

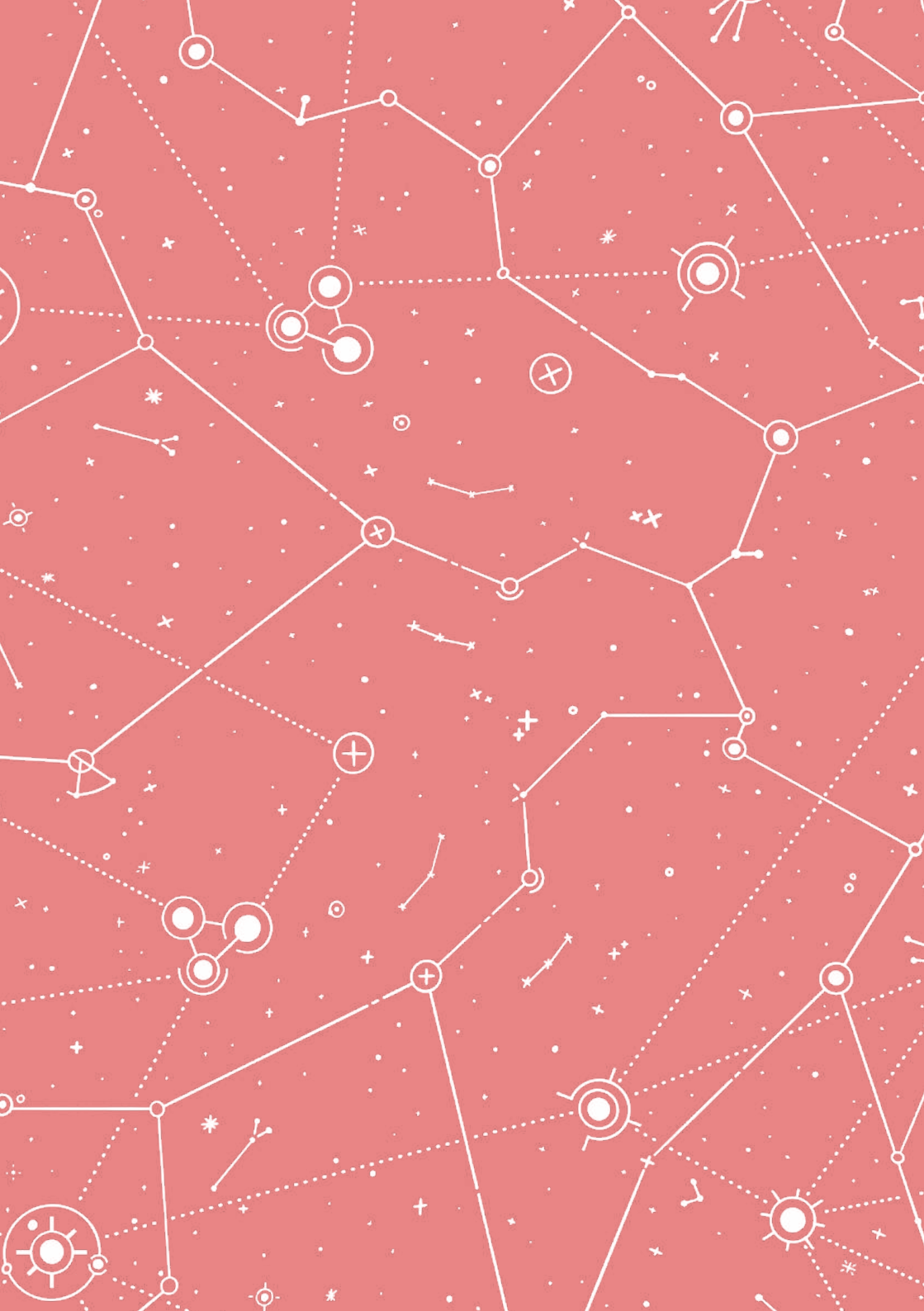
SOLO MECH EXPLORATION RPG

ION HEART



PILOT'S HANDBOOK





ION HEART

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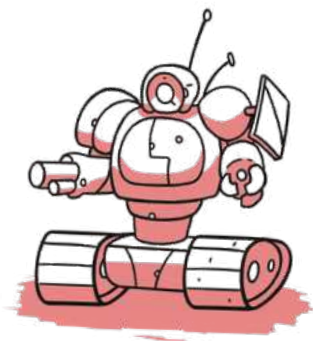


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In the far future, in a galaxy not so far away, war has waged amongst the stars for many years. But now, there is peace, and the once mighty Mechanised armies have been disbanded, their Pilots scattered and searching for purpose. There are always adventures to be had, battles to be fought, and a peace to be protected – all from the Pilot's seat of your very own Mech. What life will you lead amongst the stars of the Astral Union?

WHAT IS ION HEART?

ION Heart is a solo roleplaying game about exploring new worlds while Piloting large robotic machines called Mechs. You develop stories and record them in your writing journal, using a 6-sided die (referred to here as a D6) to randomise your encounters and resolve the challenges they put forward.

By rolling dice, you will navigate new worlds through a series of prompts, ranging from assisting locals with minor problems and worries, to fighting Mechs and other threats in daring battles.



These prompts will ask you to make decisions, roll dice, complete challenges and write about your experiences in your Pilot's Logbook to record your story.

First you will need to create your Pilot, the character you play as, using prompts to inspire their origins and goals. Next you will construct a Mech: your constant companion, transportation and protection throughout your adventure in the many worlds of the Astral Union.



1.

THE WORLD OF ION HEART

THE ASTRAL UNION

This game is set in the far future, in an interstellar conglomerate of cultures known as the Astral Union (or the AU), cradled at the heart of the Aegeic Galaxy. Through sustained diplomatic efforts, the vast systems have been forged into a peaceful federation with utopian ambitions. Thick-haired Urvons trade wares from their mighty constructor forges with cold-blooded Varziss merchants. Proud Kirvae navigators guide freight ships piloted by Apollonian deck crews. People from every culture mingle and live alongside one another in a vast expanse of peaceful planets.

Technological marvels have spread through the stars in this era of peace. With spatial-translation, Snap Rifts bind together the planetary systems of the AU, allowing ships to travel to far-flung planets in an instant. Artificial intelligence programs are used in the day-to-day running of interstellar bureaucracy. Mass-produced Piloted machines called Mechs are used for everything from agricultural gathering, to courier services and construction work.

These machines have their own AI system which forms a bind with their Pilot, learns from them, and protects them in dangerous situations when they become injured or compromised.



This system is the heart and brain of the Mech, known as the Ion Core.

