Minmatar freedom fighters went with designs that favored flexibility and employed reliable if ancient concepts of destructive force. Thus emerged the Compact Light Automatic Weapon or CLAW, an iconic small arm of the Rebellion and early Republic whose silhouette remains a nigh universally recognized image among Minmatar, and the Rifter, a frigate-class starship that featured neither a massive power plant nor banks of laser turrets but whose stripped-down superstructure made it fast and maneuverable enough to close on Imperial vessels, dodging their fire, and unload a stream of projectiles and light dumbfire rockets at point-blank range.

With such weapons the free Minmatar embarrassed the defenders of many provincial Amarrian garrisons, liberating hundreds of thousands of their kin in the years before events came to a head, and when the Empire at last attacked the free Matari planet of Eanna in the Hror system in 23216, it was with such weapons that the Minmatar defended their world. The small and nimble craft of the Matari flotilla that made its stand in high orbit above Eanna: Rifters and even faster ships that were little more than engines with weapons mounted to them; ducked between the kilometer-long battleships of the Imperial Navy and showed them as much ferocity as they could summon. The suicidal bluntness of the Matari defense, engaging the Imperial fleet in a stand-up fight that their light hit-and-run raiders could never have won, is thought by some scholars to be evidence that the mysterious Elders were present on the planet and that by tying up the invaders there might be time enough to affect their escape. No Amarrian vessels were lost in the Battle of Eanna, and yet enough damage was done to the pride, if nothing else, of the invading fleet that its commander furiously initiated the bombardment of all settled areas on the planet.

Though he would receive the Aidonis Prize more than one hundred years later for his work in bringing meaningful and lasting peace to the peoples of New Eden, at the time Emperor Heideran VII lauded the order to purge Eanna and in the process destroy countless innocent lives. Rumors circulated in the halls of power that the enigmatic Elders or some portion of their number had been wiped out in the Hror campaign, and for a brief moment it seemed to the lords of Amarr that the pesky rebels had at last been dealt a blow from which they could never fully recover. The Valklears and those groups like them might well have struggled to regain the freedom of movement and reputation for success they enjoyed before Faus Akredon, the Imperial commander at Eanna and later Vak'Atioth as well, earned the sobriquet of "Burning Sword" from the bloodthirsty Amarrian press. Surely with a dedicated and experienced leader at the head of their elite formations and finally attuned as an organization to the real threat posed by poorly-equipped yet fanatic Matari raiding parties, the Imperial Navy could have gone on to several more victories like Eanna and with all likelihood hammered the last nail in the coffin of a free Matar.

Instead, the Jove laid to rest the myth of the Imperial Navy's invincibility on the battlefield at Vak'Atioth, sending home to Amarr more coffins than its leaders and media could possibly discount. As the Ministry of War rushed to assemble a new and larger task force to once more attack the Jove, the rug was pulled from beneath its feet by two nigh simultaneous events. First, news of the defeat at Vak'Atioth reached the Amarrian masses. Anticipation of a great victory and rapid conquest of Jovian space were so certain that the Golden Fleet's invasion of the Directorate was broadcast live in many of the Empire's largest media markets, including the Throne Worlds and capital systems of the five Imperial Heirs. As the flagship *Redemption* went down under devastating fire from a Jovian mothership, the feed was cut by the Ministry of Internal Order, and the several minutes-long delay built into all such broadcasts ensured viewers in the Empire did not actually witness the destruction of Commodore Akredon's grand battleship or any of the fleet's hundreds of other vessels live on the air. Yet when the feed remained silent through the climactic moment, displaying only the words "Amarr Victor" for almost half an hour before normal programming resumed, and no mention of the battle was made in follow-on broadcasts, the seeds of dreadful thoughts were sown in the minds of a trillion Imperial subjects. For a dozen or so hours the darkest of clouds hung over an Empire totally unaccustomed to failure, until at last the truth, as it always tends to do even through the thickest censorship, made its way into the open: the Navy's elite had been wiped out.

