ASTRAL TRAVEL IN THE WORLD OF PROGRESS

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TYPES OF SHIP

FOLDSHIPS

The smaller foldships are designed and built by Dark lament, and are created from a base of material similar to that which the Deathsuit is constructed from. The control method of the ship is a neural interface between the deathsuit of the pilot and the primary control seat, which forms the bridge of the ship.

The control of any foldship is down to the navigators, the number of navigators required to control and use one of these ships depends very much on the size and class of the ship. The ship itself is constructed to the specifications of those commissioning it. The only people who are permitted to commission the building of a foldship are SLA Industries and the High command of the Navigator guilds. When they commission a ship, they will specify what is to go into the construction of that ship.

There are two separate types of foldship, those that are grown, and those that are constructed

Granch Foldships

The first type of foldship is the one most commonly viewed in the World of Progress. Smaller than the constructed ships, but no less powerful, and certainly the more preferred amongst most navigators. These ships take approximately one month per ten tons of spatial displacement to grow, and are cultivated in the huge orbital Dark Lament Space Station of Meros. Due to the time required to grow the larger ships, few navigator houses will ever make request for anything larger than a type 3 foldship.

The costs for such ships vary, but are never less than several million credits. The larger ships easily breach the billions level.

A Granch foldship is made from the same material as the normal Deathsuit, but possesses the power to channel flux itself, containing several huge flux batteries in the bowels of the ship to augment the power of the user. This is to prevent the user becoming burned out from the incredible amounts of flux burned by these ships. The Granch foldship is a thing of beauty when in motion, as it swims through the inky darkness of space, its living hull continually moving, like some giant predator. When in combat, the ship grows it's own weapons and shifts and changes to meet the requirements that its pilot puts upon it.

Most navigators choose these ships as their transport if they are given the option, only the poorer navigator guilds and pirate fleets use the M'dach variant Foldships

Identifying a Granch foldship is singularly easy, they are huge pieces of organic poetry, the likes of which could not be seen anywhere else. The ships themselves are varied in their markings, they usually carry the insignia of the guild or house to which they belong, but are otherwise as varied as the

races of the worlds of progress. The ships are usually moulded by the personality of the navigator who has command of it, and the pilots' race can generally be guessed at from the design that the ships hull takes. Ebon ships tend to be soft, curved ships that swim gently through space, even at great speed. Brain Waster ships are brutally angular ships, stark and contrasting to the ebon ships. Ships that have a necanthrope navigator are hideous constructions of spikes and claws, fully capable of tearing into other ships without using their ranged weapons.

M'dach Foldships

The other type of foldship is the M'dach foldship. Often larger than the Granch foldships due to there being no requirement to actually grow these ships. They are similar in appearance to the normal ships of the World of Progress, their construction is typically space forged Titanium, with Adamantium fittings and structure. The ship usually displays the markings of the Guild or house that owns it, and has a locator beacon aboard it fulfilling the same purpose as the core of the Granch foldship.

These ships are sterile to most navigators, devoid of emotional contact, most navigators will only pilot one of these ships if forced to do so. Sadly, the distinctly lower cost of construction means that most of the smaller navigator guilds will use these as a matter of course.

The ships themselves are less responsive and generally less efficient than the Granch foldships, and cannot make full use of the navigators natural abilities in either battle or peacetime. Their weaponry is typically mundane and requires other crewmen to operate it.

Still, the cost of these ships still often runs into hundreds of thousands of credits. The actual superstructure of the ship can be constructed on any of the orbital forges, but dark lament must install the fold core and batteries.

Identifying an M'dach foldship is a little more difficult than one would think, there is nothing on the outside to distinguish the ship from other drive types except that the marks that separate the other drive types will not be present on this ship. Apart from that, the only other possibility is that some of the ships organic components will be visible from the outside, but this is a rare eventuality.

Deathships (K'Gorn Foldships)

The K'gorn foldships are not constructed, rather, they appear when summoned. This is the public explanation of how these ships are made. They are only piloted by entire unions of necanthropes, and are never seen in civilian service. The only K'gorn foldships in active service at this point belong to SLA industries.

Deathships are difficult to distinguish from necanthrope granch foldships, but they are generally far larger than the normal ships, and any ebb-navigator will be able to sense the difference between the living ship and the dead one.

ION DRIVE

The Ion Drive ships is closer to what most people envision as the typical starship, using thrusters and gravimetric generators when in atmosphere or similar environments, the main Ion drive only comes into effect when making system spanning jumps. The crew must be in stasis at the time of the jump, as the acceleration from the drives quickly pulps anything wandering around the ship at the point at which the drive engages. The crew are able to come out of stasis while the ship is travelling at drive speed, but must return to stasis when the ship is about to slow from Drive speed.

These ships are ungainly and unmanoeuverable in normal space, and are usually only used for long distance hauling for the most part. Robotics play a great part in the ships control features, and the pilots of such ships are usually not very skilled.

Ships using Ion Drives are distinguished by their massive engines, always at the side of the ship, running the entire length of the vessel, and at least the same height as the vessel in question. Ion drive ships have a large exhaust port at the back of each drive, allowing the ship to vent used plasma into the atmosphere when travelling at speed to prevent the overheating of the engines. If something blocks the

exhaust ports, the ships automatic computer will shut down the drive when overheating becomes apparent.

GRAVITY DRIVE

The Gravity drive is the most popular of the drives in use at this point in time. The drive uses the gravity of planets and stars nearby to propel itself through space. It can use thrusters to move when there are no planets in the vicinity, but this is rare. The ships computers are calibrated to use a specially designed directional gravity wave generator to move the ship. This generator also creates an inertial damping field within the ship itself, this allows the crew to move as if in a normal atmosphere. When using the main drive, the ship uses a slingshot method to build up speed and power, releasing at the exact point necessary to catch the next gravity field on its path.

Using this method, the ship travels from system to system in good time, but is limited for use only along established trade routes, it is no good for exploring systems where planets and courses have not already been charted. As a net result, these ships are the most used within the merchant guilds, but have little use anywhere else.

Gravity Drive ships are easily identifiable by the gravity generator in the centre of the ship. At least fifty metres across, this drive resembles a large spiked ball which revolves on the Y axis only. It is also possible to discern when the drive is being powered up, as the ball will speed up in its motion. The ball needs to be spinning at full speed to enable system spanning travel. Damage to this ball, or the mounts that hold it steady will often cripple the ship or at least lower its level of performance by a huge amount.

M'SS DRIVE

The M'ss drive is only used by the shaktar race, they have never shared the technology used with any other race, and those captured or disabled have destroyed their ships rather than allow the technology to be taken by anyone else.

The M'ss drive uses a strange principle of displacement to move around. It uses a method of propulsion where actual mass is taken into the front of the ship and forced through it, exiting through the rear of the ship. It is a well known fact that there is nothing in space to actually gain purchase on, so the exact nature of the drive is shrouded in mystery. Never the less, the M'ss drive is one of the more effective forms of travel. They accelerate slowly enough not to require stasis chambers, but can also manoeuvre in normal atmosphere with almost foldship capability. The ships require vast amounts of power, and as a net result, all M'ss drive ships have the capability to drain energy from stars to recharge the power of the ship.