The days of calamitous wars waged by legions of Battle-Mechs are long gone; many of the towering machines have now been retrofitted to help build rather than destroy. But small bands of Pilots still operate as mercenaries, adventurers and peacekeepers on the fringes. At the dangerous and ungoverned edges of the Astral Union, colonists frequently settle new worlds. People travel from every culture, species and background to begin new lives here with fresh hopes of a peaceful existence.

You are an adventuring Pilot, whose story begins as you touch down on one of these worlds alongside your trusty Mech...

SOCIETIES OF THE ASTRAL UNION

The Astral Union formally came into being nearly 1000 years ago, founded at the end of a conflict between the League of Urvo and Kirvaen Prefecture, in a peace brokered by the Varziss Triarchy. These 3 interstellar nations form the original core of the AU. The Mo'nau, Chiros and most recently Apollonians have joined since the initial founding.



The central government of the AU is the Astral Council. The members of this council are called Advocators, with 3 democratically elected Advocators representing each member state. The seat of this government rests at the border between Kirvae, Varziss and Urvon territory, located on the world of Tarak Sull.

Each of the species of the AU has its own core systems, home planets and government bodies, albeit ones that operate within the framework of the AU's laws. The further one travels from the core of each member state, the more diverse the population becomes.

LEAGUE OF URVO

People: Urvon

Home planet: Barokan

Government: Clanlaw Assembly



The hulking, bear-like Urvon hail from the ore-rich planet of Barokan. Over thousands of years, they mastered colossal deep-mining operations, leading them to develop the first ever Mechs. The Urvon inner systems are perhaps the most wealthy in all the Astral Union, and home to a number of the ancient and mighty constructor forges. The League consists of hundreds of clans which control different spans of Urvon space, and have historically been characterised by politicking and (mostly bloodless) rivalries.

VARZISS TRIARCHY



People: Varziss

Home planet: Kivezz Cluster

(Kivezz, Vectross, Primoss)

Government: Triumvirate Senate

Located in the galactic north, the sprawling Varziss Triarchy forms the largest member state of the Astral Union. The reptilian Varziss call the three tropical planets of the Kivezz Cluster their home worlds. The dark old days of authoritarian rule in the Triarchy are now a thing of the past, with the 3 planetary governors elected by democratic means. Because of their cold blood, the Varziss tend to wear heated fur-lined body-suits in all but the warmest climates.

KIRVAEN PREFECTURE

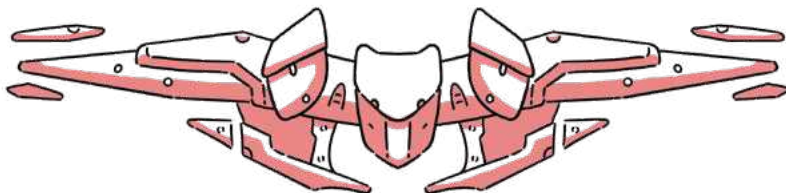


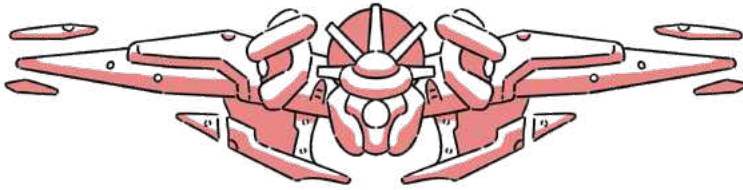
People: Kirvae

Home planet: Talann

Government: Prefect Charter

The Kirvaen Prefecture historically had a rigid class system, in the ancient past, being a feudal society. Now it operates as a democracy, but the spectre of the old aristocratic order and nepotistic power structure still looms large. Perhaps more so than other member-states of the AU, old-money families still hold a disproportionate amount of sway in positions of power. The Kirvae have shown particular interest in the development of psionics, and have whole academies dedicated to the study and furtherance of it as a field of research. It was the Kirvae who developed the first Ion Cores during a war with the Urvon, using their knowledge of psionic resonances.





CHIROS COALITION



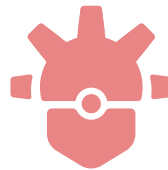
People: Chiros

Home planet: Arkion

Government: Board of Admirals

The winged, bat-like Chiros were the first sentient species to master flying machines and soon after began their exploration of the stars. Their daring interstellar missions quickly established contact with other civilisations in the Aegeic, linking together a galactic network of commerce and trade. They developed a culture of independence and self-sufficiency that saw them avoid becoming a member of the Astral Union, as they continued to exist as a collection of loose fiefdoms. Following the Emergence Catastrophe, the Chiros formally assembled into a coalition to become part of the AU.

UNIFICATION OF APOLLO



People: Apollonians

Home planet: Apollo Primus

Government: Sun Congress

The Apollonians harvested the power of their local star, Apollo Rex, and were able to break their destructive cycle of endless resource wars and environmental catastrophe to save their fledgling civilisation. The centring of the star in their society developed into a religion of sun worship. The Unification has become an increasingly progressive society, though hyper-traditionalist religious orthodoxies manifest in some Apollonian communities. The newest civilisation to make itself known to the galaxy, the Unification of Apollo engaged in a border conflict with the Varziss before being accepted into the Astral Union.

MO'NAU REPUBLIC

People: Mo'nau

Home planet: Oskaw

Government: Republican Committee



The Mo'nau Republic has a reputation as the home of scholars and peacemakers; the small home world of Oskaw boasts a thriving culture of learning and creativity. This is the birthplace of great minds of history, such as the reformer Entis Tavik and spatial-theoretician Tyko Vellitz. The Mo'nau, however, have as complicated a history as any other member state in the AU. Across the millennia they have still known conflict and intrigue, most notably the violent counter-monarchist revolution in the 25th century of the Astral Calendar that established the government as a Republic.

LIFE IN THE AU

TRAVERSING THE AU

Citizens of the AU have access to a number of means of transportation between systems, either commercially available or funded by the AU government. The most common are massive transportation ships travelling through Snap Rifts, followed by smaller ships ferrying between individual

planets. Private and government ships also exist that travel more independently.

Snap Rifts allow massively accelerated travel between different systems, acting as artificial wormholes punched in space that 'snap' together two locations. Snap Rifts act as central links between most major systems, using massive commercial cargo haulers that transport goods and people.

COMMUNICATION

All species of the AU are able to learn each other's languages, although each culture invariably has hundreds, if not thousands, of regional dialects.

Because of this, AU citizens typically wear translators when conversing with one another for ease. Translators usually take the form of earpieces and voice modulators.

CORPORATIONS

The AU has seen the rise and fall of many mega-corporations – great system-spanning conglomerates driven by the pursuit of profit at all costs. By the late 50th century of the Astral Calendar, 6 corporations had consolidated their power to vie for market domination of the AU. Each one operates as a virtual interplanetary nation in its own right and controls hundreds, if not thousands, of subsidiaries.

