

History

After three interplanetary wars the Pallas republic decided that it was time to start looking again for a new home. This time one that would be even more inaccessible. After much research it was found that a small craft propelled by several hundred tons of thermonuclear explosives could carry a skeleton crew with a load of frozen embryos, and the new fabrication swarms would make it fairly simple to construct these craft. They sent out half a dozen ships before the Calamity, and many other planetoids and even the planets of Earth and Mars followed suit. But before the first colony ship was halfway to its destination the Sol system suddenly went dark, the crews of these miniscule lifeboats waited, terrified, to find out what the reason was. Eventually they got their answer.

"This is an automated beacon broadcasting what may well be the last message ever sent by the human race. Five years ago, our homeworld, Earth was struck by a 50-ton projectile travelling at 90% of the speed of light. The debris took out most of our habitats in Earth's orbit, a few million of us survived elsewhere in the solar system. Then the rest of the invasion force arrived. Machines, vast machines kilometers in length that home in on any sources of radio transmissions, and annihilate them. We pray they are not intelligent and are simply weapons fired by a xenophobic alien race. But they've almost completed their work, we estimate that there's only a couple hundred of us left in the system. We're sending this message in hopes that there is someone out there who can hear it and beware. This universe is more hostile than we thought. They attack radio transmitters, dismantle whatever devices you are listening to this on before they find you."

The message, broadcast on the longest-wave radio known to man and paraman, repeated for three weeks before it cut out. Most of the colonists despaired at this news, as far as they knew they in their little ship were the last remnant of Earth, an untold number could not take the strain and destroyed themselves and their ship. Others decided to take the message's advice and go dark, some taking it so far as to make pacts to abandon all technology as soon as they reached an inhabitable planet.

Alpha Centauri, the closest star system to Sol, was settled by four different ships on the same nearly Earthlike planet. Second Landing, or SecLand as the planet came to be known, was first colonized by a small group of Pallene Parahumans who claimed the entire planet in the name of the great (presumed deceased) leader Argentum. To honor him, they bioprinted a first generation of 500 genetically distinct and very fertile Parahumans from the assorted sperm and eggs donated by exuberant citizens. Including a male and female grown from Argentum's own genome spliced with traces of his companions and advisors. This pair entered politics and quickly usurped the founders as the grand mayor of the colony. By the time the second ship arrived the planet had a population of 2,000 and had a burgeoning industrial base. This ship and the others that followed were integrated into the new republic.

As the centuries passed, colonies began experimenting with alternative means of communicating long distances. Planetside populations favored heavy use of fibre optics,

while those who maintained spacecraft and asteroid colonies generally preferred tight-beam laser transceivers. Eventually scientists on SecLand made two breakthroughs in the field of quantum mechanics. The first was the discovery that entangled particles exist everywhere in the universe, scattered throughout eternity, and that some of the particles that make up sentient beings' nervous systems are entangled with those of other sentients, in particular identical twins. With training these twins could be made to communicate with each other by words or feelings or in rare cases images, which they could relay to others. Unfortunately this resolution was low and telepaths with cranial implants seemed to have the weakest connections. But it did lead to the second innovation, comm units that contained entangled particles enabling them to send data up to and including video that could be exported off unit. Unfortunately these entangled particles were expensive, to the tune of 10,000 credits for a kilobyte's worth, and each bit severed the connection between a pair.

This was enough though, to justify the deployment of probes to the other known colonies fitted with the new QE comms. This enabled regular communication between the governments of these systems, once any initial suspicion had been overcome. However, bandwidth was in too short supply for any useful data transfer, the various systems had been isolated from one another for over a millenium at this point and had diverged massively. There was a wealth of information out there just waiting for someone to grasp it. Eventually a corporation called Interstellar Expeditions Inc was founded with the objective of combining the old rapid construction techs with new matter annihilation to build "data freighters" that would go out into the black carrying research journals, works of fiction, and other information that could be of value to distant suns and bring back data that would be just as valuable to SecLand. The first expedition took fifty Terran years to return but the crew was able to buy their ship outright and went back out. Others followed suit, and still other smaller groups got similar ideas, the company didn't last long but the investors at least got rich off it.