While Amarrian parents struggled to explain to their confused children why celebrations of the glorious Reclaiming with all the attendant games, fireworks, and candies were not going to happen as promised, Imperial security officers in several major systems in the colonial

regions of Heimatar and Metropolis, to include the Matari home system of Pator, were struggling to explain to their stunned superiors that they were under intense attack and needed military reinforcement right away. In the immediate aftermath of Vak'Atioth, the free Minmatar had launched their greatest gambit. With the Emperor's ire aimed as much at his Ministry as at the Jove, the beleaguered Imperial War Minister Mekioth Sarum was suddenly faced not only with at least twenty raids by Valklear forces on periphery systems but also completely inexplicable well-equipped and simultaneous uprisings on Imperial worlds with high concentrations of Matari slaves. Weapons had somehow appeared in the hands of millions of Minmatar who had long dreamt of freedom, fed in their hatred of the slaver Empire by an encyclopedia of abuses and the propaganda of the resistance movement nominally led by the Elders. Yearning to draw the first free breaths of their lives, slaves overran their guards and overlords, spilling forth into the great plazas and temples of a hundred Amarrian cities built by Matari hands. As frenzied mobs tore down the trappings of the Imperial Faith and the fatherly icons of a hated and distant Emperor, with them they scattered into the night the millennia-old certainty, which dwelt the heart of every True Amarrian, that God was in Heaven and all was right with the world.

It is remembered in the Republic as the boiling over of a hundred generations' worth of resentment and the culmination of decades of relentless effort by freedom fighters, but the breadth and speed of the Rebellion's first strikes in those chaotic days after Vak'Atioth are owed as much to the fighting spirit of the slaves who had nothing to live for and thus everything to die for as they are to the political gamesmanship of foreign sympathizers. In the hours after the Jove wiped Akredon's fleet from the skies, snap decisions were being made at the highest levels of the Gallente Federation government. Probably with Jovian counsel, the Federal leadership assessed that an unparalleled opportunity to check the power of the Amarr Empire had presented itself and should be acted upon immediately or forever lost. Although never formally acknowledging its role, leaked documents later showed that the Federal Intelligence Office subsequently initiated "Operation Cherry", the most daring of its plans to incite open revolt in the Imperial constellations densest with Minmatar slaves and to supply the rebels with arms up to and including combat aircraft and transorbital dropships while also aiding selected Valklear contingents with clandestine sabotage against key spaceborne targets.

Such sabotage came, among other forms, in disrupting interstellar communications and knocking out the shield systems on large Amarrian space stations. The stations of the day were designed with failsafes that disabled their automatic docking control systems in the event of shield failure, a feature that persists in today's station designs although the disabling of a modern station's shield from the inside is a considerably more challenging feat than it was 130 years ago. The failsafe operates on the principle that any force capable of taking down a station's massive shield could also immediately threaten its structural integrity, and the lifting of all docking and undocking restrictions was judged necessary in such a contingency to allow unhindered evacuation. The Minmatar slaves who toiled aboard those Imperial stations targeted for such sabotage missions needed little encouragement to evacuate when Valklear raiding parties appeared from the void seconds after the shields were disabled and safely reached the interior landing platforms to seize those unfortunate Amarrian vessels left in port and escape again with as many of their liberated brethren as their ships could carry.

Capturing docked Imperial vessels with access to the Empire's administrative and military communications networks, the rebels gained a crucial, if fleeting advantage in information warfare during the opening hours of the Rebellion. Transmissions from the rebels on Imperial frequencies rapidly spread the message of revolution along the space lanes, announcing to the indentured crewmen and technicians found aboard almost all Amarrian ships that their

free brothers and sisters were striking the Empire in full force and the time had come for enslaved Minmatar everywhere to stand up and fight. As the word went out, what had begun on a few key worlds quickly spread. Reports soon came in of impromptu hijackings aboard civilian transports and mutinies of Matari crewmen against their Amarrian officers on provincial security ships and even a few Imperial Navy vessels, prompting the Ministry of Internal Order to shut down all low-level FTL comms traffic in the Empire. Yet the dam had been broken and the waters of liberation were already rushing down the valley of fear and pain used to contain and control the Matari people for centuries. As more and more slave crews seized control of Amarrian ships, the Ministry of War went into triage mode, assuming operational command of all combat craft in the Empire and initiating emergency self-destruct protocols, installed for precisely such an eventuality, aboard many mutineer ships.