The same principle that drives the ship also provides a powerful deflection screen around the engines of the ship. In some of the warship variants of this drive type, the engines run the length of the ship, providing strong defence for the ship in combat.

Ships using M'ss drives are only used by the shaktar race, and thus identifying one is usually a matter of looking for the shaktar symbols on the side of the ship. The actual drive is a series of cylinders mounted along the length of the ship that all react together to produce the drive effect. Should one of these cylinders be damaged, that particular drive will be rendered inoperative. However, due to the nature of the m'ss drive, damaging the cylinders is extremely hard to say the least.

HAMMER DRIVE

Used only on smaller ships, the Hammer drive is a super-powered jet that allows unparalleled speed and manoeuvrability in ship to ship combat. It is characterised by the donut shaped rings that follow the ship as it moves. The Hammer drive uses a hyper active piston to force the power out of the rear of the ship, this activates every few seconds, generating the donut as it hits the rear of the ship.

The Hammer drive is dependent on thrusters for actual steering in space, but is equally at home in the atmosphere of planets, or in space. However, the hammer drive is limited by the power requirements to one man fighters and/or dropship variants.

Identifying a Hammer drive is simplicity itself, just play spot the donut.

STAR DRIVE/STAR GLIDERS

The most common civilian ships, the star drive uses a combination of solar power and spatial flux to move around. These ships are powered by their sails and wings, and should these be disabled, the ship will be unable to move under its own power. The sails absorb solar power from the space around them and transfer that power to the main drive, which uses a gravitic generator to propel itself through space. These ships are neither swift nor sturdy, but they are amongst the most artistic of designs, and are often used in the races around new paris. These ships are not really designed for planet to planet travel, and are generally playthings for the more wealth operatives.

The identifying marks of a Star drive are the sails and wings. No other class of ship uses these things, and on any other ship, they would simply be an encumbrance and an exercise in futility.

SOLID FUEL DRIVE

Equivalent to 20th century earth equivalents, these drives are typically only used by Darknight, who cannot get their hands on anything better.

Identifying these ships is a simple matter of looking for the massive booster rockets on the sides of the ships (and watching the ships go bang when anything so much as scratches the side of them)

CLASSES OF SHIPS

Each Drive type has several different classifications, each ship type is described in the following section. Each ship has several statistics to it, these are explained as follows

SHIP TYPE – This gives the general fleet classification of the ship being described.
DISPLACEMENT – This is to give some idea of how large the ship actually is, the displacement value is given in tons, and is the ships spaceborn mass. In any atmosphere, the ships weight increases by a factor of five.
CREW – This is represented by a range of numbers, the smallest number is the minimum crew required to operate the ship and all its weapons, the maximum number is the recommended number. In the case of a minimum number of 1, this will be the navigator alone, who will be able to fly the ship single handedly. In the event of two or more, this represents one primary navigator, who will set course and make the actual calculation, and one or more co-pilots who will handle the navigation and other weapons/equipment on the ship.
PASSENGERS – This is also represented by a number which represents the number of passengers which the ship can carry per five tons of space weight that It masses. For example, a ship with a passenger rating of 3 weighing 30 tons could carry 18 passengers. It is to be noted that ships crew are not counted towards the number of passengers on the ship, it is assumed that passengers have nothing to do with the running of the ship, and are completely extraneous to anything that the ship does. If the ship has a passenger rating of 0, then no unassigned people are permitted on ships of that type.
GEAR – This represents the amount of weaponry and special equipment that the ship can carry. It is also proportionally to the mass of the ship. In this case however, the ratio is per Ten tons of ship mass. Therefore, a ship with a weapons ratio of 4 and a mass of 50 tons could mount 20 points of weaponry and equipment. The weapons and equipment available for each ship type is listed at the end of each section.

Granch Foldships

The Granch foldship is the one of the smaller ship types in the WoP, the smallest ship is hardly larger than the average StarGlider.

SHIP TYPE	DISPLACEMENT	CREW	PASSENGERS	GEAR
Scout	30-150	1-3	3	4
Transport (Military)	100-400	1-5	8	2
Transport (Civilian)	150-600	2-8	12	1
Cruiser (Military)	100-200	3-12	2	4
Heavy Cruiser (Military)	300-900	6-30	1	5
Dreadnought	1500-10000	10-90	0	6

The final type of Granch foldship is the Coloniser, there are only two of these in existence, the Redemption and the Salvation, Both ships are 300000 tons displaced weight, with a permenant crew of 250, and the capacity for 200000 passengers at any one time, they are completely unarmed, but are never without their escort of twenty dreadnoughts.

M'Dach foldship

SHIP TYPE	DISPLACEMENT	CREW	PASSENGERS	GEAR
Scout	50-200	1-2	4	5
Transport (Military)	100-500	2-4	9	2
Transport (Civilian)	100-800	4-8	14	0
Cruiser (Civilian)	150-300	4-6	2	3
Cruiser (Military)	100-600	6-10	1	6
Heavy Cruiser (Military)	250-1500	10-40	1	6
Dreadnought	2000-12000	30-100	0	8

Deathships

SHIP TYPE	DISPLACEMENT	CREW	GEAR
Cruiser	100-150	8	10
Annihilator	1000-25000	8-64*	12

*The crew of the annihilator must be in a number that can be divided by 8, this is due to the fact that only entire unions are allowed onto these ships. If a member of a union is killed, the entire union will be removed from duty till the killed member is replaced. Deathships do not allow passengers (too much temptation for the crew to take a snack), and only change the crew when someone is killed.

Ion Drives

SHIP TYPE	DISPLACEMENT	CREW	PASSENGERS	GEAR
Explorer	75-150	3-6	1	3
Cruiser (Military)	200-500	10-20	0	4
Cruiser (Civilian)	400-800	15-30	3	2
Battleship	500-1100	12-30	1	5
Dreadnought	20000-40000	30-50	0	4

Gravity Drive

SHIP TYPE	DISPLACEMENT	CREW	PASSENGERS	GEAR
Planet Hopper	50-100	1-2	2	2
Cruiser (Military)	100-400	5-10	1	5
Cruiser (Civilian)	100-500	8-15	3	2
System Hauler*	10000-20000	15-30	1	4

*System Haulers must possess additional cargo bays, there must be at least one cargo bay per 500 tons of actual displacement. The gear points for this must be deducted from the total number of gear points.

M'ss Drive

SHIP TYPE	DISPLACEMENT	CREW	PASSENGERS	GEAR
H'nt'r	75-200	2-4	1	4
D'str'y'r	200-300	7-14	1	4

Pr'd't'r	500-1000	7-21	1	4
Sl'gh'trr	2500-3000	7-28	1	7
Dr'dn'ght	15000-30000	14-35	1	5

M'ss drives are the only ships capable of using the shaktarian equipment list.