Five more centuries passed, ten systems were contacted, four were found burned and shattered like Sol. But eventually, physicists on SecLand made another breakthrough. With access to astronomical data and the works of physicists from over two dozen worlds they were finally able to develop a means of producing a transversable wormhole. The two mouths of the wormhole had to be transported to the two destinations to be connected, at under 25% light speed no less, but once they were in place they were held open by exotic matter and could move traffic and information between star systems in hours rather than years. When the first stargate, between Alpha Centauri and Tau Ceti, was laid down grand mayor Selkd the Uniter, a descendant of Argentum's bioprinted progeny, pushed for a unification of all Parahuman worlds under a single Federation that would prevent yet another Calamity from happening. The Church of the Noosphere, up until then a minor sect in the Centauri system, declared their unilateral support for Selkd and proclaimed that the noospheres of Cenatauri and Ceti would soon become one. The government of Tau Ceti agreed, followed by Epsilon Eridani. However not all the people shared that opinion.

Insurgencies cropped up all over the new Federation, usually no more than a few hundred in an area all together they caused immense damage and killed thousands of people. Eventually, even Selkd was felled by an assassin at the tender age of 312. His sister Lirdrill was elected to replace him and she was merciless towards the rebels. She named herself "Praetor" and organized the Federal Guard as a military force that would police inhabited space for threats to the Federation, and by extension all Parahumanity. The insurgencies were the first target of this new force, swiftly and decisively all violent rebels in the stargate network were shot, captured, or annihilated by orbital kinetic bombardment. Captured combatants who had civilian blood on their hands were summarily executed, those who had not were placed in nanostasis and loaded en masse aboard starships with no other form of nanotechnology on board and sent far from the growing empire.

Praetor Lirdrill was praised for her just disposal of the extremists, when elections for her sixth term came around it was whispered that with the still massive distances between stars an election every five years would be impractical, and the legislature passed a law making the position of Praetor last for life. She reigned for another 250 years before retiring, her great-grandson was elected to fill her place. Since then the House of Silver has filled the office of Praetor and many other high offices in the Federation.

It has been seven hundred years since the birth of the Federation, and it still expands to this day. Nearly a hundred systems are connected by the gate network while ten times that number have been contacted or colonized. And the data traders usually manage to keep at least fifty years ahead of the stargates.

The Federation of Human Species (Centauri Imperium):

The Federation, known by many as the Centauri Empire or Imperium, is officially a representative democratic confederation but it has some elements resembling more of a constitutional monarchy. While the Core Worlds are fully represented in the congress almost all Praetors of the past seven hundred years have been of the same bloodline and the rim systems not yet connected into the network are frequently treated like the personal fiefdoms of their Federation Emissaries.

Federal Government: The Federal government has three branches as with many 20th century republics. The Executive consists of the Praetor and their advisers, who vary in number with each Praetor. When a Praetor resigns, dies, or is impeached (a very lengthy and convoluted process that has only been completed twice in the Federation's history) a new Praetor is elected by the populace of the stargate network. Campaigning takes five years and every year the candidate pool is winnowed down further and further, the first year the most popular 80 candidates are selected, halved to 40 in the second year, 20 in the third, 10 in the fourth, and finally the Praetor is chosen from the final 5 candidates still in the race. In theory, any citizen of the stargate-connected systems can run, in practice only prominent legislators, planetary politicians, or members of the House of Silver make it past the first year. The Senate has one senator chosen by each planetary government in the network, by whatever means they decide, their primary

purpose is to write and debate new laws before passing or rejecting them. The House of Commons, on the other hand, exists to repeal unpopular laws. Representatives of the Commons are elected by each block of 1 million people sectioned out by area every 50 years, 10 candidates are nominated randomly by lottery and 1 is elected by their constituents. 50 years after a law is passed by the Senate it goes before the House of Commons, who vote on whether it should remain or be repealed, if they decide to keep it the law will be reassessed again in another half century.

Out-Worlds: Systems outside the stargate network do not have any sort of representation on SecLand, rather they have an Emissary appointed by the Praetor who acts as a liason between the planetary governments and the Federation. Predominantly running the local Guard starport. It is not uncommon for Emissaries to set themselves up as military dictators of their planets, but the Congress does send an inspector every so often, depending on how far the system is from the nearest gate and the previous inspector's report. More than one inspector has vanished mysteriously en route to their destination, standard Guard policy is to dispatch an invasion fleet after five disappear.

Bureaucracy: Any large government is going to require scores of administrators, and the Federation is no exception. The bureaucracy is by and large meritocratic, with local branches starting out with Core Worlders in leading roles and later stepping out in favor of natives. However, nepotism and cronyism have yet to be fully eliminated. There are many departments, the Judicial enforces Federal laws, Mercantile affairs assesses tariffs and enforces trade restrictions, etc.