Reprisals by hardliners throughout the Empire against the vast majority of Matari slaves who remained in bondage, and in most cases were still unaware that a full-blown rebellion was taking place, began over the following few days while the Imperial Navy's numbers swelled with the activation of reserves and integration of warships commandeered from the countless small private fleets operated by wealthy holders. Valklear raids, targeting vulnerable colonies with high concentrations of slaves, continued despite Amarrian garrisons that mounted increasingly desperate opposition, but the high of early successes soon turned to heartbreak and bitter rage as the rebels fighting their way past hasty blockades and planetary defense grids encountered gruesome scenes upon reaching their objectives. Many holders, especially in the territories under the notoriously strict and conservative influence of the great houses of Ardishapur and Sarum, were simply murdering their slaves rather than leaving any chance that the rebels might affect their liberation and thereby help fill the ranks of the Rebellion. Genocide to any reasonable observer, and an unspeakable tragedy to the rebels paying dearly with their lives in the hope of freeing more of their kin, for the Amarr this was a straightforward economic decision, culling the herd to starve the wolves.

New Eden saw one of the largest migrations of refugees in recorded history and perhaps the greatest of humanitarian relief efforts ever launched as the free Minmatar looked for a way to protect their people in light of such atrocities. With none of the star systems under rebel control fully secured against Imperial counterattack, the throngs of liberated Minmatar fleeing captivity in the cargo bays of rebel ships would not be safe as long as they remained in contested space. In this context, a secret agreement was drafted between the Gallente government and Matari rebel leaders to transport those refugees who were physically unable or intellectually unready to directly support the Rebellion to planets in Federation space and house them there in camps under the administration of the neutral Sisters of EVE aid organization until such a time as Pator and its environs were secure enough to resettle them. With the aid of the FIO, Sisters-flagged transports picked up refugee former slaves, among them many newly orphaned children and most having no worldly possessions save the clothes on their back, at covert rendezvous points sited as close to the Federation border as possible and, as was necessary to maintain their neutrality, made the crossing unescorted and armed with only their convictions. While some transports were intercepted by either rogue Amarrian or pirate ships, and their charges recouped into slavery or sent to fates worse still along with their selfless SoE crewmen, most who dared the voyage survived.

Pirates and radicals did not limit their targets to defenseless refugee transports, however, and an unprecedented spike in violence was seen from all quarters as criminal elements and extremist sub-factions on both sides of the conflict took advantage of the chaos to advance their agendas by any means necessary. The official Imperial media consequently wasted no time in attributing every hostile action to the rebels, often trumping up the damage done and ravenously feeding on accounts of the torturous abuse, rape, and summary execution of innocents as evidence of Matari inhumanity. It is little wonder that the Valklears, already



noted for their brutal instincts, extended paltry few mercies to the Amarrians they fought or captured in the early weeks of the Rebellion, but portrayals of their cold-blooded atrocities, some of which have become acceptable fare in media markets outside the Empire in recent decades, are almost certainly overblown. You see, the free Minmatar were ultimately not out to inflict pain and suffering on the Amarrian populace, however thoroughly it might salve their need for vengeance, but to free their fellows and forge a sovereign nation from those colonies the Empire had populated centuries prior with billions of displaced Matari slaves. Though difficult even now to describe all the forces in play during the early Rebellion, let alone catalog the importance of each raid, battle, and war crime, it was becoming clear to the lords of Amarr in the Rebellion's first several weeks that the momentum of events lay with the rebels.

This was demonstrated in no small way when unprofessional Matari fleets consisting of fast, cheaply-built frigates scored victories against the juggernaut of the still-mobilizing but eminently better trained and equipped Imperial Navy in ship-to-ship combat. Without an elite formation around which to rally, the Navy was surprisingly disorganized, and as rebel pilots outflew their Imperial counterparts in engagement after engagement and demonstrated that subcapital vessels using guerrilla tactics could at least temporarily deny space to large ships-of-the-line, the Empire's greatest hope for crushing the Rebellion, its space superiority, seemed to rest on an uncomfortably shaky foundation. It was with such reservations and struggling to combine so many provincial forces under its command, each seemingly led by the supercilious son or uncle of some prominent holder or another, that the Ministry of War turned to outside hires to reinforce its embattled fleets. The Order of Saint Tetrimon, having languished in obscurity as a small and persecuted martial order after being driven from the Imperial stage during the Moral Reforms, re-emerged as a mercenary force fighting for the Empire against the rebels. Swift and skillful in combat and vicious to their prisoners, the Order struck fear in the hearts of rebel commanders wherever it appeared, but as a strategic force its impact on the ultimate course of the Rebellion was dramatically overshadowed by the cracks that showed within the Matari front itself.