Hammer Drive

SHIP TYPE	DISPLACEMENT	CREW	PASSENGERS	GEAR
Fighter	10	1	0	12
Interceptor	20	2	0	10
Gunship*	30	2-3	0	12

*Gunship variants must mount at least twenty points of weaponry on them.

StarGliders/Star Drives

SHIP TYPE	DISPLACEMENT	CREW	PASSENGERS	GEAR
Yacht	20-30	1	2	3
Liner	300-500	6-30	3	2

Solid Fuel Drive

SHIP TYPE	DISPLACEMENT	CREW	PASSENGERS	GEAR
Spatial Interceptor	100-150	6	1	1
Transporter	300-500	8	2	1

EQUIPMENT LISTING

Each ship can be equipped with some of the items on the following list.

Basic Equipment – All ships can use these items

Shadow Screen – This is a holographic imaging system that allows the ship to monitor the types of star and background on each side of it, and match it with an equivalent image on the other side of the ship. In basic terms, this prevents perfect tracking on the ship which has the screen. the ship leaves a faint residual trail at higher speeds as the imaging systems try and keep up with the images going past. This takes up four gear points per hundred tons of ship, and cannot be fitted to anything displacing more than a thousand tons.

Bolt Cannon – A standard magnetic accelerator cannon, firing single bolts incredible distances. Due to the lack of friction in space, the bolts will continue to travel until they actually strike a target. As a result of this, these weapons are only mounted on the cheaper ships, and do not make for popular weaponry within the field of combat. They are available in five different grades, numbered one to five, the weapon requires two gear points per grade of the weapon, and a separate ammunition drum for each bolt cannon.

Bolt Cannon ammunition Drum – This holds a thousand rounds for the standard bolt cannon, and is refillable at any space station.

Laser Cannon – This is a simple laser cannon, designed to work in space, it fires bolts of concentrated light over vast distances with tremendous damage capacity. These are also available in five different grades, these weapons require three gear points per grade, the ammunition is in the form of separate batteries. These weapons perform more efficiently with more batteries, but can run on economy if necessary.

Laser Battery – This is a small nuclear reactor, designed to recharge itself on a rapid basis. Each Battery recharges one unit of power per turn. Lasers require one unit of power per grade, per turn, to operate at full capacity. Each laser battery holds a maximum of twenty units of power. If there is insufficient power to fire the weapon, then the weapon will not fire until sufficient power is available to fire. Most

ship designs have more batteries than are required for the very real possibility that one or more of the batteries may be damaged in combat. Laser batteries take up one gear point per two batteries.

Plasma Cannon – The Plasma cannon does not work by heat or cold damage as it does in normal atmosphere. After all, ships designed to operate in the absolute zero of space or the corona of stars are unlikely to be affected by any extremes of temperature. Instead, plasma cannons fire superheated bolts of plasma that adhere to the target, forming a coating over the hull of the target, which quickly cools into an immobile shell. This may seem like not a bad thing, after all, it acts as extra armour in it's cooled state, however, for any ships with moving parts, vents or exhausts, this can be critical in disabling the ship. Plasma Cannons take up Five gear points each, and require one or more vats of plasma to be fully operational.

Plasma Vats – Designed to hold the plasma for the cannon to fire, each one of these vats holds ten shots for the standard plasma cannon, they can be recharged at any space station.

Cargo Bay – This is an enclosed space within the main ship, used to transport goods, valuables and other cargo, this area is sealed from the outside atmosphere, but accessible both from the outside and the inside. Cargo bays are often the chosen point of entry for those making boarding actions. Cargo bays cannot be fitted on a ship smaller than 100 tons of displacement, and cannot take up more than half of the ships displacement. Cargo bays take one Gear point per two tons of cargo bay.

Fighter Bay – These are Bays with launch capability for fighters that are on board the ship. They are more economical than the cargo bay due to the lack of need for stable climate control within most of them. Fighter bays can hold a number of smaller craft equal to their total tonnage, and have powered doors and launch tubes where necessary. The cost of a fighter bay is two gear points per ton of space, this includes all the necessary space and equipment for the fighters in question. Fighter Bays over a hundred tons in size can sometimes accommodate the smaller fleet craft, and it is not uncommon for the colony ships to carry several of the smaller fleet ships within them to facilitate easier access to the world they are moving to. Fighter Bays cannot take up more than Half of a ships total tonnage.

Note: Fighter bays and Cargo bays both count towards the total tonnage allowed by a ship. For example, a 100 ton ship could contain a 20 ton fighter bay and a thirty ton Cargo bay, or any combination thereof, but the combined tonnage must not exceed 50.

Navigation Computer – This is a standard on all system traversing ships, it contains all the star charts, co-ordinates, and distances for all planetary movement. Without one of these, the crew have to navigate using paper and pencil (and let's be honest, we wouldn't want to be trying that would we?) The Standard Navigation computer takes up one gear point and is often linked to the ships onboard sensors.

System Scanner – This item allows the ship to scan up to fifty light years in any direction, reporting back all power signs, lifesigns, and other information that may be required by the ship. In conjunction with the Navigational computer, it can bring the ship out of full power drive should the need arise, it can also make minor course alterations if this would be preferable. The System Scanner takes up one gear point.

Explorer Sensors – An infinitely more complex form of the system scanner. The Explorer sensors can catalogue any forms of life and atmosphere within the system. They can also be used to extrapolate and collate information that will enable the correct minds to predict astral phenomenon before they occur. Explorer sensors take up ten gear points, and cannot be fitted to any ship smaller than 50 tons.

Ram Prow – The ram prow is a favourite amongst pirate conclaves and mercenary guilds. The Ram prow is a massively reinforced Adamantium covering over the front of the ship. Effectively invulnerable to most forms of weaponry, this modification is used as a precursor to boarding, usually mounted on a smaller ship, the ship will ram the other ship, then open up the ram prow to allow the boarding parties into the other ship. The Ram Prow takes up one gear point per two tons of ship displacement.

Assault tubes – These allow troops from one ship to cross the space between the two ships to try and take over the other ship. They can be fitted either in the ram prow of a ship, or along the sides of it,

where the troops will attempt to enter the opponents ship through holes in the hull caused by weapons fire. Assault tubes take up one gear point each.

Medical Bay – this option fits a fully equipped medical bay into the ship. Medical bays require five tons of space on the ship, and cannot be fitted to anything smaller than a 70 ton ship. The bay will be staffed by one doctor and one assistant, and requires Ten gear points to fully equip. Additional space can be created at the cost of two gear points per extra ton of medbay, each extra ton of medbay space will be capable of holding up to ten injured.

Grapple unit – This fits a set of grapples onto the ship, these grapples can either be magnetic or manual, the cost is the same no matter which are selected. These grapples cost one gear point per twenty tons of towing capacity. It is to be noted that if the towing ship is weaker than the ship being towed, the grapples merely act as a chain for the lighter ship. Standard Grapples have a range of four miles, and cannot be fitted on any ship smaller than 100 tons.

