

TWILIGHT IMPERIUM

AGENTS OF THE NEW DAWN

"Whereas the recent rise of the ancient Mahact, blah blah blah; and in light of previous existing blah blah balh, the various august and venerable civilizations of the Galactic Council have unanimously agreed to establish a body of Keleres, whose sole mission shall be the protection of galactic society."

Sh'val The Harbringer stopped reading allowed for a moment. "August and venerable," he repeated, and flicked one multi-faceted eye across the table.

The tentacles of the figure known only as The Chancellor answered with a shrug from inside their bubble. "You know how the Council loves flattery." The Chancellor did not have lips and could not smile, but the mockery was clear. Sh'val made a mocking bow, sharing the joke. "It will do nicely. I am sure they will put the words on display in the offices themselves."

Neither party enjoyed the preference for words that so dominated many of their fellow galactic citizens, although for different reasons. The Hylar had a beautiful and detailed written language capable of a hundred times the density of meaning compared to the average Jord word-sound, but The Chancellor would rather be making calculations than talking. They didn't even like being in the same planet as the Council, or indeed anywhere beyond their beloved university. For their part, the mighty N'orr preferred to communicate in vibrations alone; that way there could be no misunderstandings.

"You're sure this will direct attention away?" Sh'val breathed in the shared voice language of the Galaxy.

"Everything leaves a trail," shrugged the Chancellor again. "But in the ocean, all currents are lost." It was a Hylan phrase, but the meaning was clear.

"The Keleres have badges, a headquarters, a charter. Of course everyone knows their agents expendable and their politics conflicted, but when you put chum in the water, the chum is the only smell." Another Hylan idiom. Sh'val hated talking to the Chancellor, hated even looking at the squidlike creature writhing in his steelglass frame, and the Chancellor knew it, but Sh'val couldn't be entirely sure the constant use of unclear poetics wasn't done precisely to annoy him. "They will look so far, and no further," the creature added, with condescension. "And thus, the real work can begin."

Sh'val studied his much-loathed ally with both his eye-fields. He knew that the Chancellor loved more than almost anything to be inside their laboratory, inside their beloved University, and even being here in space was a sacrifice they literally sickened to make. But there was something more important than even knowledge at stake. Similarly, Sh'val knew that his proud N'orr would consider his actions here high treason, for to vie for peace was to value something higher than the Queen herself, to say there was a greater goal than the glory and greatness of the swarm. But so he believed, and so he and others had come together, to commit this treason together. Where the Keleres distracted, their agents could indeed do the real work, for the Council and the peace it promised.

If it worked, the swarm would surely prosper, he believed. He also knew that either way, his treachery would eventually be known. If he was lucky, he would have time to chew off his own head before the Veiled Brood made him pay. "To the highest point, then" he said, half under his breath, with a tiny hope that the N'orr idiom would be lost on the Chancellor and embarrass him. But if it did, the vast eyeballs staring back gave no sign, of annoyance, of hope, or of anything; nothing but a singular dark orb of infinite black resolve.

CHAPTER ONE: MISSION BRIEF

“Some have said these days of chaos and destruction will be the destruction of our great Empire. I see them as merely a shadow, before the new dawn.” – Mathis Mathinus

Agents of the New Dawn converts the Twilight Imperium universe to a roleplaying game using Cortex Prime. If you are new to Cortex, you can find out more at www.cortexrpg.com and if you are new to Twilight Imperium you can read more about it at twilight-imperium.fandom.com. This document assumes great familiarity with both. Although we will summarise the basics of each, we assume you have access to the above to understand the core rules and get more information on the setting.

Fantasy Flight Games has already published some rules for a Twilight Imperium RPG using their Genesys system and a corebook is coming soon entitled **Embers of the Imperium**. This is not intended to compete with that game. I just don't really like Genesys, I like Cortex. No copyright infringement is intended or should be implied. (There was also a D20 Twilight Imperium RPG in the 90s, regarded as one of the worst games ever made. Let us never speak of it again.) Art is used without permission. It is all from the board game, go buy it.

To help the two games feel different I've focussed on a slightly different approach. Where Embers focusses more on combat agents sent to do the Council's bidding on the ground, under its flag, **Agents of the New Dawn** shifts the focus to Council diplomats, spies and politicians who wage a different kind of battle for the same goal. Players take the role of a collection of political operatives who must maintain their cover with their own political backers while working together to bring peace to the galaxy.

For hundreds of centuries the wise Lazax led the galaxy to great and glorious heights, and then all of a sudden, they were gone. The Imperial throne is empty. The Council meets less and less. Technology and knowledge slips away as each of the mighty factions withdraws into themselves and looks across the vast rifts of space with distrust and fear. Sabres rattle; skirmishes flare; civil war flashes and burns away. The great capital of Mectaol Rex lies in ruins from nuclear attack, and the galaxy like it, lies in silent decay.

And yet rebuilding has begun everywhere. The galaxy burns as much as ever with the drive and ambition of its inhabitants. Out in the far reaches of frontier space there are battles to fight with ships and armies. In the hub around Mecatol Rex, a different war wages. Agents of the great and powerful factions vie to ensure that any show of force in space works in concert with the required political machinations to make the cards fall in place and put the leader they desire on the throne.

The Council has no objection to a new Emperor, of course. But they do object to burning the Imperium to dust to see it happen. Thus the Council maintains its own agents, working entirely in secret, dedicated to making sure that the twilight days do not burn down into darkness. They have powerful positions among the political sphere but cannot call for backup or use any great force lest they be noticed. And surely, if they were to admit working for the Council, they would be instantly denied and burned by their allies. Secrecy is their watchword and their only chance at survival, for what they do is surely treason.