- + **Noth Logistik** – A massive infrastructure conglomerate controlled by the Noth dynasty, specialising in supply chain and asset management.
- + **Ikarus Multi-Stellar** – Primarily known for its food production, Ikarus will happily bulldoze small settlements to establish one of its smoke-churning industrial hubs.
- + **Ipcriss Executive Outcomes** – One of the most powerful arms manufacturers in the AU, and notably holds the licence for the Zenef Mech model.

- + **Dragnoss Industries** – This military firm makes the lion's share of its profits through security and manufacturing contracts, loaning out cadres of mercenaries to the highest bidder.

- + **Gramyll-Keeler Resources** – Heavy manufacturing and natural resource extraction have spawned an industrial empire that has made GKR one of the largest employers in the Astral Union.

- + **Vultun Holdings** – A communications and entertainment giant, Vultun owns a staggering number of stellarcom networks and creative properties.

PSIONICS

Around 0.0012% of the population of the AU manifest psionic abilities. No one knows how or why this began, but suggestions include spontaneous evolutionary mutation, or unforeseen side effects of the development of Snap Rifts. Psionic manifestations take the form of small-scale telekinesis, empathic synaesthesia and limited telepathic communication.

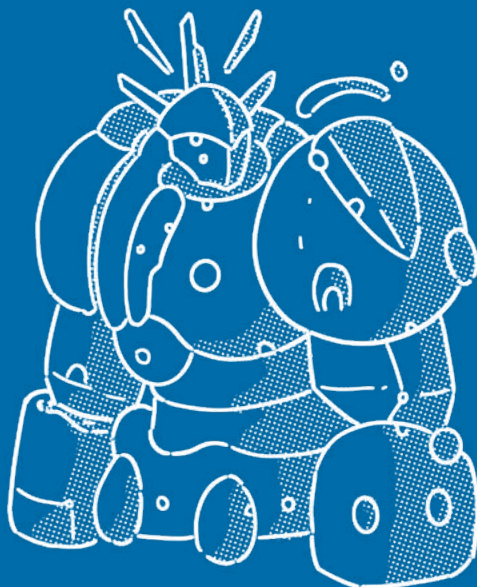
The Kirvaen Prefecture has led the charge with research into psionics, and this research is what allowed them to engineer the first Ion Cores.

MECHS

Initially developed as industrial machine units by the League of Urvo for mine clearance and construction purposes, Mechs were first weaponised for combat use during the Urvon–Kirvae War. Those dark days are long gone, and Mechs have now become the standard form of land vehicles in the AU.

Mech design templates are distributed and licensed by large corporations, although independent modification and construction are common, as weapons of war are turned into machines of peace. With the exception of the Ion Core system, Mechs can be fabricated wholesale from advanced printing units and constructed locally all over the AU, although the process is expensive. Most settlements of any size will have at least one Mech Workshop to carry out repairs or build new parts.

Some Mechs have been around for hundreds of years (albeit with some hardware updates), while others are newly reconfigured military units assigned to workers in sprawling development projects. Small communities may have a handful of Mechs that fulfil necessary functions of rural life, while some Mechs act as status symbols of old aristocratic lineages. Some Mechs are passed down as heirlooms from one



generation of a family to another, while inevitably receiving small upgrades here and there along the way.

Mechs can range in size from just larger than a person to the size of huge buildings and are built to specifications and regulations overseen by the AU. All but the most ancient Mechs use kinetic-harvesting tech to provide themselves with a near limitless supply of power, as the Mech's movements continually charge their internal generators.

The psychic and emotional bonds built between Pilot and Mech are not easy ones to transfer, and Pilots will usually stay with the same Mech for most of their lifespan. Only after the Pilot voluntarily parts ways with their Mech, or dies, will a Mech potentially accept a new Pilot.

THE ION CORE

The Ion Core system was developed by the Kirvae for war against the Urvon, as a way of improving their Pilots' reaction times. The Kirvae are renowned for their study of latent psionic potential in all sapient beings, and it is believed this is what helped them develop the mind-machine connection, known as the Sync Bond.

In the new peacetime, Ion Core technology has yielded huge societal benefits. The precision and dexterity of Sync-Bonded Mechs massively increases the speed of construction projects, as well as the efficiency of disaster relief missions.

The Ion Core itself is an advanced AI system that shifts and grows over time and inevitably develops new habits, idiosyncrasies, and some say a personality of its own. A Mech will have a baseline 'neutral and helpful' personality assigned will come with some minor tweaks a Pilot can make to the voice and holographic appearance.

The Mech's Ion Core will naturally change over time and it is difficult to perform an entire factory reset of them. Because of this, many Mechs – especially ex-combat models – have the equivalent of suppressed memories. Particularly maverick Mech Pilots may attempt to rewire a Mech's Ion Core, releasing inhibitors and allowing the Mech to achieve increased levels of self-awareness.

Ion Cores are very costly to build and manufacture, and for most medium-sized models they will be the most expensive part of the Mech. The creation of an Ion Core is extremely intensive and borders on the magical. Consequently Ion Core production is only sanctioned in a limited number of production facilities across the AU.

MECH SENTIENCE

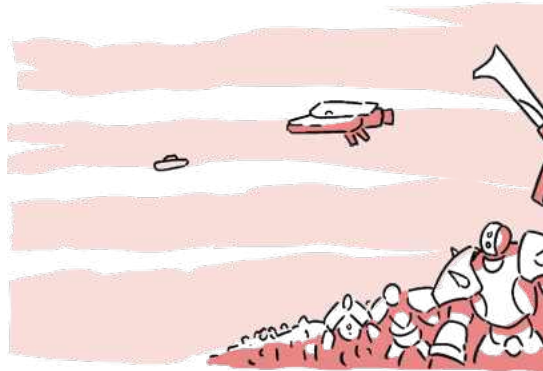
Mechs are not classed as sentient under AU law, as they aren't recognised as being wholly autonomous and independent. However, the topic of Mech Sentience is a source of constant debate and academic study.

Although Ion Core systems are able to grow and change, they are limited by in-built parameters that prevent Mechs from achieving what could be termed true self-awareness. It is with great bemusement, then, that leading figures in the field of Mech Studies are forced to repeatedly wrestle with disparate reports of Mechs across the Astral Union operating of their own free will.

Some believe that Mechs that experience what can be characterised as profound or traumatic events can sometimes inadvertently shut off their own programming firewalls, effectively moving towards self-awareness. Other theories suggest that physical damage to the Ion Core's casing can produce similar results, although this is exceptionally rare.