Energy Siphon – The energy siphon is popular with all the guilds, it is a device that allows the ship to skim the outer limits of a star and take energy from the star as it passes. The Energy siphon is available in grades one to five, In layman's terms, the ship can skim off one point of energy per minute per grade that they stay near a star. Energy siphons cost two gear points per grade of siphon, and more than one siphon can be fitted on a ship. However, they cannot be fitted on any ship smaller than 50 tons.

Bio camouflage – this option fits a shell of dark lament material over the top of the normal ships hull, this allows the ship (very basically) to pass as a granch type foldship. The ship will register as alive to sensors, and will be sufficient camouflage to anything giving the ship a cursory glance. Ebon navigators will soon tell the difference, as will explorer sensors. Bio camouflage costs one gear point per ten tons of displacement, and must be acquired for the entire ship at once.

Foldship equipment

Flux Battery – This Device is basically a huge chunk of dark lament material that does nothing except absorb and contain flux for use by the ship. Foldships are fitted with one battery per ten tons of displacement as standard, and each battery holds 200 flux. Flux batteries take up one gear point per two batteries, and the flux is usable for any of the ships functions. The batteries recharge at the rate of five flux per turn.

Symbiotic Chamber – A standard feature on many Granch foldships, it is also available for other foldship types. The symbiotic chamber is a living chamber deep within the ship that can only be folded into by the navigator. If anyone else should try, the ship will recognise this and redirect the intruder to the main flux batteries. This is invariably fatal as there is no atmosphere within the batteries, and the intruder will be swiftly digested by the ship. From within the symbiotic chamber, the navigator can control and override all functions of the ship should it prove to be necessary. The Symbiotic Chamber takes up one gear point and can be fitted on any foldship.

Navigator Assistant – This piece of Dark lament technology is fitted to the navigators chamber and increases their own astral sensing talents a hundred fold. With this device, the navigators can chart entire star systems. The Assistant takes up one gear point and can be fitted on any foldship.

Ebon Medbay – Basically an enormous ebb medi kit, this device amplifies the ebons abilities in the same way as an ebb-med-kit, but also contains a battery of 200 flux that the ebon medic can access to assist in the healing process. The Ebon medbay can only be fitted to ships larger than 100 tons, and takes up five gear points.

Fold Amplifier – This device allows the ships to make far larger jumps than is normally possible, the ship will be re-directed into areas of abundant flux, which it will then absorb and use to continue on its path. Basically put, it amplifies the distance traversable by a factor of five. The Amplifier takes up Ten gear points and masses twenty tons for purposes of cargo bay space.

Flintlock cannon – The Basic ebb weapon in space is the blast ability, it is already noted that the ships are generally immune to extremes of temperature, however, massive explosive damage is noted as an excellent cause of ship destruction. The Flintlock cannons are available in five different grades, each

grade multiplies the damage caused by a factor of ten times the grade of the cannon. They also use an amount of flux equal to the cost of the ability being used multiplied by the grade of the cannon. Flintlock cannons take up three gear points per grade of cannon, and more than one cannon can be fitted to a ship.

Communications booster – This is a larger version of the Distracter, it amplifies the users ability a thousand fold, allowing system wide communication between the ship and its destination. The Communications booster takes up three gear points and cannot be fitted to a ship smaller than eighty tons. When using the communications booster, the booster takes the power directly from the ships batteries and requires three times the flux that the normal ability uses.

Astral Pathfinder – This is a variant of the normal ebon Pathfinder, it is particularly popular with the mercenary ebon warriors who are hunting their targets across entire galaxies. The Astral Pathfinder multiplies the users power a million fold when simply trying to locate things. It is not well suited to the other uses of the detect ability, only multiplying their use by a factor of ten. The Pathfinder uses the flux batteries on the ship, and uses the flux at four times the normal cost of the ability. The pathfinder requires five gear points and cannot be fitted on a ship less than one hundred tons.

Thermal Gauge – A superpowered version of the normal thermal gauge, this device can be used offensively, but is generally used to assist the ship in areas of intense astral variation. The gauge usually projects a field of either heat or cold around the ship to nullify the conditions around the ship. If the ship is hit by a plasma weapon, the gauge can melt the plasma off it within minutes, similarly, used properly, the Gauge can be used to allow the ship to fly through the centre of a star without ill effect. The Gauge uses five times the normal amount of flux that the ebb ability uses, and multiplies the effect of the ability by a factor of ten. The Thermal Gauge requires one gear point per twenty tons of displacement, and if acquired, must be acquired for the entire ship.

ORGANISATIONS IN SPACE.

There are several different organisations that run the spaceways, these are as follows.

NAVIGATORS GUILD

The Navigators guild is commanded by the preceptor teeth as a subdivision of the department of Ebb. It is subdivided into separate houses which all have a number of ships and personnel that are allowed to use them. The costs for journeys depends on the nature of the journey and the passengers/cargo. These houses fall into two groups, those owned by SLA and the others. The ones owned by SLA are uniform in their approach, rights, and costs. There are only three houses that have broken away from the SLA houses, these are as follows.

Colmach – The Colmach are the newest of the navigator houses, numbering in the hundreds, they are led by Seraphin, an ebon operative of SCL 2.1, who recently retired from active service after fifty years of service. They operate a “fleet” of twelve Civilian transport granch foldships, and have two Granch Military cruisers. Their navigators are all Ebon, and their fares are up to 30% cheaper than any of the other houses (including SLA owned houses).

Charrach – House charrach is the second largest navigator house, numbering almost three thousand all told. Charrach makes equal use of all the ebb races, but shows far more deference towards the Necanthropes when allotting piloting assignments. Their fleet consists of fifty ships, both Granch and M’dach foldships, all the way up to one Heavy Military Cruiser. They are widely renowned as the most efficient of the independents, Their prices are up to 10% lower than the SLA owned houses.

Grian – House Grian is the largest of the navigator houses, with over six thousand navigators and other personnel in its ranks. They have the largest fleet of ships of any of the navigator houses, numbering over six hundred, including the colony ship Redemption. Headed by the Necanthrope Karna Grian, they have all the ebb races working for them, but none of them are below SCL 5, and all of them were SLA operatives prior to their working for Grian.

TRAVELLERS GUILD

Similar in function to the ebon navigators guilds, these guilds are wholly non-ebon in their personnel make-up, after all, what self respecting ebb-user would lower themselves to piloting one of the slug ships that cannot traverse space instantly. There are several smaller guilds with one or two cruisers to their name, but they are too numerous to mention. The central guilds are all regulated by SLA, anyone stepping outside of their arc of operations will be heavily penalised, anyone found actively pirating goes on the dead list. The dead list is a list of ships and guilds with a price upon their heads, several of the legal houses and guilds make a tidy profit with occasional "witch hunts", and many make a decent living at it.