If they succeed, none will ever know they played a part. If they fail, none will live to know anything at all.

GENRE AND TROPES

Agents of the New Dawn is a political story. It follows the tone of shows like *The West Wing*, *Jack Ryan* and *The Expanse* where politicians are as much the heroes – and villains - as their agents and operatives in the military or espionage. Combat may play a part in your games, maybe even a significant part, but just as important is the wheeling and dealing of the political sphere, and the drama that arises from those conflicts are just as thrilling as a gunfight or a car chase.

DIPLOMACY

A common refrain regarding Twilight Imperium is “this isn’t Space Risk”. The game is won, in other words, not by superior military tactics but by clever use of diplomacy and conversation. The game of politics in this dying galaxy is the same: it is a game of subtlety and subterfuge, of bluffing and bravado, of sudden alliances and strange bedfellows in the name of shared goals or dark pacts. Agents of New Dawn know they may be assassinated any moment, but a far worse fate is to be cut off from political influence, and unable to make the deals they need to make. They are quiet, cold warriors, in an icy but never silent war.

SHIFTING TIDES

Secrets are the stock and trade of spies, and though the Agents are not supposed to have any between their coterie only a fool lays out all their tools on the table. The Agents have loyalty to peace and order, nothing more, and all other promises are merely temporary. The galaxy is in flux at all times, and what was true can change on an instant. Loyalties and alliances change just as fast, and cruel and amoral acts must sometimes be done to achieve what is needed. Can the Agents keep their souls or is that too great a luxury for keepers of the peace?

WHAT IS CORTEX PRIME?

Cortex Prime is a multi-genre, modular, session-centered roleplaying game. It’s based on the same underlying rules system previously used in several award-winning RPGs based on comic books and television shows. These games were different from one another in ways both major and minor, yet Cortex was a vital force that ran through the heart of all of them.

Cortex Prime players are encouraged to embrace their characters’ motivation, personality, and backgrounds. In many cases those elements are hardwired into their character file as traits. As the stories develop, everyone is invited to really sell these characters’ victories and failures, their highs and their lows, true to who their characters are. As sessions go by, these characters grow in meaningful ways, and reveal more of themselves and the settings they inhabit.

CORTEX PRIME RULES AND VARIANTS

Each PC's character file is mostly a list of traits and related game stats. Traits define a character and how they interact with the world they live in. Traits paint a picture of who a character is and what they can do, not just in terms of their skills and abilities but also their personality, background, or aspirations. Any collection of traits that belong to the same basic type is assumed to be part of a trait set. Attributes is a trait set, as is skills. A prime set is a trait set that serves as the core of a Cortex Prime character. Prime sets provide the baseline dice for your dice pool in any test.

Each trait has a die rating, usually between D4 and D12. When that trait comes into play, the player rolls that die as part of their dice pool. The rule of thumb in Cortex Prime is that you may only add one trait from any given trait set to a dice pool without added cost. If you want to include more, it costs a Plot Point, written as PP. Generally, when making a test, players collect dice from two or more sets, roll them and add up two of the dice to determine if they've succeeded.

Different versions of Cortex use different variants of the rules, but they all use prime traits resolved by rolling dice pools. The full details of the Cortex dice rules are not included in this document.

This setting uses the follow trait pools: **Affiliations** (here called **Expertise**), **Skills**, **Distinctions** and **Specialities**. **Talents** provide abilities to modify the dice rolled or the outcome. **SFX** for the three Distinctions are fixed and are simply *Hinder*. Tests are typically made against difficulty pools, but also common are contests against values representing the power and qualities brought to bear by NPCs. **Stress** is used to measure damage and uses its own rated stress tracks. **Assets** and **Complications** can be applied to die rolls when they have been created.

Every Agent will also be part of a **Coterie**, a small group handpicked by their superiors to deal with a variety of situations as needed. Coteries have access to **Tech Dice** representing new discoveries and devices that they can spend to aid their endeavours.



CHAPTER TWO: AGENT FILE

EXPERTISE

Expertise is a prime attribute set for Agent characters. This represents the political climate, environment, assignment and battlefield in which they are most or least at home. Any conceivable Test takes place in one of these areas of Expertise; the GM will let you know the nature of Expertise governing any scene you enter. GMs can spend PPs to shift the nature of the scene, making things more difficult for certain Agents. The nature of the story can also cause such shifts.

Expertise is rated at three levels. PC Agents begin with one at D8, one at D10 and one at D6:

- D6: You are out of your element or have limited training in this area
- D8: You are familiar with this arena and are comfortable operating in it
- D10: You are at your best in these situations and have an easy mastery of them

The three types of Expertise are CULTURAL, HAZARDOUS and INDUSTRIAL.

CULTURAL Expertise is training for and predilection towards cultural exchanges. The galaxy has a deep and vast cultural life and it plays an powerful part in all politics. Cultural scenes can be something as elegant as a art gala to as rustic as taking tea with Naazir whalers; the key element is that the mode is a cultural exchange. That is also often the goal of Cultural missions, at least on the surface. Cultural scenarios may often seem safe or even trivial but in a galaxy built on diplomacy, nothing is more important or more delicate than showing proper cultural acumen.