There are some who attribute these growing reports of sentience to the unique bonds that Mechs build with their Pilots. As Pilots connect to the Mechanical brain of the Mech, the same happens in reverse. They receive data, reflexes and nervous system responses to help aid in better control from their Pilot, but some theorise the Mechs receive more than that. They are fully connected to the brain of their Pilot, seeing memories, emotions, and elements of the soul that determine decisions. They may not understand

what these pools of data are initially, but as a Pilot and Mech's Sync Bond grows, they begin to take on a personality born of this connection.

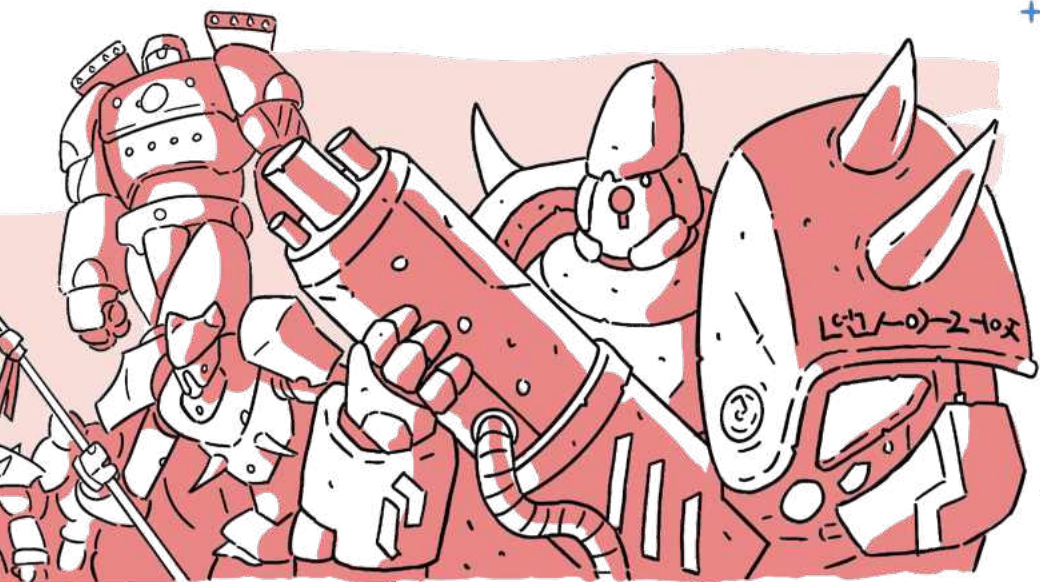


THE NEPHILIM

AN EXISTENTIAL THREAT

Decades before your story begins, the AU was rocked by an extra-galactic invasion by the unknowable Strand Fleets of the Nephilim, known as the Emergence War or Emergence Catastrophe. The invasion was beaten back, but fragments of the original invasion force, as well as individual Nephilim, still exist in far-flung reaches of the AU.





The Nephilim themselves are a Biomechanical hybrid species of indeterminate origin. All that is known is they are singular-minded, violent, and impossible to communicate with. Scientists theorise that the Nephilim are constructs, built by long-forgotten creators who they ultimately destroyed before moving their gaze towards the Astral Union.

The Nephilim range in size from just larger than a person to towering skyscrapers, often taking on aspects of the many species they have eradicated over time. They were an intergalactic steamroller, looking to pulverise every other living thing in their path and reconstitute them as part of their own. There would be no peaceful assimilation, just absorption, leaving nothing left of whatever stood in their way.

AFTER THE WAR

The Nephilim were defeated and scattered back to wherever they came from, thanks in no small part to Chiros bomber squadrons. This was leveraged by politicians from the Chiros Coalition to allow them to join the AU in the years after the war.

The war supercharged Mech technological advancements, which continue to pay dividends in the peacetime since. Innovations include advanced anti-gravity thrusters, self-repairing internal systems and sustainable Perpetual Motor Drives.

TIMELINE OF THE ASTRAL UNION

The AU uses the Astral Calendar, with years marked in relation to the First Meeting between sentient species in OAC.

-3000 – The Varziss poet Ketses describes great armoured bodies Piloted by tree spirits in her fictionalised historical epic, *The Fall of Pentessh*.

-224 – Mo’nau theoretician Tyko Vellitz proposes a faster-than-light ‘Spatial-Junction’ as a possibility .

-100s – Multiple species undertake manned space-faring missions .

-47 – Varziss ships successfully settle the planets in the Kivezz Cluster. First recorded instance of full planetary colonisation.

0 –The First Meeting. Varziss and Kirvae make contact, the first of its kind between sentient galactic species.

25–75 – The Chiros launch far-ranging and decades-long exploration missions throughout the Aegeic. They establish diplomatic relations with the Kirvae, Mo’nau, Varziss, Urvon, Rakaen and Vull.

153 – Nearly 400 years after Tyko Vellitz’ initial proposal, the first teleportation Snap Rifts are engineered by Mo’nau scientists to transport 1.2g of matter from one side of their planet to the other.

500 – Mo’nau and Kirvaen scientists perfect the first interplanetary Snap Rift, capable of transporting entire space ships. The process is massively expensive and laborious.

1006 – Earliest recorded instances of psionic manifestation occur in the Kirvaen Prefecture. Over the next decade all through the Aegeic, further psionic manifestations take place across all cultures and species. Estimated population with psionic abilities totals 0.0012%

- **2483** – Mo’nau civil war erupts between Monarchist and Republican forces. The Mo’nau royal family is deposed and the government becomes a Republic.
- **2800** – Humans complete their first manned space flight.
- **3000** – Tulkhan Vuul, an Urvon engineer, develops a Piloted Mechanised suit controlled entirely by neural impulses for deep mining work. Vuul is widely considered the father of Mech technology.
- **3470** – The Kirvae–Urvo War erupts over natural resources. The League of Urvo deploys modified Mechs for frontline combat to brutal effect.
- **3476** – Kirvaen Prefecture engineers use their psionic research knowledge to develop their own Battle-Mechs with an ingenious AI system to aid their Pilots’ performance. The AI is known as the Ion Core.
- **3490** – The Varziss broker a peace between the devastated League of Urvo and Kirvaen Prefecture, vowing to forever enshrine peace amongst the 3. The Astral Union is born.
- **3520** – The Astral Union passes laws preventing the monopolisation of Mech production by corporations. The corporations sell their supplies of production moulds of Mechs to individual Mech forges to offset their losses.
- **3600** – Mech entertainment gains widespread popularity in and outside of the AU, from sporting events to theatrical performances.
- **3800** – Mechs have replaced nearly all other forms of land vehicles, ranging in size from small cars to cargo ships. Ion Core technology vastly accelerates the scope and ambition of construction projects throughout the Aegeic.
- **4145** – Mo’nau Republic formally recognised as Astral Union partner.
- **4152** – Astral Calendar instated as the dating system of the AU, 4152 years after the meeting of first civilisations.
- **4259** – Snap Rifts begin construction between most major systems in the Astral Union.
- **4323** – Political reformer Entis Tavik enshrines in law a baseline entitlement

to food and shelter for citizens of the Astral Union despite protestations of political opponents. He dies in mysterious circumstances, becoming a symbol of justice and compassion.