Although under constant pressure to assimilate and their communities subject to the perpetual scrutiny of their Amarrian masters, the Minmatar had in the near millennium of their enslavement managed to develop a distinct culture that ran undercurrent to their status as a subject race. The great tribal identities and the countless subtribes, clans, and familial groupings of this shadow civilization went through countless changes, adjusting to the intensity of cultural indoctrination and the particular local conditions they encountered over the centuries. By the time the Elders emerged on the scene, apparently the ultimate expression of the tribal mindset (or perhaps simply careful social engineers who found the tribes an ideal rallying point around which the Minmatar could easily be gathered), seven primary groupings existed.

Among the lowest tiers of slaves and those whose ancestors were relegated to the most physically challenging work were found the Brutor tribesmen. The indentured technical experts who attended to the operation and maintenance of infrastructural technologies that were deemed unworthy of Amarrian efforts produced the culture of the Sebiestor clans. In space, where Minmatar were still used in large numbers as crewmen aboard Imperial vessels, were found the Thukkers. Among the administrative aides and slave attendants whose proximity to the Empire's most powerful figures lent them to involvement in the cloak and dagger machinations of state lurked the blood of the Krusual. The individual Matari slave often lived a dual life, displaying the qualities expected of a loyal subject and deferent servant in public while cherishing in private with family and comrades the scraps of their cultural distinctiveness that remained alive. Still, some found syncretism in these two halves of a life. Particularly among the Nefantar tribe, heavily represented in the ecclesiastic

institutions of the Empire, there were Minmatar, derisively called Ammatars by their kin, who genuinely accepted the Imperial Faith and proudly displayed the surety of their devotion while at the same time feeling true racial pride as an ethnic Matari.

When the leaders of the Rebellion gathered secretly in Pator not six weeks after the first uprisings drove the Amarrians out of the ancient Matari home system, representatives of the Seven Tribes (the five mentioned above in addition to the Vherokior, an adaptable people who often lived as slaves in households of the itinerant Amarrian middle classes, and the notional representation of the long-extinguished Starkmanir) were present. They met with the intention to proclaim an independent Minmatar nation and at last make salient the ultimate goal of the thirty-year resistance and the Rebellion it was still waging. They did so, declaring to the universe: "We the People of the Seven Tribes hereby establish, on the birthworld of our forefathers and with jurisdiction extended unto those distant stars that their progeny, by sweat and blood, have made near, a Republic of Minmatar, unified and equal, possessed of freedom and independence, responsible and just, honoring family and the trust of clanship, mindful of history and sworn in brotherhood to the Great Struggle, and for the protection of the culture and language, do therefore commission a Tribal Army, responsive to the leadership of the Tribal Assembly that may convene as the needs of the People dictate."

Seven though the tribes numbered on paper, in practice only four of the remaining six followed through with upholding the Minmatar Republic's declaration of independence. The Thukker tribe, though at first a participating member in the infant Republic, would later split from its brethren during the Second Pator Conference in 23219 and its people would thereafter take to a nomadic life in the depths of space. Nefantar leaders broke much sooner. Long privileged in the Empire for their acceptance of Amarrian values and willingness to integrate within Imperial society, the Nefantar ultimately refused to side with the rebels. The Empire rewarded their hesitation to join in revolt and inveigled their loyalty with a bold offer. In exchange for their active support of the Emperor in his efforts to put down the Rebellion, the Nefantar were granted a semblance of autonomy and a region of space to call their own. Conveniently, this was the region of the Empire that bordered the outer systems claimed (and defended) by the newly founded Republic, and with the establishment and rapid militarization of the Ammatar Mandate as an Imperial client state, the Amarrians skillfully erected a strategic buffer between the rebels and the valuable core worlds of the Empire proper.