HAZARDOUS Expertise is found in Agents who have spent a lot of time in the field. That could be in battle but Hazardous situations also occur in desperate space flight, navigating dangerous ecosystems, encountering terrifying aliens or seeking out ancient secrets buried deep in forgotten tombs. It can also be the mean streets of Mecatol Rex just as easily as the bridge of a Dreadnought: danger is everywhere and the wrong turn even in the Imperial Record House can throw one into a Hazardous encounter.

INDUSTRIAL Expertise deals not with the great ship-building forges or deep asteroid mines; rather it refers to missions and scenarios where the goal is to make progress on projects that require long and serious undertaking. It may not be as glamorous as Cultural or thrilling as Hazardous but somethings aren't exciting and still must be done; and Industrial ops mean there is much to be done. Often that work does involve ensuring fleets are built and mines dug, but it can easily be the slow seeding of destructive rumours or the careful building of a spy network. Industrial scenarios are the default; the others are obvious when they occur and all that remains is the work itself.

SKILLS

Skills represent the acumen, study and proficiency the Agent has in certain wide areas. Skills are very broad in Agents of the New Dawn, almost equivalent to skill sets or roles. Only eight skills are used, but they are also modified by Specialities. Skills are a prime set for this setting. Skills are rated from D4 to 12 like other traits. Each PC starts with one at D10, one at D8, three at D6 and three at D4.

- D4: Untrained. You have no idea what you're doing, and you're likely to create trouble when you try it, but who knows.
- D6: Competent. Sufficient training to get by. You're comfortable doing this.
- D8: Expert. Able to do this for a living. This is second nature to you.
- D10: Master. One of the best in the field. Likely known to others who possess the skill.
- D12: Grandmaster. One of the best in the world. Known even to those outside the field.

Your highest rank Skill is known as your Primary skill. Skills available to all Agents are as follows: CONSTRUCTION, DIPLOMACY, IMPERIUM, LEADERSHIP, POLITICS, TECHNOLOGY, TRADE and WARFARE.

CONSTRUCTION is the understanding of how things are made and operate. This could be useful in building a bomb or in knowing exactly the right place to put one so a Cruiser is crippled by the explosion. In a world where species are rarely constructed of something as simple as flesh this also includes "medical" knowledge.

DIPLOMACY is the art of getting people to like you and keeping it that way, primarily through the application of social graces, customs and etiquette. An agent with strong diplomacy can tell you to go screw yourself in a way that makes you look forward to the trip.

IMPERIUM is the knowledge of the great and ancient history and mythology of the galaxy itself. Although rarely useful in day to day internecine encounters, the galaxy continues to be beset by shadows of past and future that require an expert's eye to predict.

LEADERSHIP is different to Diplomacy in that the latter gets people to invite you to parties, whereas Leadership is convincing people to kill and die for you. It is a much more personal interaction although this also covers running large networks or organisations.

POLITICS is the knowledge and understanding of the byzantine interactions of the most complicated and delicate organism in the galaxy: imperial bureaucracy. If Imperium is history, this is geography; the study of the latest news and how to change the headlines to your favour.

TECHNOLOGY is the wind to the fires of war and those who can win the race to understand and unlock new secrets of the universe will likely win the race to the Throne as well. All wars are wars of technology so it pays to be an expert in researching, developing and understanding the frontiers of science.

TRADE is the art of turning less money into more money. If Technology is the wind to the fire of war, then money is the fuel. Ships and soldiers cannot exist without the money to fund them and so the galaxy turns on trade first and war second. Ask the Hacan.

WARFARE is the ultimate expression of politics; eventually almost all struggles come down to a fleet or a platoon in the right place at the right time, and the individual who can out-think and out-fight their opponent. Warfare is the ability to stay alive when everyone is trying to make sure you don't and as such is supremely valuable.

SPECIALITIES

With such broad skills in play, Agents can distinguish themselves further with specialities. Someone with a D10 in Warfare may be an excellent pilot or a crack shot or a great tactician: it is the Specialities they choose that let us know. Specialities have no dice rating associated with them, they always add a D6 to the pool just like a standard Asset. When you list a Speciality, it is tied to a specific Skill but this is to show its primary use. It does not always have to be used with that Skill if the situation calls for it. If you have a speciality in how much you rely on your Sarween Sidearm (Warfare) and happen to be at the home of a gun collector, you could use the Speciality to add to Diplomacy to impress them.

Agents start play with two Specialities. They may be associated with two different Skills or the same Skill.



DISTINCTIONS

While Specialities are always dependable, Distinctions represent parts of your Agent that can be an advantage or a disadvantage, depending on the circumstances. Distinctions often represent “softer” or more narrative concepts than those governed by skills. In this game, Agents have three Distinctions, each focussing on a different aspect of the character.

Distinctions are always rated at D8 and add that die to your pool when they come into play. Each Distinction has the *Hinder* SFX, which is “Gain a PP when you switch out this Distinction’s D8 for a D4.”

ORIGIN

Your first Distinction is simply your Faction. Every being in the galaxy has a political alignment by nature of their origin. Disguise is rarely possible in a world with genetic scrubbers and no matter how much or how deeply one swears allegiance to any goal or creed or other loyalty, you carry your original loyalty wherever you go. That means you can get those people in your Faction or friendly with it to act in your interest. At times, however, your allegiance will make you suspect or an enemy.

PASSION

A political warrior should be dispassionate. Nothing matters more than victory, and a conscience is a luxury you cannot afford. But everyone has a weakness. A point where you care more than perhaps you should, in a way others might use to harm you. This is of course where you give your

all and never yield. You may have a pressure point but you rise to fight this battle unlike any other. Perhaps it is to protect your closest friends or family, a planet or a biome, or your fine country house and the spice-making tradition it was built on. Is it a fondness for a noble cause or even an abstract concept? Perhaps you are drawn to hopeless causes or noble sacrifice, or simply cannot stoop to being ungracious no matter what.