4439 – Humanity embraces sun worship, becoming the Unification of Apollo.

4886 – The Unification of Apollo makes first contact with the Astral Union. Cautious exchanges and trade begin.

4898 – A series of incidents result in skirmishes between the Varziss Triarchy and Unification of Apollo. Other AU member states refuse to become involved.

4900 – Ceasefire and normalisation of relations between Apollonians and Varziss and other AU members brokered by Mo'nau diplomats.

4915 – The Emergence Catastrophe: Nephilim Strand Fleets emerge from the Galactic East, rampaging through Rakaen space and emerging into the Astral Union.

4916 – Forces from across the Aegeic, including the Unification of Apollo, Chiros Coalition, and even the Vull Federation, assemble in the Astral Union to fight against the Nephilim. The Emergence War grips the galaxy.

4925 – The Nephilim are finally defeated and driven from the Astral Union when Chiros bomber squadrons are able to destroy a Macro-Tyrant leading the Nephilim.

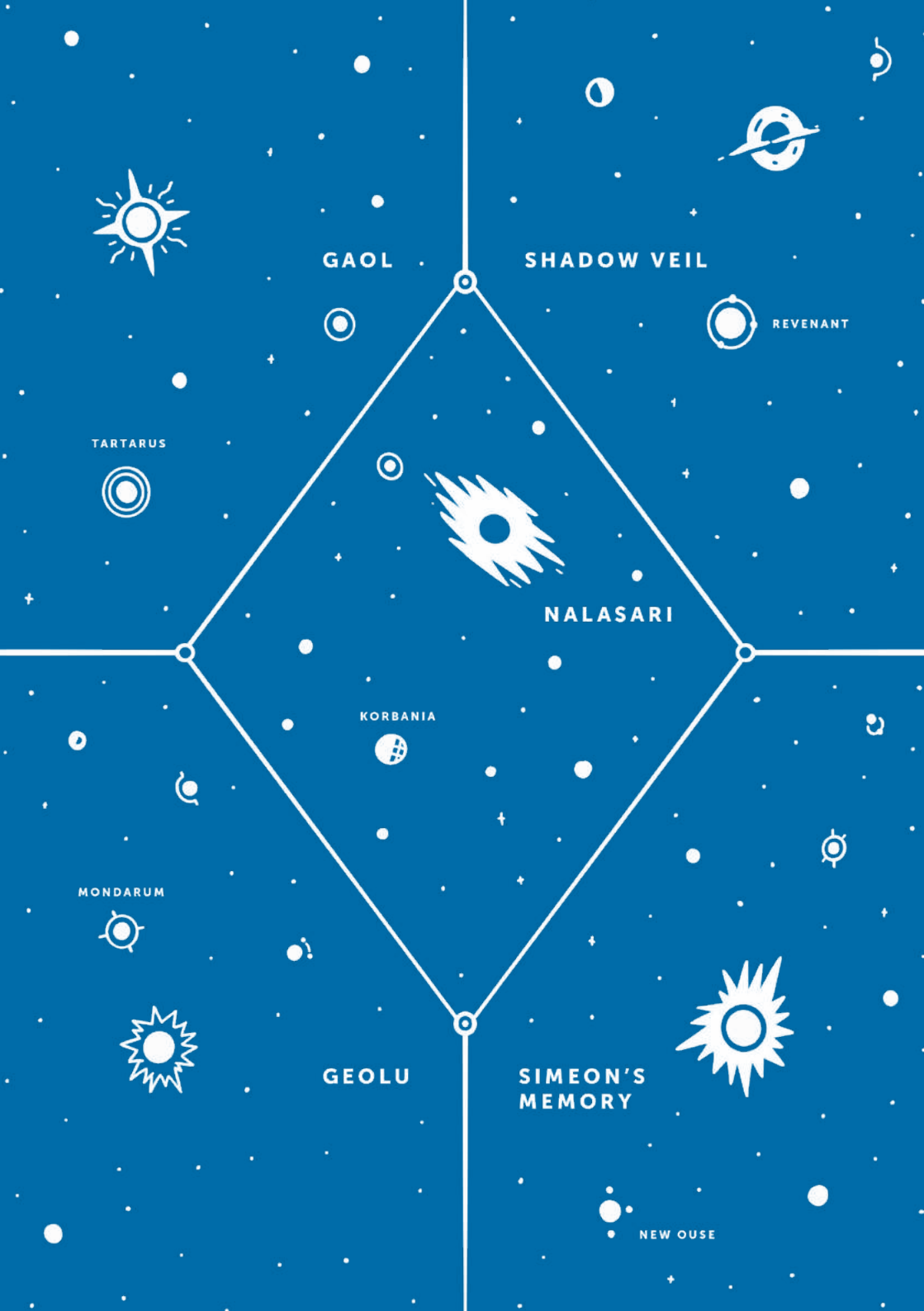
4927 – Chiros is accepted into the Astral Union for their role in the defeat of the Nephilim.

4928 – Unification of Apollo is accepted as a member of the Astral Union.

4929 – In the chaotic wake of the Nephilims' defeat, fringe groups from within the Astral Union vie for power. The details of these events are hidden from public record for decades.

4935 – The Second Tavikian Reform is brought into force by the Astral Council to curb the power of corporations, and to ensure a baseline of living standards in the wake of the Emergence Catastrophe.

4980s – Present day



GAOL

SHADOW VEIL



REVENANT

TARTARUS



NALASARI

KORBANIA



MONDARUM



GEOLU

SIMEON'S
MEMORY



NEW OUSE



2.

INTRODUCTION TO PLAY

GETTING STARTED

ION Heart is a tabletop roleplaying game where you inhabit the dual roles of a Pilot and their large Mechanical companion and protector, the Mech. Together you will explore a post-war universe, helping those in need, uncovering mysteries, and growing as friends, forging an unbreakable bond through adventure.

WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

To play the game you will need:

- 5 or more 6-sided dice or D6s
- A Character Sheet (which can be downloaded from here www.parablegames.co.uk or [Click Here](#))
- A pencil or something to type on
- A journal, notebook or word processor

WHAT IS A SOLO RPG?