Darach Guild – The Darach guild is the only guild that is run by frothers. They have a small fleet of fighter craft and several gravity drive ships. They are widely regarded by the other guilds as somewhat unbalanced, and only those with no other options will travel with them. Besides this fact, the Darach guild makes a tidy profit running guns and weaponry between the warworlds. Anyone wishing to travel with the Darach guild pays no fee, instead, they sign on for the duration of the trip that they are taking as a member of the crew. They will not be paid for this, but they will be given the same rights and privileges as a normal member of the crew (hope you like cold slop and metal beds)

Charon Guild – The Charon Guild is smaller than most of the guilds, but they regularly undertake exploration missions and other such things which most normal guilds will not go near with a power lance. Their fees for mounting expeditions run to the costs of the crews wages and the provisions for the expedition, the actual cost of hiring the ship is negated in return for the Charon guild keeping the rights to all things found in the expedition, this includes the rights on any new systems and locations that can be mined.

Horis guild – The Horis guild is typical of the merchants guilds, it runs a varied fleet of ships, varying between ion drives and gravity drives, they have a small fleet of fighter craft, but do not hire out for mercenary operations as a rule. Their costs are regulated by the SLA spatial commission, and they are bound by the rules of the guild in their work.

MERCENARY GUILDS

These guilds hold large numbers of fighter craft and short range craft, they rely on escort duties and seek/destroy contracts to finance their operations. There are too many to name, but a typical guild will have Two to Four military cruisers with fighter bays, and the fighters to fill the bays. Their rates depend on the nature of the battle to be fought, the location, distance between warzones and expected mortality rate of the warriors being hired. Some Mercenary guilds hire out troops for non-spatial engagements, but the hiring party will still have to pay the costs for the transportation of the troops to the battlefield.

PIRATE CONCLAVES

There are several organised factions of pirates and rogues that roam the spaceways, most of them have a single cruiser and several fighters, but some of them are truly huge organisations with several heavy cruisers and many of the different types of gunship at their disposal.

RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVEL IN SPACE

There are always restrictions when making any journey throughout the worlds of progress. These fall under several categories, these include.

Boundary restrictions: If an area has a limit to it, then travel to the area is prohibited unless the correct permits and identification are displayed. Planets that fall within these classifications are as follows

PLANET	REASON	IDENTIFICATION/PERMITS REQUIRED
Dante	Warworld	Valid mercenary permit or SLA head office permit.
Static	Secure Area	Sanction from the ebon council or SLA head office permit.
White Earth	D-notice	No access permitted to this area at all, see section on space wall.

Danger Zones: These areas are classified as being hostile to any craft that pass though them. All forms of insurance and recovery become void if a craft falls into the jurisdiction of one of these areas. Examples include Dante, Artery, White Earth, The Black Stump, and the wall.

Trade Restrictions: These areas are typically used only by traders and merchants, any ship in one of these zones can be stopped, boarded, and searched at the discretion of the systems law enforcement or at the whim of any who hold the required passes, most of which can be purchased from the corrupt officials holding the rights to the routes. The more lucrative trade routes are:
Static to New Paris to Polo
Dante to Mort
Artery to Dante
Mort to Static
Anything found on one of these routes will almost certainly be stopped and searched.

The other restrictions on travel in space are the distance that can be travelled by each type of ship, as a rough guide, the larger the ship, the greater distance it can travel, due to a combination of larger engines and more power. As a basic guide, a ships maximum range is equal to its ship type modifier multiplied by its spatial displacement in tons to find the maximum distance in millions of miles that the ship can travel without running out of power. The Exceptions to this rule are the M'ss drives, which can travel effectively indefinitely, but are generally slower than the other ship types, and the Star/solid fuel drives, which are infinitely more limited in range.

SHIP TYPE	SPEED	SHIP TYPE MODIFIER
Granch Foldship	100 Light years/Second	10
M'Dach Foldship	100 Light years/Second	10
Deathships	200 Light years/Second	30
Ion Drives	20000 Miles per second	50
Gravity Drives	10000 Miles per second	10
M'ss Drives	5000 Miles per second	20000
Star Drives	100 miles per second	Range of 1 million miles
Solid Fuel Drives	Mach 7	Range of 2000 miles

NAVIGATORS

There are several different types of navigator in the worlds of progress, ranging from the necanthrope unions about the deathships, to the pirate shuttle jockeys in the outer worlds. What follows is a basic summary of the skills that each type of navigator will have, and at which levels.

EBB-NAVIGATORS

The potential navigator candidate starts out as a Navigators apprentice to an established crew, they will progress in both skill and understanding as they continue their career. It is to be noted that it is not feasible for anything beyond a Co-pilot to still remain in an operative career. For those players wanting to begin a career in Navigation, they may take one of the following packages to start them on the way. The package replaces their basic operative package, and also lowers the number of character points as noted.

Navigators Apprentice – Basic character points – 200
Initial Skills

Reality Fold – 10	Universe Knowledge – 5	House knowledge – 5
Astral Awareness - 5	Foldship Operation – 5	Space navigation - 5

Advantages/Disadvantages
Major Ally – House (whichever house the apprentice is with) rank 2
Duty – House (as above) rank 10, if the navigators house gives them a command, providing it does not violate SLA law, then they must comply with it.

Foldship Crewperson – Basic Character points – 250
Initial skills

Reality Fold – 5	Universe knowledge – 2	House knowledge – 2
Astral Awareness – 2	Foldship Mechanics – 5	Foldship Repair – 5

Advantages/Disadvantages
Major Ally – house (as above) rank 1
Duty – House (as above) rank 5

A Foldship Crewperson can progress to the rank of navigators apprentice by acquiring the necessary skills and making the pledge of allegiance to the house which they are working for. There is usually a waiting list of up to five years before the position of apprentice will become available, but this can sometimes be shortened if the ebb-user has the right contacts.

The other ranks of Foldship operation and their required skills are as follows.

Foldship co-pilot
Skills

Reality fold – 15	Universe Knowledge – 10	House Knowledge – 10
Astral Awareness – 10	Foldship Operation – 10	Foldship Mechanics – 8
Foldship Repair – 8	Ebb communication – 10	Ebb Awareness – 10
Space navigation - 10		

Advantages/Disadvantages
Major Ally – House Rank - 5
Duty – House – Rank 15 – Even if the action requested by the house is mildly illegal, the co-pilot is still required to complete it, this includes the transport of dangerous and illegal cargo, and the breaking of trade restrictions.

The co-pilot must have finished at least two hundred hours of actual travel as a navigators apprentice before they are allowed to test for the position of co-pilot. Even when they pass the tests, there is still usually a waiting period before a commission becomes available for the co-pilot to take.

Foldship Pilot
Skills

Reality Fold – 20	Universe Knowledge – 10	House Knowledge – 10
Astral Awareness – 10	Foldship Operation – 10	Foldship Mechanics – 10
Foldship Repair – 10	Ebb communication – 15	Ebb Awareness – 15
Blue thermal – 5	Red Thermal – 5	Formulae – 6
Space Navigation - 12		

Advantages/Disadvantages
Major Ally – House – Rank 10
Duty – House – Rank 20 – They say jump, you say how HIGH?