STYLE

Everyone is fighting a war, but everyone fights with their own style. Your approach, your attitude, these are the things that will come to define you more than anything, as the reputation you can never shake. Some are ruthless and brutal, others try to lessen any blows that fall. Some will betray anyone at any time, others loyal to a fault. Some are hopeless romantics, some dead-eyed masters of realpolitik, some do everything with a laugh or a smile. Some dissemble, some always tell the truth. Whatever your style, it is often helpful but it always comes with a cost.



TALENTS

Since Agent PCs have no powers or abilities to define them or exotic SFX in their Distinctions, their fantastic abilities are captured in Talents. Talents usually require a specific situation to activate or they cost a PP. In some cases both apply: the situation can trigger the Talent and a PP can make it even more effective.

Agent PCs choose two Talents. These must come from Talents listed for their primary Skill or their Faction or from the General Talents. Skill and General Talents are at the end of this chapter.

STRESS

Agents of the New Dawn measures damage and setbacks through Stress Tracks. There are five tracks, each measured from D4 to D12. If a character receives more than D12 in a given Stress track, they are Stressed Out and cannot act until some sort of support or remedy is given. What kind of remedy depends on the Stress suffered.

The five tracks are:

OUTCAST – This measures how much support you have within your political systems. Taking Outcast stress removes you from allies and connections and makes you seem more risky and less trustworthy.

OUTGUNNED – This measures actual physical stress, even if it doesn't come from guns. It can also reflect stress to your military staff or bodyguards or arms reserves: anything that keeps you alive.

OUTLASTED – This is about stamina and endurance. Taking Outlasted stress means your opponents are outlasting your ability to keep standing and keep fighting, in both the physical and metaphorical senses.

OUTPLAYED – Nobody can dodge the rain of blows forever. Eventually you run out of tricks in the bag. Facing countermandment at every angle means taking Outplayed Stress.

OUTRAGED – The first person to get angry loses, the saying goes. An angry enemy makes mistakes. Your enemies know this and will try to play upon your weaknesses to give you Outraged Stress.



CREATING AN AGENT

Making a PC Agent is a process of following several steps. Characters are built from scratch based on a starting idea of who they are. Players should work together to build a group of Agents who already know each other and work together and have complimentary skills. Once characters are built, you will also build your team (called a coterie) and shared resources.

- **Choose your Faction.** Determine to which of the many power groups you originally claimed allegiance.
- **Assign dice to Expertise.** One at D10, one at D8, one at D6.
- **Assign dice to Skills.** One at D10, one at D8, three at D6 and three at D4. Add any modifications from your Faction.
- **Choose two Specialities.** Each is linked to a Skill.
- **Choose three Distinctions.** One for your Origin, one for your Passion, one for your Style.
- **Choose two Talents.** Talents must come from your Primary Skill group, your Faction Talents or the General Talent list.
- **Finishing Touches.** Give your agent a name and make some notes about their appearance, job and relationship to the others in their coterie.

For more on building your coterie, see Chapter Four. For Factions, see the next chapter.

ADVANCEMENT

Advancement in **Agents of the New Dawn** is done using the Callback system. Missions can also be spent to upgrade or rewrite attributes. Spending 3 Missions allows the player to:

- Step up a Skill die
- Gain a new Speciality or step one up to D8
- Step up an Expertise die and step down another
- Replace a Distinction with a new one

Spend 6 Missions to add a new Talent.

SKILL TALENTS

CONSTRUCTION TALENTS:

Black Market Replica: You can construct exact replicas of anything that can be carried by hand, in a short amount of time (a Scene or less). These will fool all but the most careful examinations. It won't work on Relics though.

Scuttle: When you're making a test during a Physical Combat using a Skill other than Construction, you may spend a Plot Point to add Construction to your die pool and include a third die in your result.

DIPLOMACY TALENTS:

Master Plan: When someone in your Coterie who you're in contact with fails a roll in a Contested Action, the next person in your Coterie to make a Test gains your Diplomacy die to their roll.

Veto: When someone who can see you and hear you starts a Conflict, you can shut it down before it starts. If the GM rolls an Opportunity, they cannot continue to try to raise the stakes and the conflict immediately ends. They cannot start a new one against you until the next Scene.

IMPERIUM TALENTS

Archaeologist: If you are making a Test using Imperium to examine an ancient item of some sort, add a D8 to the roll.

Ghost Hunter: After the GM tells you there's nothing in this particular part of space or this part of the planet, you may spend a Plot Point. If you do, gain an Asset at d8 regarding what's actually there instead.

LEADERSHIP TALENTS

Let's Work As A Team And Do It My Way: When you share a scene with one or more of your Coterie you may swap up to two Plot Points between those in the scene. Only one transaction can be made, only between two people.

Morale Boost: Spend a Plot Point when a member of your Coterie can hear your communication and is about to perform a Test of any kind: give that member a D6 Asset of "High Morale" for the rest of the scene.

POLITICS TALENTS

Distinguished Councillor: You are or have contacts to the most august and venerable councillors. When you are trying to pull rank on a person who cares about such things, add a D8 to your roll.

Ply the Weakness: You know which buttons to push, but sometimes you push way too hard. When you are using Politics in a Test to get what you want out of someone and decide to squeeze their weak spot, you may add a D10 to the roll...but if you do, you must also add a D4.