ION Heart is a solo roleplaying game (RPG) of sci-fi adventure and friendship. For those who have not played a solo RPG before, they are a personal adventure game for one

person to play, deciding the outcome of everything that happens in a story of your own making. In *ION Heart*, you play as a Pilot and their Mech as they explore the galaxy together.

The game is intended to be played by one person who describes their Pilot and Mech's journey using a journal in sessions of 30–60 minutes each. This book provides the framework for creating and guiding your characters through the world. Once you have your characters, the game will provide gameplay and prompts to fuel your adventures. You will be writing these down in your Pilot's Logbook, a personal journal of your story.

The beauty of solo roleplaying games is that YOU create your own story and have control of what your characters do. If something doesn't work, or there isn't an obvious solution, you can create your own way forward. There are no limits to what can happen, only your imagination.

JOURNALLING

While playing *ION Heart*, you will record your characters' stories in your journal, the Pilot's Logbook. You should do this whenever your characters encounter something unique or dramatic such as discovering a settlement, partaking in Story Circuits (see page 80), or any other memorable moments for your characters.

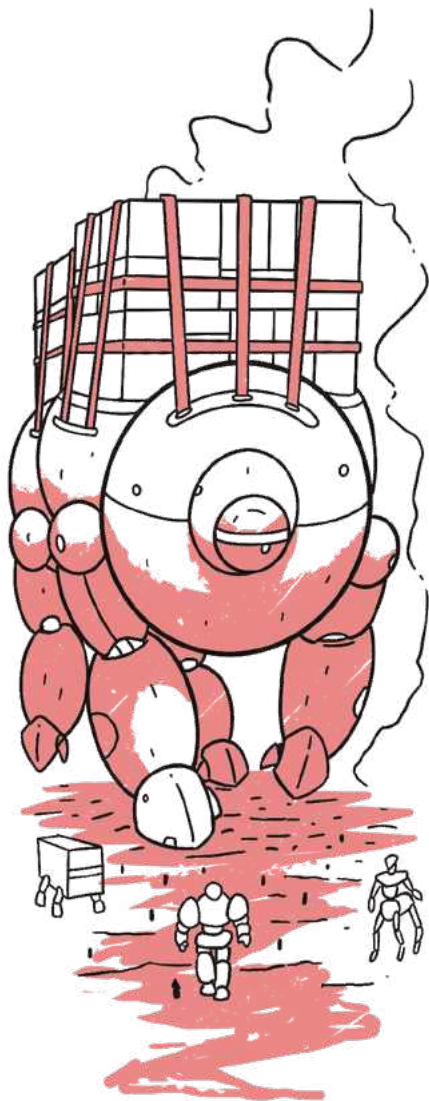
DICE ROLLS

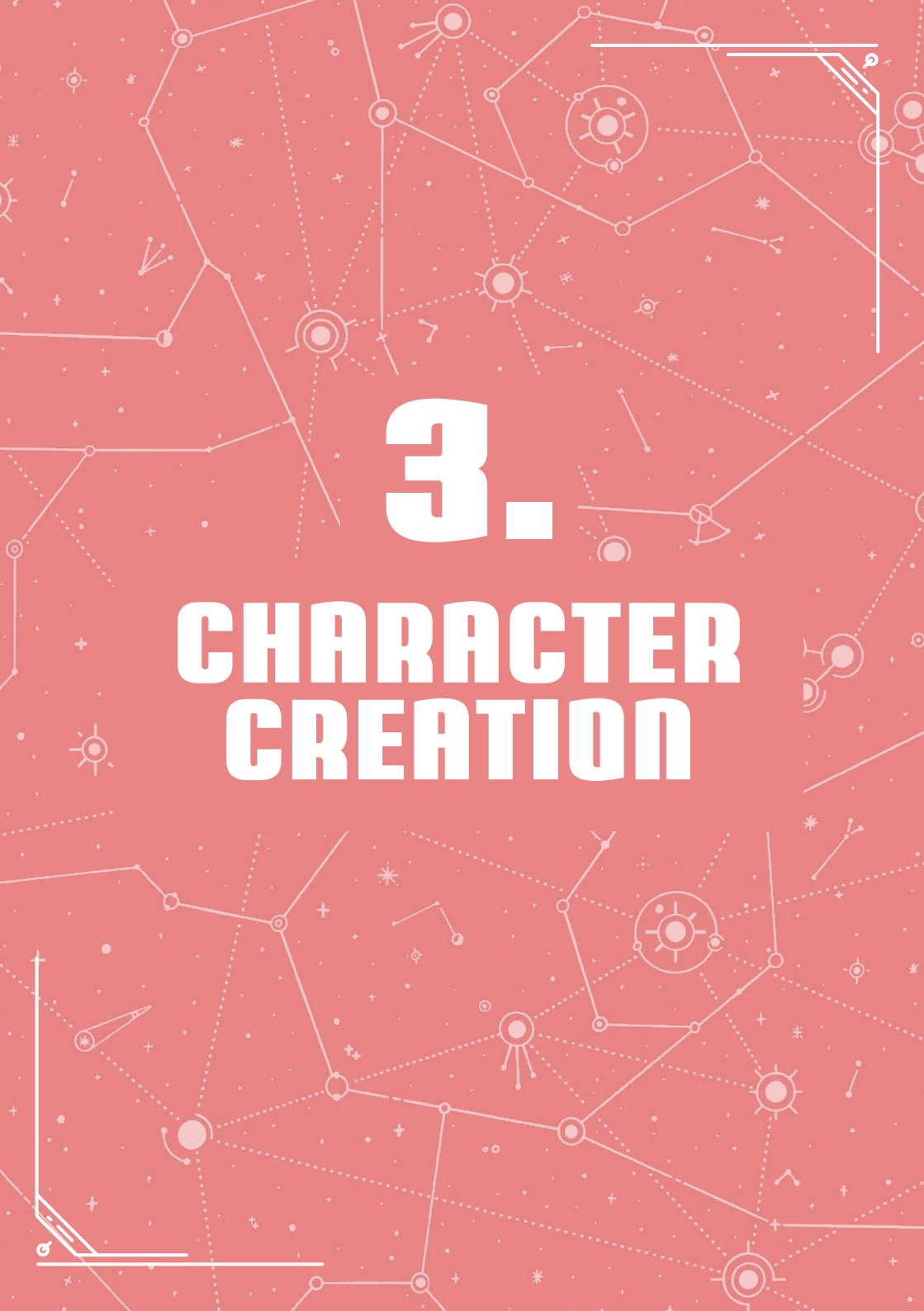
When your characters engage in challenging or dangerous tasks, you will often be asked to make dice rolls to see if they succeed or fail. These are generally referred to as Checks. A dice roll of a 4, 5 or 6, described as a 4+, is usually successful unless stated otherwise. This is covered in more detail in the Playing ION Heart (page 43) and Combat (page 65) sections.