Understandably, the leaders and people of the Republic were furious at the Nefantar betrayal. Together the tribes had waged a historic effort and were at last on the cusp of achieving the impossible dream of liberation despite enormous costs, when in the penultimate moment the Nefantar elders chose instead to kneel as Ammatars rather than stand as Minmatar. As the fateful year of 23216 drew to a close and with the massive Imperial Navy at last regaining its composure and organization after the knock-out punch of Vak'Atioth and the ensuing eruption of the Rebellion, the Amarrians were tempted to goad the defenders of the young Republic. On the eve of the first major campaign of the Imperial counterattack, War Minister Mekioth Sarum transmitted the following warning into the Republic: "Your brothers have seen the truth of God's word and advise you to submit without further delay. If I bring my fleets upon you, I will destroy the colonies you cower within, burn the skies over your heads, and slay your people to the last child." With arms and resources pouring in from the Gallente Federation and more worlds in Heimatar, Metropolis, and Molden Heath turning to them with each passing day, the council of rebel leaders that would later evolve into the Republic Parliament sent to Amarr a single word reply: "If."

The Amarr never regained the regions that fell to the Minmatar during the Rebellion. Heimatar, Metropolis, and Molden Heath remain the sovereign territory of the Republic to this day, but their status as such was never guaranteed and has been maintained only through

great sacrifice. As the Imperial Navy's counterattacks failed to break the rebel lines and exert any sort of permanent control in Republic-held space, the center of gravity in the conflict shifted from Amarr to Tanoo, capital system of the Ammatar Mandate. As the skirmishes and great raids of the Rebellion transitioned to the battles of the Minmatar-Ammatar War, a localized but intense conflict that would continue for more than a century and saw the evolution of a rag-tag band of rebels into the professional fighting forces of the Republic Fleet, the Empire slowly came to terms with the new shape of their universe and the terrifying thought that God had forsaken them. For almost one hundred years, "Reclaiming" would be treated like a dirty word in the Amarr Empire and the Emperor Heideran VII would, in the twilight of his reign, become a man of peace.

Having invested heavily in the rebels who formed the Minmatar Republic, the Gallenteans quickly asserted themselves in the distillation of its institutions. Still at war with their arch-nemesis, the megacorporate alliance of the Caldari State, and by no means comfortable with the Amarr Empire on their opposite border, the Federation would gain a priceless ally in a free Matari nation dedicated to liberal democratic ideals and able to defend itself against foreign aggression. Soon after the declaration of the Republic, representatives of the Federal Diplomatic Service began arriving in the refugee camps set up in Gallente space to deliver supplies, render medical and social services, and to teach millions of newly-freed Matari slaves about representative government and how to exercise the personal and social liberties that were still alien to most of them. When those refugees eventually left for the Republic, their eyes were opened to a universe of possibility and they tackled their young nation's problems with gusto alongside new Gallentean friends who were all too happy to help. In the years after the Caille Conference of 23220, where the Federation elicited concessions from the Empire on the matter of the Gallente-Minmatar relationship, the Republic Parliament was created on the model of the Federation Senate and the Matari military learned command organization, capital ship tactics, and advanced logistics from Federation Navy advisers.

New Eden was transformed by the Rebellion, breaking apart the largest empire in history and introducing to interstellar politics a powerful new player. Though young and enjoying virtually no institutional inheritance from which to build its offices of government and agencies of administration, the Minmatar Republic proved to be a nation full of vigor. Its people were energized by their achievements, having stood up to and beaten the hated slaver and successfully embraced democratic ideals in the shaping of their own destiny, and yet their true mission was not complete. Although hundreds of millions of Minmatar had been freed in the raids and revolutions of the Rebellion, an equal number remained in chains within the Amarr Empire, Khanid Kingdom, and Ammatar Mandate, subject in most cases to even greater deprivations than before, and so the Great Struggle would continue until the very last was brought home to freedom.

While the decades since the Rebellion have seen the continuance of that mission under a number of auspices, the official policies of the Republic (and certainly its alliance with the Gallente Federation) has kept it out of open warfare with the Amarr Empire. The prevention of outright war, a questionably significant achievement considering the degree to which Matari vigilante and terrorist groups based in Republic space have caused trouble for Amarr over the last century, was due almost certainly to the creation of a new international body for diplomatic dialogue and security regulation. With the encouragement of Aidonis Elabon, the young and energetic President of the Gallente Federation who served in that office from 23230-35, the Jovian Directorate restored contact with the Amarr Empire and helped to spearhead the effort to forge a cluster-wide council dedicated, among other things, to avoiding future conflicts on the scale of the still ongoing Gallente-Caldari War and the Great Minmatar Rebellion and ensuring that future disputes between the superpowers would be resolved by peaceful means.