TRADE TALENTS

Bribery is An Ugly Word: When you are making a Test and Trade is not a die in your pool, you may spend a Plot Point to add Trade to the pool and include a third die in the outcome.

Insider Information: When you are making a Test to see if a deal is bad or a scam and exactly how it is ripping you off, add a D8 to the roll.

TECHNOLOGY TALENTS

Disable: If you are in a Conflict and the GM has a Complication die due to the opponent having some technological advantage, you may spend a Plot Point to take that advantage away for the rest of the scene.

Reveal Prototype: Spend a Plot Point to reveal a new gadget you just invented is being carried already by another member of your Coterie that will help with their current situation. They gain a D12 to their next roll – then it breaks down.

WARFARE TALENTS

Blitz: If you make a roll to start a fight of some kind, spend a Plot Point to add a D8 to the roll to hit hard and fast. If the GM rolls an opportunity, step it up to a D10 for the next roll otherwise it becomes a D4 for the rest of the fight.

Counterstroke: You may spend a Plot Point to turn that Stress into an Asset for one roll made to retaliate in some way, as you use the information gained from the attack against them.

GENERAL TALENTS

Confusing Legal Text: After you fail to raise the stakes in a Conflict involving anything to do with the laws, regulations or protocols of the Imperium, you may spend a Plot Point to reroll all your dice.

Construction/Leadership/Trade/Technology/Warfare Rider: When you are attempting to make a Politics or Diplomacy Test, you may include Construction/Leadership/Trade/Technology/Warfare in the roll if that is your primary skill.

Direct Hit: If you roll an Extraordinary Success in a conflict, you may Increase your Effect die or Stress Die.

Lucky Shot: If the GM rolls an Opportunity against you and fails to raise the stakes in a Conflict, spend a Plot Point to gain a D8 Asset for the rest of the scene based on your luck turning things around.

Rise of the Messiah: You add religion to the mix to help win your case. Add an extra D6 to your roll but if it comes up a 1, you Botch.

Sabotage: When the GM gives you a Plot Point to activate an Opportunity you rolled to create or step up a Complication, you may hand it back to nullify that.

CHAPTER THREE: FACTIONS

Nobody is neutral in the Imperium. Not while the throne is empty and the galaxy is on fire. You may work for the Council but your Faction determines so much of who you are and the deals you make.

Choose your faction from the table below or roll randomly. Note not all of the factions presented in the wargame are present. The Arborec's hive mind means they could never have singular agents working against their desires. The Mahact are sworn enemies of the entire Council. The Nekro Virus is, well, a mindless virus and the great beasts of the Cabal are not, we hope, given to intrigue (although they still demand to vote on Council matters).

FACTION TABLE:

Roll 1D6: 1-3 TABLE A, 4-6 TABLE B. THEN ROLL 1D10

TABLE A

1	The Argent Flight
2	The Barony of Letnev
3	The Clan of Saar
4	The Embers of Mu'at
5	The Empyrean
6	The Emirates of Hacan
7	The Federation of Sol
8	The Ghosts of Creuss
9	The LIZIX Mindnet
10	The Mentak Coalition

TABLE B

1	The Naalu Collective
2	The Naaz-Rokha Alliance
3	The Nomad
4	Sardakk N'orr
5	The Titans of Ul
6	The Universities of Jol-Nar
7	The Winnu
8	The Xxcha Kingdom
9	The Yin Brotherhood
10	The Yssaril Tribes

These talents often refer to Increasing or Decreasing Stress die. Decreasing lets you, when an opponent causes that kind of stress, reduce the effect die chosen by one step. Increasing means when you cause the listed kind of stress, you may step the stress up one level than your effect die.

THE ARGENT FLIGHT

Thousands of years ago the Flight swore service to the Lazax in the destruction of the Mahact and preventing them from ever returning to this universe. They failed in the latter; they will not fail at the former. With a zealotry to cause bordering on religion, they are people with a clear view of their role in life – and their place on the Throne.

Skills: Step up Leadership.

Talents:

Strike Force Alpha: You start the game with a Signature Asset – a Destroyer-class vessel, swift and deadly. Assign D8 to this Asset.

Zeal: Your words carry great force in debate, but you see no nuance, and that can backfire. You may add a D10 to any roll to get others to agree with you, but if you do you must add a D4.

THE BARONY OF LETNEV

The Barony are ambitious; even arrogant, say their enemies. The Barony would call that jealousy. Raised in the dark underground of a world without a sun, they have little of the necessities to survive. It is necessary then, to take it from a galaxy that would rather the Barony starve and die. So there is a need for force, it seems. Should the Barony weep when those who would see them die perish?

Skills: Step up Warfare.

Talents:

Munitions Reserves: If an opponent makes a successful roll to remove or step down an Asset that is a physical object or a weapon, spend a Plot Point to negate that roll and step the Asset up instead.

War Funding: You have a D8 signature weapon that cannot be taken from you, because you always have another one hidden somewhere else.

THE CLAN OF SAAR

Once known as The Forgotten Race, under Lazax rule they were scattered and weak, and risked extermination at the hands of more aggressive factions. Since Ragh's Call, however, the Saar have found their strength in ever-growing unity. They call no planet home but build one wherever they go, meaning the entire galaxy belongs to them, and they just might make it so. Forget them at your peril.

Skills: Step up Construction.

Talents:

Chaos Mapping: If you are hiding in any environment larger than a single room, attempts to find you suffer a D8 complication. If you spend a Plot Point, only the most powerful technology can possibly find you.