The Federal Guard: The Federation's military arm. The Guard is usually the first Federal institution to make its presence known in a system and with good reason. It has two duties: to defend Parahumanity from external threats, and to maintain the unity of the Federation. The first is directed primarily at the Berserkers, piracy is unknown as "trade routes" tend to be light-years long and light-days wide, rendering it nearly impossible to intercept a freighter in transit, and there are few known polities outside the Federation that can threaten it. The Federal Guard has never fought the Berserkers on any known occasion, they tend to enact that duty by stopping long-wave radio transmissions. The second duty is invoked far more often, there is always some group of malcontents somewhere. Standard procedure for dealing with separatists and problematic ideologies is to land power-suited marines directly on bases, armed with less-than-lethal ordinance if the insurgents have not yet killed civilians and lethal weapons if they have, round them all up, execute anyone known to have killed someone, and deport the rest in a ship paid for with the auction of their own assets. It is spelled out quite clearly that secession from the Federation is impossible, emigration, on the other hand, is always an option.

Planetary Governments: While the Federal government is democratic-oligarchic, the governments of individual planets vary a great deal. Democracies, dictatorships, feudal estates, corporate states, it runs the gamut, there may even be multiple governments on one planet. The Federation generally does not care unless 60% of the planet's population petitions for an intervention, in which case the Federal Guard is called upon to overthrow the current government and instate one more to the majority population's

liking. This policy has led to many planets within the stargate network adopting Pallas-style democracies, either gradually or abruptly. Some Out-World Emissaries are suspected of forging or astro-turfing intervention petitions.

Economy: The Federation economy is generally capitalistic, discounting planetary governments that attempt more control. There are many currencies in use in its borders, but two are in prominence. The Production credit is backed by an industrial complex that forms the heart of every Federal city, fully robotic, capable of producing most goods with publicly available blueprints, and stocked with a large supply of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, iron, and silicon. Anyone with credits on account may use them to order goods from this complex. These complexes are also used by the Federal government itself, relieving a bit of the tax burden from the citizenship. Trade credits on the other hand are issued by interstellar merchants when a planet doesn't have a strong currency. Natives sell them goods or data and are paid in trade credit, which they then use to buy data and goods from the traders, or try to exchange them with their neighbors. Other currencies include rare elements, favored by merchants, cryptocurrencies, favored by people who don't expect to leave their native infosphere, and the occasional fiat currency. There are also a few governments with gift or barter economies, though they usually need to actively intervene to prevent the formation of de facto currencies.

The House of Silver: The family descended from the reconstituted genes of Argentum. The House includes many prominent legislators, administrators, Guard officers, Emissaries, and priests. There are numerous clans and branches of the House scattered throughout the Federation, generally following one of two philosophies. Preservers tend to believe that they should be exerting a tighter grip on the Federation, and have a habit of trying to preserve the founders genes as much as possible. Innovators want to experiment, both with their genotype and with governments. While all Silvers have trace genes from Argentum's companions and lovers the Innovators are known to incorporate scores of other genes, even going so far as to sexually reproduce outside the family on occasion. Features such as wings, taurism, and non-binary sexual characteristics are among the least radical modifications, they are even found among Preservers. Breeding pairs are customarily arranged by House or clan elders for eugenic reasons, and may shift at a moments' notice. This selective breeding has resulted in a bit of mental instability, anyone with a mental disorder more noticeable than a simple anti-social personality disorder is barred from the breeding lists. Some branches surgically sterilize their "rejects" but they can get that fixed in almost any Core World clinic, so instead they disinherit any children they manage to produce. Something they have tried to encourage is the creation of telepaths, each generation has used a combination of drugs and nanotech to induce twinning in at least one pregnancy, frequently resulting in three or more children with identical genes and some degree of mental connection. They use these telepaths to form their own secure FTL communications networks, unfortunately they have an even greater than average (for the House) tendency towards autism spectrum disorders or psychoses, keeping them out of the gene pool.

Religion

The Noosphere:

Noospherism was formed as a syncretism between the Roman Catholicism that gained a small foothold on Pallas before the exodus, and the Eastern beliefs of Buddhism and Taoism. Noospherists believe that the universe is slowly becoming sapient, and its thoughts are communications between sentient beings. Occasionally the Noosphere makes its will manifest through avatars that may be living beings (prophets) or visions and dreams (eidolons). When communication is rough and only a few hundred people may be in regular communication, people may perceive thousands of eidolons, but as time progresses and society becomes more centralized avatars consolidate into "gods" and eventually into a single "God". However even with the internet of pre-Calamity Earth or modern-day SecLand, God is not sapient yet, the people are too confused and conflict with one another too much for it to form cohesive thoughts. The Church of the Noosphere's goal is two-fold, to settle dispute within the Noosphere so that it may think straight, and to expand the Noosphere across the universe so that it may form the complex thoughts needed for true sapience. Unfortunately, even the Church itself has fallen to factionalism.