STARTING YOUR STORY

We recommend you start by reading through some of the lore and history of the galaxy to acclimate yourself to the Astral Union (page 7), where your story will be set. You don't need an encyclopedic knowledge of ION Heart's setting, but having some grounding and knowledge will help when you journal your story and provide some inspiration.

Next, we recommend working through the Character Creation section to fill in your Character Sheet. If this is your first time playing *ION Heart*, solo-TTRPGs, or TTRPGs in general, we recommend using the random tables to roll and generate your character.





3.

CHARACTER CREATION

CHARACTER CREATION

You play *ION Heart* from the perspective of a **Pilot** and their **Mech**. You must generate profiles for both, and these will be filled in on a single **Character Sheet** (see page 40). Pilots and Mechs each have a number of stats that act as modifiers for rolls made in the game (see below).

These all start at 0 but are altered by your **Pilot Temperament**, **Mech Weight Class** and **Levelling Up** through your experiences.



*Your Pilot and Mech share the **Sync Bond** stat, which determines how often you can safely **Engage Ion Core** or use **Heroic Actions** per day.*

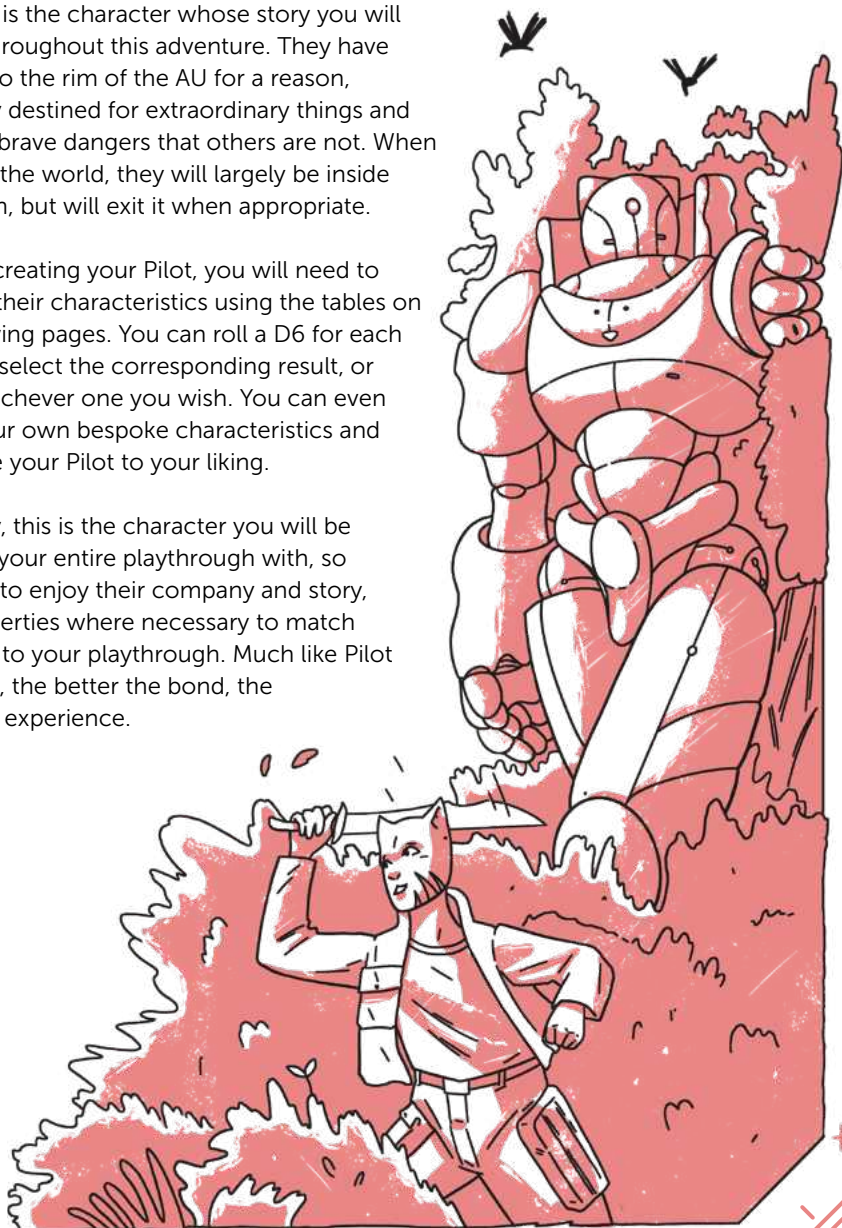
- + **Pilot Body** – Your Pilot's physical strength, dexterity and resilience. This will determine your Pilot's physical aptitude whenever they exit the Mech.
- + **Pilot Presence** – Your Pilot's mental fortitude and reasoning skills. You'll use this in and out of the Mech when schmoozing, negotiating, solving puzzles or anything else requiring mental processing.
- + **Mech Brawn** – Your Mech's strength and toughness. Larger, more imposing Mechs will generally have greater Brawn, which will be used to hit harder in combat, or carry out feats of strength.
- + **Mech Reflex** – Your Mech's speed and agility. Lithe, lighter-weight Mechs will have higher Reflex, allowing them to quickly take Initiative in fights and run rings around opponents.

PILOT CREATION

Your Pilot is the character whose story you will explore throughout this adventure. They have travelled to the rim of the AU for a reason, seemingly destined for extraordinary things and willing to brave dangers that others are not. When exploring the world, they will largely be inside their Mech, but will exit it when appropriate.

To begin creating your Pilot, you will need to generate their characteristics using the tables on the following pages. You can roll a D6 for each table and select the corresponding result, or select whichever one you wish. You can even create your own bespoke characteristics and customise your Pilot to your liking.

Ultimately, this is the character you will be spending your entire playthrough with, so you need to enjoy their company and story, so take liberties where necessary to match your Pilot to your playthrough. Much like Pilot and Mech, the better the bond, the better the experience.



PILOT ORIGIN

The AU is a federation of many different sentient species, each with their own cultural practices and modes of communication. Where does your Pilot originate from?

1

Apollonian



Humans from the Apollo-Theta system, home of the sun-worshipping Unification of Apollo. The youngest of the space-faring species of the AU.

2

Varziss



Reptilian inhabitants of the Varziss Triarchy, the largest interstellar nation in the AU. Varziss are cold-blooded and require heated Mech interiors for colder climates.

3

Urvon



Towering bear-like mammals from the League of Urvo. The League developed the first Mechs for its enormous mining operations.

4

Chiros



Winged nocturnal citizens of the Chiros Coalition. Chiros are capable of short-ranged flight and will happily sleep upside-down, hanging from the ceiling.