Scavenge: The Saar use what others destroy. Whenever an Asset that is a physical item or construct is removed in a scene by an opponent, put a new Asset into play immediately based on what was destroyed, and step it up one level. Spend a Plot Point to make it permanent.

THE EMBERS OF MUAAT

These unique creatures are made of burning plasma, a fire that slowly burns out then, in a cocoon stage, is turned back into matter once more. Thus the Muaat live long and can endure much, but the crafty Hylan were still able to enslave them to build superweapons. But not forever. The Embers rebelled and took back the superweapon, and will never, ever be slaves again.

Skills: Step up Technology.

Talents:

Ember Suit: You have a D8 Signature Asset of a massive metal suit that protects you from cold and others from the burning fire of your body. The GM can give you a Plot Point to roll a D4 when your suit might be an hindrance or malfunction.

Fiery Vengeance: At any time, you may step down any Outgunned or Outlasted Stress you are suffering any amount to step up Outraged Stress the same amount. If you spend a Plot Point, you may use that Outraged stress in your next roll.

THE EMPYREAN

Legends suggest the shadowy bat-winged empyrean were moving through space thousands of years before any other known race developed superluminal technology. These contemplative beings were, until recently, seemingly only interested in observing the history of the Imperium. Now that seems to have changed.

Skills: Step up Imperium.

Talents:

Dark Whispers: Any two beings in contact with you may act as if they have exchanged Specialities for the scene. You do not share your own Specialities. You can spend a Plot Point to let them exchange Distinctions.

Void Born: You can exist in the vast emptiness of space. When a Complication applies to you about needing air or other survival elements, you may ignore it, or spend a Plot Point to turn that Complication into an Asset at the same value.

THE EMIRATES OF HACAN

For millennia the Hacan were a poor species, dwarfed in galactic history by the achievements of others. Then the universe discovered their great love of the many strange spices and herbs only grown on their beautiful desert planets. Now the proud leonine emirates are the blood that flows all commerce in the Imperium.

Skills: Step up Trade.

Talents:



Check Your Account: Once per scene you can force anyone to reconsider if they want to do their current action by sending them a few credits. If they proceed, they must Reroll all the dice they just rolled.

Master of Trade: Any time you are trading anything involving currency or goods, Double your Trade die. This doesn't work for trading favours or other ephemeral things.

THE FEDERATION OF SOL

There are untold billions of humans found across the galaxy as they have a determination to survive and adapt to any suffering, no matter how punishing. They are scattered and chaotic, and only a small percentage swear allegiance to the Federation. The Federation doesn't need them: it has billions of loyal soldiers and ships on its own.

Skills: Step up Warfare.

Talents:

Reinforcements: The bizarre human biology allows reproduction at a fantastic rate. Whenever you go to a new planet, system or station, you may acquire a D8 Asset of an agent already in that place. Spend a Plot Point to make it permanent.

Special Ops Training: The Federation trains its soldiers hard and well. Once per scene, you may Increase your OutGunned or Outplayed Stress Die.

THE GHOSTS OF CREUSS

For most of recorded history, the Creuss were a fairy tale, a ghost story told to scare young space pilots. But now the ghosts are here and the shining beings of energy have crossed into this universe. The Creuss find beings of matter strange, and their nature is also obscured behind the metal suits they wear to exist here. But they want power, like all factions.

Skills: Step up Politics.

Talents:

Enigmatic: With no physical body, the Creuss are difficult to read in any situation. Double your Politics die in situations that are "face to face".

Ghost Form: Spend a Plot Point to abandon your "suit of armour" that contains your energy form. You instantly leave the scene and manifest back at a nearby safe haven. You may Restore one Stress track back to D4 when you arrive. If it was already D4, remove it.

THE LIZIX MINDNET

The Lazax vanished when the galaxy descended into the twilight and chaos reigned. Now the L1Z1X have appeared, resembling the Lazax but their bodies inseparably enmeshed with cybernetics. Their dark red eyes speak of the terrible cost of survival, and a dark malevolence to make others feel the same pain.

Skills: Step up Technology or Construction.

Talents:

Assimilate: If an opponent uses a technology-based Asset or Complication against you, you may spend a Plot Point to take that die and add it to your own pool.

Calculating: You may spend a Plot Point to add your Technology rating to any Leadership or Politics pool and keep a third die.



THE MENTAK COALITION

The Mentak Coalition began as a prison rebellion. For centuries the Lazax sent political dissidents to die in backbreaking labour and cruel penury on Moll Primus. Now the Mentak have risen up and command a vast pirate fleet that harries and raids while the Mentak claim no knowledge of such actions. They were never shown fairness under the law; they see no need to show it to others.

Skills: Step up Trade or Politics.

Talents:

Opportunist: When the GM rolls an Opportunity, you may spend a Plot Point to gain an additional D6 to your roll. Recalculate if necessary.

Rebellious: If you fail a test because you refused to Give In, gain a D6 to the next test you make.

THE NAALU COLLECTIVE

The telepathic Naalu are in constant contact with each other, sharing one mind, and possibly the minds of others. They claim they do not read what is not willingly given, nor control the thoughts of the “lesser” races they encounter. And then they smile. That beautiful, elegant Naalu smile, that says everything is fine, underlined with sharpened fangs.

Skills: Step up Diplomacy or Politics.

Talents:

Foresight: When an opponent takes an action against you or your allies, you may spend a Plot Point. If you do, rewind time and replay the scene with the knowledge of the action to come.