The Pilot must have finished at least Two thousand hours of actual travel as a co-pilot before they are permitted to seat the entrance exams and tests for the position of pilot. The position of pilot is a most prestigious one, and very rarely are there places available for the co-pilot to fully realise their ability.

Foldship Lord
Skills

Reality Fold – 20	Universe Knowledge – 12	House Knowledge – 12
Astral Awareness – 12	Foldship Operation – 10	Foldship Mechanics – 10
Foldship Repair – 10	Ebb communication – 20	Ebb Awareness – 20
Blue Thermal – 20	Red Thermal – 20	Blast – 20
Protect – 20	Formulae – 8	Space navigation - 12

Advantages/Disadvantages
Must be Ebon/Waster, no necanthropes may hold this rank
Oath of Allegiance – Static council – Rank 20, see below

There are only a few Foldship lords in the history of the worlds of progress, they are the best pilots in the entire WoP, and as such, are usually freelance, operating where they see fit, and commanding their own fee. To take the test to become a foldship lord, the navigator must renounce all allegiance to any house that they are with at that time, they are then brought before the navigator council on the world of Static. There are many tests that they must undertake before they are given the rank of Lord. At this point, they take an oath of allegiance to the council on static, in return for this, they are given as much help in combating the dream demons as they require. The council has been known to openly oppose

the necanthropes trying to turn the ebon/waster to the white, and they have met with considerable opposition from SLA as a result of this. The Rank of lord is lost as and when the character becomes a necanthrope, as the council will not associate with these dead creatures.

NEW SKILLS FOR EBB-NAVIGATORS

Universe Knowledge – this skill is the fundamental knowledge of the phenomenon of the universe. It includes things such as navigating past such things as gravity wells and the planetary black spots like Artery and Dante. It also includes a knowledge of areas of space that are not safe to travel in, pirate organisations, mercenary guilds, and the standings of the Ebb guilds at that point in time.

House Knowledge – This is specific to certain houses, and includes the houses particular standards, laws, and procedures. At lower levels, it will only be a rudimentary knowledge of the house, whilst at the higher levels, the knowledge will include the trading routes and awards/accolades that the house has.

Astral Awareness – Similar to the Ebb skill of reality folding, this skill is intricately linked to the folding skill. The level that this skill is at can never exceed the ebb-users reality folding skill. When using this skill, the ebb-user can correctly chart and predict courses through deep space, anticipating things that are not on the maps. Not to be confused with Space navigation, which is the skill of using existing maps and charts, this skill is specifically to do with uncharted obstacles.

Foldship Operation – This skill is the familiarity that a pilot must have with the specific controls of the foldship. Other skills are required to make sure that the ship can actually move, but without this skill, the ebb-user will just not be familiar with the workings of the ship, and how to diagnose problems with the ship or sense that the ship has taken damage.

Foldship Mechanics – This skill covers the basics of how a foldship works, including the flux batteries, ebb amplifiers, sensor arrays, and communication devices. Without this skill, the ebb-user will not be able to re-route power from other locations to keep things like life support running should it be damaged, and as such, is required for all good navigators.

Foldship Repair - Tied in with the foldship mechanics skill, this skill allows the ebb-user to repair minor damage to the ship, with the correct tools, the ebb-user can also mend larger faults and jury rig systems to continue working through catastrophic damage.

NON EBB-NAVIGATORS

The basic level for other races is to start as a Crewperson on the ship, from there, they can learn the basics of the ship, and from there, progress to the position of either navigator or pilot, unlike the ebb races, the two skills for non ebb-users are very different, and are specialities of their own. While it is possible to simply rely on the navigation computers for the information, nothing can quite equal a well trained navigator, and should the charts prove ineffective, the navigator will be able to plot a course away from the zone without having to call for rescue.

Basic Training Packages

Crewperson – Basic Character points - 250
Skills

Ship Mechanics – 5	Ship repair – 5	Ship Drive Theory – 5
Ship systems – 5	Space navigation – 2	Unarmed combat – 2

Advantages/Disadvantages
Minor Ally (House/Guild/conclave) Rank 3
Duty (as above) Rank 3

Navigators Apprentice – Basic Character points – 200
Skills

Ship Mechanics – 8	Ship Repair – 8	Ship Drive Theory – 9
Ship Systems – 7	Space navigation – 6	Universe Knowledge – 4

House/Guild/conclave knowledge – 4
Advantages/Disadvantages

Major Ally (House/Guild/conclave) Rank 4
Duty (as above) Rank 7

Co-Navigator – Not available as a basic character starting point
Skills
Ship Mechanics – 10 Ship Repair – 10 Ship Drive Theory – 10
Ship Systems – 10Space navigation – 8 Universe knowledge – 8
Astral Instinct – 4 House/Guild/Conclave knowledge – 9
Advantages/Disadvantages
Major Ally (house/guild/conclave) rank 7
Duty (as above) Rank 11

Must have been a navigators apprentice for at least three years before progressing to this level.

Navigator – Not available as a basic character starting point
Skills – As co Navigator with the following exceptions
Space Navigation – 10 Universe Knowledge – 10 Astral Instinct – 10
House/Guild/conclave knowledge – 10
Advantages/Disadvantages
Major Ally (house/guild/conclave) rank 10
Duty (as above) rank 20

Must have been a co-navigator for at least seven years before progressing to this level.

Pilots Apprentice – Basic Character points – 200
Skills
Ship Mechanics – 5 Ship Operation – 5Ship Drive Theory – 5
Ship Systems – 5 Universe Knowledge – 5 Ship Repair – 5
Ship jury-rig – 5 House/guild/conclave knowledge – 5
Advantages/Disadvantages
Minor Ally (house/guild/conclave) – rank 4
Duty (as above) rank 4

Co-pilot – not available as a basic character class
Skills
Ship Mechanics – 10 Ship Operation – 10 Ship Drive Theory – 8
Ship Systems – 8 Universe Knowledge – 9 Ship Repair – 6
Ship Jury Rig – 6 House/Guild/conclave knowledge – 9
Astral Law – 6 SLA information – 4
Advantages/Disadvantages
Minor Ally (house/guild/conclave) – rank 8
Duty (as above) rank 8
May choose to be part of the pilots guild at this point, unless pirate affiliated, gains minor ally – Pilot guild – rank 3

Must have been an apprentice for at least two years before assuming this post.

Pilot – Not available as a basic character class
Skills – As per Co-pilot with the following exceptions
Ship Drive Theory – 10 Ship Systems – 10Universe knowledge – 10
Ship Repair – 10 Ship Jury rig – 10 Astral Law – 10
Sla Information – 10 Astral Instinct – 5
Advantages/Disadvantages
Minor Ally (house/guild/conclave) – rank 10
Duty (as above) rank 10
If part of the pilots guild, minor Ally, Pilots guild, Rank 6

Must have been a co-pilot for at least ten years before assuming this post.