Major Sects:

The One True SecLand Church: The original, and the one most closely affiliated with the Hosue of Silver. They believe that most disagreements can be settled with logic and reasoning, and that many viewpoints can strengthen society, but they're not afraid to use force if conflict ends up coming to blows. The One True SecLand Church is also the single largest NGO in the Federation, with hundreds of thousands of temples and millions of clergy operating on a franchise model and led by a Patriarch on SecLand in a private arcology. Missionaries frequently come to newly recontacted worlds, build a temple with a nanoseed, then recruit new priests from the local converts to take over when they move on. The SecLanders openly profess the belief that Argentum was the last prophet of Sol, and that many of zir descendants have achieved that prestige themselves, but they don't have the exclusive right to it, it's a big galaxy. Birth control is thought to be a spit in the face of the last Solar prophet and zir work to make parahumanity fertile, but artificial conception, even homosexual, is tolerated so long as it expands the Noosphere. Monogamy is seen as ideal but not required, the closest thing to marriage on SecLand and many other planets is a child-rearing contract that may be between any number of individuals. Praetors in particular are known for not following the ideal. The Church varies a great deal from planet to planet, it is not unknown for followers from one world to not recognize adherents on another as members of the same faith.

Crusaders: A general term for a variety of radical sects that believe that violence is the end-all be-all to all arguments and will settle them for good. They are officially considered to be memetic hazards and usually rebels in the Federation and frequently exiled. However, many of them manage not to get caught by posing as mercenary companies and operating outside the Federation's borders. Such Crusaders tend to live

on board their starships in large travelling villages of soldiers, accompanied by wives and engineers. Because they rely more on breeding than proselyzation to expand the Noosphere they tend to keep females isolated from the battlefield, and a man's rank is usually proportional to the number of wives they bed, which can make some fleets rather inbred. However, there are also many other Crusader sects that are composed predominantly or entirely of female warriors who consider themselves all that is necessary to support a population. Another category includes those who grow their children artificially in tanks and have equal numbers of male and female warriors.

Berserker Cults:

The second most common category of religion in the Parahuman sphere are those that in some way preoccupied with the machines that razed the Solar System. However, they differ widely in their beliefs concerning the machines. Some believe that the machines are simply some other species' means of eliminating potential threats, and advocate reducing their chances of being noticed as much as possible, up to and including forsaking all electronics. Others think that the machines are manifestations of the will of some divine being and punish populations who have offended it or them, reminiscing the legends of Sodom and Gomorrah. Yet another variety, thankfully the most rare, believe that Parahumanity itself does not deserve to exist and actively try to attract Berserkers. Federation policy is to persecute the last category with extreme prejudice, if necessary bombarding their antennae from orbit. But still, enough frontier planets have fallen to machines that on many planets prejudice and even mob violence against any and all Berserker Cults is commonplace.

Language:

The diaspora and isolation has resulted in the evolution of countless new languages, English alone has spawned hundreds. Fortunately translation software is quite freely available and most Federation citizens have at the very least Augmented Reality glasses, if not cranial implants. Ships on which every crewman speaks a different language and does not know any of their shipmates' tongues are not unknown, but very uncommon. The Federation has made numerous attempts to encourage solidarity and interplanetary cooperation by formulating a single "common tongue", three of which are in common use. Lojban is the official language of business and politics, however its incredible preciseness and linguistic isolation has prevented it from becoming an "everyday" language and its mostly used for contracts and laws. Basic Anglic is a simplified version of English with all regional jargon stripped out and grammar greatly simplified. Anglic spelling is completely phonetic (funetik) with no silent letters or compound sounds. It is fairly commonly used for communication between individuals from different worlds and is probably the most prevalent "second language" and even a first language in some places, as a result it has mutated considerably. Landlish is the naturally evolved language of SecLand, developed from a mix of English, Latin, Mandarin, and Lojban. It's fiendishly complicated to learn as an adult but most inhabitants of the capital only know Landlish and maybe a smattering of Lojban and Anglic, and they've spread it to most planets linked by stargates.