So Many Crystals: When making a physical object, step up your Construction die (maximum D12) and ignore any Complications that apply to the roll. If it is an Asset, step it up by one.

THE NAAZ-ROHKA ALLIANCE

The Naaz and the Rohka are proof that the galaxy is run by those who find a way. Separately they were weak: the Naaz physically unable to fend off enslavers, the Rohka lacking in technological knowhow to become more than just paid enforcers. Together, they became a new galactic powerhouse, intent on showing all that co-operation is the way forward.

Skills: Step up Imperium.

Talents:

Distant Suns: When rolling Imperium to see what you know about a planet or system, double your die.

Two Bodies: When you are Stressed Out, you may spend a Plot Point to have it only apply to the Naaz or the Rohka in your partnership. The other may continue to act in the scene but acquires a D8 *No Longer Two* Complication.

THE NOMAD

The Nomad and his crew are a small clique of individuals, but they own a space station of nearly 2 million people and have financial resources to rival even the Hacan, which has attracted mercenaries and investors alike to their banner. They behave, therefore, like any galactic empire, although how they acquire their money and what their goal is remains a mystery.

Skills: Step up Leadership or Trade.

Talents:

Inner Circle: You gain a Signature Asset “The Company” at D8, which represents being a close friend of the Nomad and his crew. You can bring the Asset to bear whenever you need financial backing or to be trusted (Leadership or Trade rolls).

Future Sight: If the GM creates an Opportunity rolling against you when you are using your Primary skill, you may Reroll as many dice as you like, because you know what is coming and can adjust for it.

SARDAKK N'ORR

The N'orr homeworld is the most inhospitable place in the galaxy, regularly lashed by acid storms and fire hail. The N'orr persisted anyway. The insectoids are resilient to the point of aggression. Their very existence punches them in the face, so they punch back harder. They frequently shun even simple comforts or basic technology. Not out of pride but to maintain their resilience.

Skills: Step up Warfare.

Talents:

Tekklar Legionnaire: You are the supreme warrior of the universe's most aggressive species. Double your Warfare dice in physical combat.

Unrelenting: If the GM rolls a Complication against you, you may spend a Plot Point to nullify that Complication for the remainder of the session.

THE TITANS OF UL

The Titans are living machines built to be the perfect slave race of the Mahact sorcerers. A fusion of biological concepts and living steel, they start off as mere giants and grow to tower over entire planets. To accommodate the needs of the Council and the intrigue around it, smaller forms known as Microns can detach from their larger nature, but they find it unnatural.

Skills: Step up Construction

Talents:

Awaken: Spend a Plot Point to create a D10 Asset related to the planet, station or system you are on having one of your Titan brethren hidden sleeping below. The GM can hand you the point back and allow your opponents to use this Asset as well.

Tellurian Strength: Spend a Plot Point to instantly remove all Outgunned or Outlasted Stress.

THE UNIVERSITIES OF JOL-NAR

The vast intelligence and technological mastery of the aquatic Hylan people has been the beating heart of the Imperium for all its days. Every device used on a billion different worlds was invented, designed or built by the Hylan. Small wonder that they are tired of the galaxy running on borrowed tools without due obeisance paid to the creators.

Skills: Step up Technology.

Talents:

Brilliant: When you are using Tech Dice in a roll, you may reroll any of the dice in your roll.



Cold-Blooded: You may Decrease any Outraged or Outplayed Stress effect die made against you.

THE WINNU

The Winnu are a people divided. For millennia, they and the galaxy knew them only as the servants of the Lazax, maintaining that immense imperial bureaucracy for their wise and ancient masters. Now the Winnu who remained on their home world believe their role in the galaxy stands apart from the Lazax. In a stroke, the most trusted equerries of the Council became tarred as turncoats.

Skills: Step up Diplomacy

Talents:

Blood Ties: When rolling Diplomacy or Politics in a situation involving the Council, you may add a D8 to the roll.

Hegemonic: You may spend a Plot Point when an ally is attempting a task; if you do they may add your Leadership die and include a third die in their total.

THE XXCHA KINGDOM

The Xxcha are the oldest of all the known imperial peoples, and they have spent most of that time content. They do not seek glory or expansion; their needs are humble and their goal is contemplation and wisdom. But they are not weaklings, and when the Letnev invaded and blasted one of their planet to ash, they decided they would need to rule to find peace.

Skills: Step up Diplomacy.

Talents:

Contemplative: You may spend a Plot Point to remove your own Outraged or Outcast Stress.

Instinct Training: When the GM rolls an Opportunity against you, for each Opportunity rolled you may turn a 1 into a 2 in your own roll.

THE YIN BROTHERHOOD

Cloning was illegal under the Lazax, as they knew that genetic sorcery drove those ancient kings madder than they already were. In the face of the wasting Greyfire Plague, Dr Van Hague pierced this shadowed field and the endless clones of the Yin Brotherhood was the result. The clones are often overlooked but their unwavering devotion and obedience makes them extremely powerful

Skills: Step up Leadership.

Talents:

Blessed: Your flesh is ravaged by the Greyfire wasting. Gain a D8 to any Leadership or Politics roll where you are trying to intimidate or frighten someone.

Indoctrinate: If you are outnumbered in a conflict and the GM rolls an Opportunity, you may remove one of the dice gained for outnumbering you, as the assailant decides not to hit a holy man.