NEW SKILLS FOR NON-EBB NAVIGATORS

All ship skills are for one type of ship only, when the character starts down the path to be a navigator or pilot, they must choose one particular type of ship to learn how to use, that ship will be the one to which all their ship skills associate with.

Ship Mechanics – This is a basic knowledge of how the ship works, what it can and cannot do, limits of performance and generally how to keep the ship working in all conditions. This skill also allows the character to diagnose what could be wrong with the ship at any given time, and is the skill used to make sure that the character is tearing out the right circuit board

Ship Repair – This skill works in conjunction with the ship mechanics skill, and cannot exceed the characters ship mechanics skill, this allows the character to repair faults within the ship, to replace critical components while still keeping the ship running, and generally know what to do in an emergency.

Ship Drive Theory – This is an in-depth knowledge of the way in which that particular ship drive type works. It also includes a deep understanding of what things can affect the drive, what things can increase the performance of the ship, and what to avoid.

Ship Jury rig – Where the repair skill has failed, the character may attempt to rig a temporary bypass to the system in question. For example, if the ship has suffered terminal damage in one of its systems, the character may attempt to patch up the system until proper repair facilities are available. A successful roll indicates that the system will hold for a number of hours equal to the Characters CONC statistic

Ship Systems – this skill is used in conjunction with the mechanics, repair and jury rig skills. The systems skill is the knowledge of how each system works, and which ones can be used to replace others should the need arise.

Astral Law – the laws of space are fickle at best, those who would travel the space-ways often must be aware of how the worlds of progress will view what they are doing. This skill covers all the basic restrictions of travel, places not to go, things not to do, and what "laws" can be bent or even broken without too much risk. It also includes a knowledge of what

Universe Knowledge – Identical to the ebb skill

Astral Instinct – This skill is not so much a skill as years of knowing the space lanes. This skill allows the pilot to "read" the flow and flux of space around them, seeing and predicting things before they become a danger to the ship.

ASTRAL LANDMARKS

There are several "Core" planets and systems within the world of progress, these are as follows

MORT – The "Centre" of the Worlds of Progress, mort is used as a central point for most navigators. It is recognised by ebb navigators as a chaotic ball of raw emotions and misery, but they are more than familiar with the planet due to the Dark Lament building and the "guidance" pillar within the building. Mort has two Space Stations around it, the first is Chrom, a huge spaceport designed for holding personnel and allowing most of the larger craft to dock and refuel/reload things between long trips. The second station is Meros, which is not so much a space station as a construction yard in space, it is here that most of the SLA fleet is constructed.

ARTERY – This engineered planet is one of the few places that most ebon navigators will not travel to, it's pain and suffering are a testament to the creatures that somehow survive upon it. The typical traffic to this planet are non-ebb using races, there is a regular shipping run to this planet with new parts and personnel, but there is little trouble from pirates in this area due to the high level of SLA fleet protection. Any ebb-using navigator who tries to bypass this area without observing the one light year barrier around it will be thrown off course by the intense waves of pain and fear emanating from it. Necanthrope unions are immune to this, and several of them are quite happy to detour to go past the planet if they can. Artery has two Space ports, Mirch and collas, each one capable of holding over 200000 people within its hull. It is from here that the supplies are ferried down to the planets surface.

NEW PARIS – The pleasure centre of the worlds of progress, this area is well patrolled by the SLA fleet, but they get distinctly more pirate activity in this area due to the high concentration of wealth in the area. The fleets in the area are all of SLA origin, and they brook no interference from anyone else who would enter the system.

STATIC – Very close to the Galactic wall, Static is easily recognisable by the air of tranquillity that pervades its entire atmosphere, the only thing similar to a space station is the colony ship Salvation, which resides in a constant low orbit around the council headquarters on the planet. The only ships barred from orbit and close proximity on this world are Deathships and foldships that are piloted by Necanthropes. This is due to the councils policy of hatred towards the abominations that SLA produces.

POLO – The homeworld of the wraiths is a rather dead zone in terms of space traffic, it has no space stations, and no natural resources to strip mine, so it tends to be ignored by most things. There is a small SLA fleet presence in the area, and the war world of Dante is within 200 million miles of it, so personnel can be diverted in times of need.

DANTE – The Primary warworld of the Worlds of progress, Dante has a massive amount of space traffic both to and from it, there are two separate space stations in orbit around it, one on the northern pole, Riran, which has all the SLA fleet traffic and supplies delivered to it. On the other pole, the Station known as Wave One, which contains all the thresher personnel and keeps all the thresher fleet in close proximity. So far, attempts to take the station have met with failure due to a powerful ground based defence that the SLA high command have been unable to penetrate.

SHAKTARIAN TRIBE WORLDS – A collection of fifteen separate worlds, these worlds contain the largest concentration of the shaktarian people amongst all of the worlds of progress. It has no space stations, and all space traffic in the area is limited to the occasional pirate vessel and numerous supply and personnel ships from the SLA fleet. There is rumour of a large Shaktarian pirate force hidden on one of the moons of the capital world, but these are as yet unfounded.

THE WALL – Separating the worlds of progress from the nightmare that is white earth, the Galactic wall is a barrier of infinite distance located 300 million miles from Static. It is constantly patrolled by the SLA fleet and Several of the larger Ebons battlecruisers. Three vessels have passed the barrier, and none of them have returned, It is not known what the barrier is constructed of, but the co-ordinates of the barrier are precise. The barrier does not prevent anyone from entering it, but once a ship has passed the borderline, it vanishes from the scope and is never seen again. There are no further plans at this time to send any other ships beyond the barrier.

GUARD DUTY

It's the duty from hell, with no real redeeming features.

My name is Anastasia Draco, I pilot one of the guard ships just beyond the great wall, it is a lonely life, only the few crew that I have for company, and most of them treat me with the sort of reverence that only necanthropes tend to earn on the land. I was posted here after a few indiscreet words with some of the council. They cannot take my commission, or my ship, and my house name allows me far more leeway than most other navigators can keep.

I am one of the last of House Draco, although it is a name synonymous with failure, the preceptor has ordered that no-one shall take retribution for the sins of the past, even the council are not too anxious to dispute with his will, and so, for my transgressions, I am here, watching for something to return from the darkness.

I have been a navigator for over ten years, I have seen many things in my time, been from one end of this universe to the other, fought in the pirate wars, and seen new stars being born and dying. This position holds the greatest rewards for those who can seek them out. However, being stuck here, patrolling the same set of co-ordinates over and over again, occasionally making some contact with the other patrol ships, there is no outlet for the frustration and boredom that permeates the atmosphere of my ship.