The Consolidated Cooperation and Relations Command, popularly rendered by the acronym CONCORD, was founded in 23233 after intense behind-the-scenes dealings at the highest levels of power. Proposed and supported most strongly by the Federation and its friends among the Jove, CONCORD was initially seen as a way to secure guarantees from the Amarrian elite that the Gallente-Amarr Free Trade Agreement, suspended during and for many years after the Minmatar Rebellion, would again be respected and that Gallentean interests in the Republic and elsewhere would be protected against Imperial (specifically Ammatar) interference. The Empire countered that such guarantees could only be made if a third party were included at the table, offering the Caldari State as an ideal candidate and forming the first tenuous links of friendship between Amarr and New Caldari. Gallente diplomats consented on the terms that representatives from the Republic be included in CONCORD as well. Although Imperial negotiators made a great fuss over permitting the Minmatar, they eventually relented. Much later it was learned that the Jovians, who had blessed the Ishukone Corporation, then a minor player in Caldari megacorporate politics, with powerful hydrostatic capsule technology in 23224, offered to extend their scientific generosity to Amarr provided it agreed to giving the Republic a seat.

Mandated with the lofty goal of protecting universal peace and prosperity, CONCORD began its existence tumultuously. At first, its only official function was as a floor for free debate among the superpowers, and amidst countless disagreements between the representatives of the cluster's five largest nations over both minor and major points, CONCORD managed to achieve little until after the Yoiful Conference of 23236. Aboard the Jovian cruiser *Yoiful*, the CONCORD powers established a system of timekeeping for use in all space traffic control and aboard all major stations, resetting the calendar to the year YC0 and scoring the first significant achievement of their new council. The creation and maintenance of a universal clock led to CONCORD's expanded role as an international regulatory agency for trade and communications. The body was thus empowered to monitor the movement of goods, people, and data across international borders and to ensure compliance with all applicable laws in order to combat fraud, interdict smuggling, and discourage violent crime on the high skies. To achieve this it established the Commerce Assessment Department (CAD), Secure Commerce Commission (SEC), and Directive Enforcement Department (DED) among several other agencies.

Though charged with a enormous task (space being a very big place, after all), CONCORD initially depended on funding from its member nations and most, with the notable exception of the Jovian Directorate, were often quite delinquent in paying their dues. It was not until the Battle of Iyen-Oursta in YC15 (23251), when the long-quiet Gallente-Caldari War threatened to explode once more into relevance that CONCORD truly came into its own. Sticking to its mandate to protect the diplomatic and economic stability of the cluster, the body's inner circle decided that the civil war that began in Luminaire 96 years before and had irresponsibly been allowed to spread to the stars had gone on for far too long already. Leveraging the influence of the other three members and various anti-war parties within the belligerent nations, CONCORD managed to force the governments of the Federation and State to the table. Within six months of the battle, a formal peace agreement was signed with all territories restored to their original owners save the old Caldari homeworld in Luminaire, by then a planet vital to the Federation's economy and one that was home to a majority Gallente population.

At last ending a war that generations of Gallente and Caldari leaders had been unable to, CONCORD earned enormous respect from all quarters. Its influence and income grew steadily as member nations paid more than lip service to the mission of interstellar security and the SEC and DED found new ways to raise capital. Following quickly on the heels of its diplomatic coup in settling the cluster's longest-running conflict, CONCORD achieved a major

economic victory with the establishment and widespread ratification of a new international trading currency: the Interstellar Kredit (ISK). Although at first a financial tool for governments and only the largest of megacorporations, the ISK proved invaluable for facilitating commerce and international investment as a medium of exchange that knew no borders and over time would mature into the default currency of almost all spaceborne enterprise.

By YC 20, virtually every barrier to large-scale entrepreneurship and exploration in New Eden had been soundly reduced thanks in large part to CONCORD. Those with both sufficient vision and will looked to the stars and, seeing the specters of war, piracy, and instability on a precipitous decline in this new age, imagined a better future and dreamed of building paradises to call their own. In the decades that followed, as stargate networks expanded at a frenzied pace, adventurers and idealists would dare to test the limitless promise of the future in deep space. A few would even succeed. Not all that can be imagined is good, however, and when some of those starry-eyed dreams eventually turned to nightmares, the powers of CONCORD would take one further step in the name of their collective prosperity and stand united against frightful new challengers...

...to be continued in Volume 2.