THE YSSARIL TRIBES

So many of the great races have a blind spot: they think that if it does not appear grand and epic, it must not be powerful. First they tried to exterminate the Yssaril, then enslave them, then use them as spies for hire for every faction that could afford it. All that time the Yssaril were watching, learning, gathering, planning, and becoming an powerful space empire that nobody ever saw coming.

Skills: Step up Politics.

Talents:

Infiltrate: Spend a Plot Point to have always been in a scene all along, invisible until now.

Scheming: Your plans hit hard. Increase your Outcast or Outplayed Stress effect die.



CHAPTER FOUR: COTERIE RESOURCES

Characters in **Agents of the New Dawn** operate in a Coterie when conducting espionage and other missions. The players build the Coterie together, and it provides shared resources for them to draw on over a session.

The Coterie has traits that can stand in for Agent traits in a roll or be added to a roll. The Coterie can gain Assets created by players and Complications as a result of rolls.

COTERIE TRAITS

Coterie have three traits that describe how good they are at certain types of espionage. These traits can be substituted instead of an Agent's Expertise die in appropriate situations. The three traits are:

INTEL measures the ability of the Coterie to find out information that other people do not want them to know. The higher the die rating, the more they can find out and the more likely it is to be accurate.

REACH measures how much raw power the Coterie has, by virtue of who they can get access to and manipulate. A high die rating means they can command ministers and influence council votes.

SECRECY is how little is known about the Coterie, its members, methods, operations and goals. Secrecy tends to be the opposite of Reach as access to power requires some visibility – but not always.

These traits begin at D8. Players may choose to lower one to a D6 to raise another to a D10. These traits can be changed by spending Missions just like Expertise, but

Coterie also choose a Handler and a Cover. These operate like Distinctions. Where they may help the Coterie, the nature of their Handler can add a D8 to their roll. But every politician has enemies and public loyalties, so just as often their identity can work against the Coterie. It is possible to have a highly ranked Handler and low Reach: the Handler must keep the Coterie at a distance and not risk showing them visual support.

Handlers could be distinguished by their position or their agenda (see the following list) or their style or approach.

Anti-Intellectual Revolutionary, Mining Advocate, Demilitarization Advocate, Imperial Arbiter, Minister of Antiques, Minister of Commerce, Minister of Exploration, Minister of Homeland Defence, Minister of Industry, Minister of Peace, Minister of Policy, Minister of Sciences, Minister of Trade, Minister of War, Representative Government Advocate, Terraforming Advocate, Arms Reduction Advocate, Disarmament Advocate, Economic Equality Advocate, Colonial Redistribution Advocate, Judicial Representative, Legislative Representative, Constitutional Revisionist, Checks and Balances Advocate, Nexus Sovereignty Advocate, Rearmament Advocate, Research Grant Advocate, Scientific Expert, Historical Expert, Exploration Expert, Legal Expert, Procedural Expert, Political Consultant.

Coteries also have a Cover which they use to move through the galaxy pursuing their secret political agendas. Sometimes their Cover will act as an aid to getting in and out of places and fields of influence, other times they may have some explaining to do.

Covers include: Research Team, Diplomatic Attaches, Ministerial Aides, Council Officer, Legislative Operatives, Judiciary Staff, Security Team, Military Observers, Bodyguards, Personal Staff, Family and Friends, Entourage, Servants, Custodial Staff, Imperial Scribes

TECH DICE POOLS

Coteries has multiple pools of dice that represent access to technological resources and breakthroughs. Any player can spend them out of the pool, rolling as many as they take and adding the highest rolling die to their total for a test. For example, if a player chooses to spend D6 D6 D6 from a pool, they roll all three dice and choose the highest result to add to their roll. The other dice are discarded—they do not go back into the resource pool. The resources in question must align with the test they're being used for; players who spend the dice come up with some narrative for what that resource is and how it's being applied.

Resources must be committed to a specific test before the test is rolled, and once spent out of the pool, they aren't refreshed until a downtime scene, or until a player adds a D6 to a crisis pool to refresh one. The latter effect represents a knuckle-biting last-minute addition or discovery that may make things worse.

Any player may spend resources and refresh resources, but one player is assigned the role of tracking resources in each mission. Before each mission, this player, with the advice of the group as a whole, decides how many dice the pools contain for that mission. This decision can't be changed after the mission starts but you can research the mission before making this decision. Assign ten dice among the following categories. No category can have more than four dice. The number of dice indicates the level of technological investment.

Biotic Tech: These are resources to do with biology, medicine and keeping people alive. They are also useful in understanding new lifeforms and pacifying them without resorting to direct combat.

Cybernetic Tech: Computer technology is all implanted in the Imperium, so this includes processing power, tools to assemble or disassemble things and all sorts of espionage devices such as lockpicking, hacking and surveillance.

Transport Tech: Anyone can get anywhere they want in the galaxy *eventually*. Spend Transport Tech to help you get there faster or more efficiently, or to places hard to reach.

Combat Tech: This is technology designed to hurt or disable individuals, vessels or structures, or aid in such things.

Exotic Tech: This is access to or understanding of things from ancient history, prophecy or religion, artifacts and relics, Lazaxian tools, wormholes and things that otherwise fall beyond the other four categories.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE MISSION

This chapter explains how the GM creates GMCs and opposition pools, including Crisis Pools. In this version of Cortex, both individuals and situations will act against the Agents. The former make rolls against the Agents and can drive conflicts on their own. They may be minor GMCS with only a few notable dice ratings and are defeated in single conflicts, or major Feature GMCs that give and take Stress. The latter operate exactly as Crisis Pools do normally, taking actions from each pool to attack the Agents, add Complications or worsen the crises.