Speaking of my ship, allow me to introduce him. This ship is Pagan, named after a good friend of mine, a man I have known for many years, and who I see rarely now. I know that the ship is technically not alive, and that there is not reason for anyone to suspect that sentience can be attributed to these ships. However, I also know that my ship is alive, he lives and breathes with me, I can feel the sun on him, feel the solar waves as they flow over his hull, I know what he feels, I know when he hurts, and when he needs to feel my touch.

Sitting in the symbiotic chamber, I am aware of all things at the same time, I can feel the flux coursing through the wiring of Pagan, I keep him safe, and in return, he protects me and my crew.

Strange it is, sitting here, waiting for the nothing to suddenly burst into life. It never will of course, there is no chance of anything even vaguely coming back from whatever lies beyond that barrier. I sometimes feel the manic urge to go and fold beyond the barrier. I know it is expressly forbidden, but what are they going to do? Follow me in?

I smile at the thought for a second, after all, the evolution of my race began when someone did something they weren't supposed to. What would happen if something ever came back from beyond here, what if someone knows what lies beyond here, what if it's all a lie?

I shake my head, such thoughts are for the insane, what could they be hiding behind there that I haven't already seen? I finish my sweep and report in.

A brief whim takes me and I take out my cards, long outdated as a method of doing anything beyond lighthearted predictions of one of thousands of futures, they act as a focus for me when my thoughts wander to things I shouldn't be thinking about. I remember how strongly nathaniel believed in fate, and find myself wondering if there could be something in all this fate crap.

I lay out the cards before me, the old traditional three card spread. I turn the first card, this represents what troubles me. The card is a road leading to a crossroads, it's name is choice, I know what it means in basic terms, it is the eternal question of what if, it is the point that all the world is but a choosing ground. I know the dangers of reading too much into the cards, it is all too easy to make things sound as if they mean something to you personally, so I dismiss the first card as coincidence.

I turn the second card, this represents what will deal with my problem. I turn the card, it is a miniature star chart. The Card is the Universe, it represents infinity in all its myriad forms, it is the culmination of all things to form a greater pattern. In terms of meaning, it refers to the fact that all things have their place, and that each thing has to find its place before it will belong.

Intrigued now, I turn the third card, this defines what I should do to make the second card right. I turn the card, it is the Lord of Hosts, it signifies a strong decision maker and wise ruler of people. It means that sometimes, you must throw caution to the wind and make the decision that is right at the time.

I look down at the cards, rocking gently to and fro in the navigators hammock. I check the sensor array, there is nothing for three million miles in all directions. I pause for a second, then put the cards away, locking them carefully down in the nav-box.

The reading pulls at me for the rest of the day, there is nothing that I can think about other than the possibility that something is waiting for me beyond the barrier. I start along the same patrol route again, preparing for another quiet day at the barrier.

As I begin the patrol, the scanners suddenly go haywire, something is approaching, I send a request for clarification to Pagan.

"Tracking one object, four million miles within the barrier, approaching at atmosphere speed"
"Displacement in tons?" The command goes out a little more sharply than I intended, this is the first known contact from beyond the barrier, it's more than understandable if I'm a little freaked out at it.
"Five Hundred…"
I breathe a sigh of relief, whatever it is, it's not as big as Pagan, I should be able to handle it myself.
"…Thousand"

My heart stops, frozen by the sudden icy chill of fear running through me. I activate the primary communications array and begin sending emergency assistance requests. Throughout all of this, I do not engage the drive to flee the area, some morbid curiosity forbids me from running.

The thing gets closer, I can now sense it myself, like a shadow in space, It's huge, far larger than anything I've ever seen before, and its alive, don't ask me how I know that, I just do. I activate the main view screen, watching the barrier to see the thing approach. The viewscreen is clear, there's nothing there. I ask Pagan again to verify its existence.

"object now two million miles and closing"

I lean forwards in my hammock, straining my own eyes even though I know how fruitless it is, if pagan cannot see it, what chance have I?

And then I realise, the viewscreen is not clear, the object is there, it's just too large for me to see anything But the object. I look with new eyes at the object as the visual blurring fades and the ship comes into view. Battle scarred beyond all recognition, the ship rumbles forwards, it's hull pockmarked with the impact of meteors and scored by the claws of some huge creature.

Breathlessly I key in the Identify ship command, maybe it's something that was once known by SLA, at the same time, I send another request for help, and a message of greetings to the ship in every language I know

"This is Anastasia Draco, Wall Sentinel 3114, please identify yourselves"

The communicator crackles with static for a second, then a voice, deep and resonant, echoes out of the darkness.

"Draco?"
The view screen changes as the other ship overrides pagans' security protocols with a casual elegance, an Ebon, young looking, with short cropped black hair and eyes like a sky on a stormy day. He looks intensely through the screen at me.

"No" he murmurs softly "the resemblance is a good one, but you are not her" As he speaks, the identifier clicks quietly and begins printing out the registry of the ship. I glance down as the ebon continues speaking

"It is a shame really" the ebon muses "that they cannot know about us yet"

I look at the printout

Vehicle Registry 000001, commissioned 010 S.D. Ship Title……

"I am sorry for what I must do here, forgive me if you can" he continues, noticing that I am about to look back up again

SLA Industries Holocaust Class Foldship Yung.

I look up in time to see his eyes flare

I wake some time later, I can't remember how long I've been out, I can still see things, creatures, demons, worlds where whole races are slaughtered to keep the rivers of blood flowing, and above that, those who I know are dead looking down at me, smiling from fleshless lips. It takes me a second to realise that I can't see, I reach up to remove the bandage from my eyes, I have to see what is going on.

A strong hand stops me

"Annie"

I recognise that voice, Pagan, my oldest friend, is with me, just as he promised he would be. I let my hand rest in his
"What happened?" I ask
"You….." He hesitates, in all the time that I've known him, he's never done that "you were found six months ago, your ship adrift and badly damaged, your crew dead, you were brought back to mort, and I've been caring for you since"
I smile up at him "So when can I see you again?"
He hesitates again "I….."
My smile fades "What?"
"Are you sure you want me to tell you this"
I know nathaniel well enough to know that he is not one for melodramatics, I consider for a second, already beginning to guess what he's going to tell me "Tell me Nate, It can't be that bad can it?"

He sits down next to me, and takes my other hand "when you were found…." He sighs softly "you had torn out your eyes with your bare hands, and were screaming incoherently about the demons in the light"
His hands hold mine gently but firmly as I involuntarily try to touch the missing eyes through the bandage.

"No" he whispers "believe me, you're not ready to do that"
"But I'm alright aren't I? The Demons are gone aren't they?" I feel him tense up slightly again
"No, they're not, you're currently on something called Cirilenia" he butchers the pronunciation of the word, but I know what he means, White Noise they call it in less educated circles, it keeps the dream demons at bay for those who are getting close.
A tear escapes one of my ruined eyes, I fall into his arms as the loss hits me like a hammer. I can hear him whispering meaningless nothings, words trying to heal the damage, to take away the pain.

And there, at the edge of my realisation, the demons crawl and slither, waiting for night to fall…….