5

Kirvae



Tall centaur-like beings from the Kirvae Prefecture. The Prefecture was the first society to study psionics, leading to the development of Ion Core technology.

6

Mo'nau



Feline citizenry of the Mo'nau Republic. Their home world, Oskaw, is renowned as a centre of learning and culture.

PILOT GOAL

What is the Pilot trying to achieve this far from settled AU space? Has a traumatic event driven them from home, or have they been sent to fulfil an ancient prophecy? You can tell interesting stories when your character's Temperament (see next page) conflicts with their Goals. If you want to create your own specific conclusion for your characters' story, you can look at the Creating Story Circuits section (see page 82).

1 Adventure Forth

You may have grown up in a small town, but dreamt big, or simply want to see the wider universe. You are driven by a desire to explore and collect new and exciting memories.

2 Return Home

Maybe you have been exiled from your clan, or have escaped an unjust imprisonment, and just wish to travel home. You might be building up enough credits for interstellar travel or gathering evidence to clear your name in order to return home without a bounty on your head.

3 Escape Past

Your home may have been destroyed in a calamity, ruined by natural disasters, raiders or jealous rivals. Maybe you have a dark past that you are still running from.

4 Save Others

You are driven to save the vulnerable. You may have been struck by tragedy early in life and wish to prevent it from happening to others. Perhaps you want to atone for the sins of your past.

5 Prevent Calamity

Something bad is going to happen, and only you can prevent it. Maybe you are gathering allies to repel a Strand Fleet of the Nephilim. Perhaps you have found yourself stranded in the border territories and need to work your way back to the central AU to stop something terrible from happening before it's too late.

6 Fulfil Destiny

You are a fated child, prophesied to bring order to a tumultuous system or overthrow a great enemy. Your Mech may have been passed through the generations, with new additions added by each owner, preparing for this fated future.

PILOT TEMPERAMENT

Who is your Pilot, especially when they Step out of their Mech? This is how your character composes themselves and interacts with the world on a day-to-day basis.

1 Outgoing	Extroverted and at your best when around others. You love forging connections with new people.	+1 to Pilot Presence.
2 Reflective	You prefer to keep to yourself and think carefully before committing to anything.	+3 Max Mech Shielding, +1 Pilot Body.
3 Analytical	You value truth, practicality and logic in your appraisal of different situations.	+1 to hit in first Ranged Step of any combat.
4 Intuitive	You are an empathetic, poetic soul who makes judgements based on what feels right.	Re-roll two failed Pilot Presence Checks per day.
5 Mercurial	You make things up as you go along. Rules are more like guidelines to you.	Use 1 Universal Ion Core ability a day without using a Sync Bond Point.
6 Rigid	You adhere to a strict code, and are organised and consistent.	Re-roll first failed Initiative roll per day.



BUILDING YOUR MECH

Mechs are typically built from constructor templates licensed by corporate manufacturers, but experienced Pilots inevitably customise them.

Perpetual Motor Drives provide a constant battery charge using the Mech's own movement, giving them an almost limitless power supply. Your Mech will be your Pilot's transport, weapon and constant companion in your story.

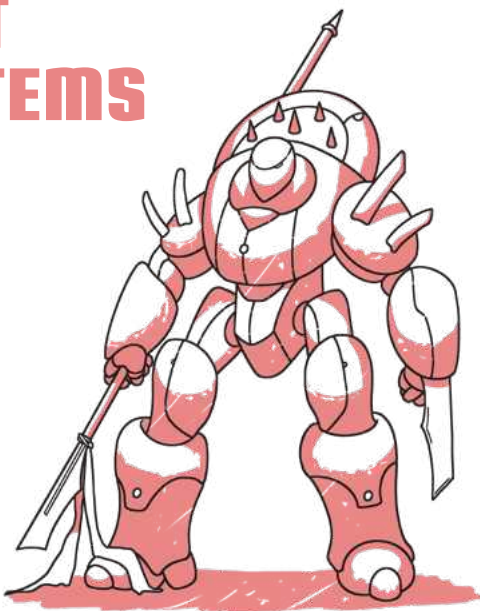


Mechs act as walking (and flying) tanks in combat situations. Their sturdy Shielding deflects incoming attacks while robust weapon mounts allow for an impressive array of high-powered ordnance.

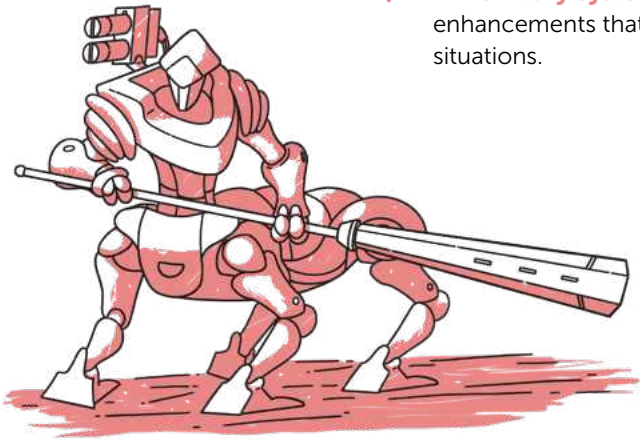
To begin constructing your Mech, generate their characteristics using the tables on the following pages.

MECH WEIGHT CLASS & SYSTEMS

Mechs come in Light, Medium and Heavy classes. Lights prioritise speed over durability; Heavies combine thick armour with powerful weapons; and Medium-class Mechs strike a balance between the two. Your Mech Weight Class will establish your starting Mech Shielding, as well as your Brawn and Reflex modifiers. Roll a D6 on the following tables or select preferred results to generate your Mech. Unless otherwise stated, all Mechs have an in-built flight system.



Each Mech has 3 main systems for handling combat situations, Ranged Weapons, Melee Weapons and an Auxiliary System. Each weapon has a special rule associated with it. A Mech starts with one of each, which can be rolled for (see page 33–35). You can build a Mech with no weapons at all, if you wish to embrace a more peaceful play style.



- + **1x Ranged Offensive System:**
A variety of missile weaponry for handling threats at a distance.
- + **1x Melee Offensive System:**
An arsenal of short-ranged weapons allowing you to get up close and personal.
- + **1x Auxiliary System:** Secondary enhancements that aid in conflict situations.

MECH WEIGHT CLASS

1–2 – Light	Mech Shielding 34	Mech Reflex +1	Mech Brawn -1	Attacks 3	Sync Bond 2
3–4 – Medium	Mech Shielding 40	Mech Reflex +0	Mech Brawn +0	Attacks 3	Sync Bond 2
5–6 – Heavy	Mech Shielding 46	Mech Reflex -1	Mech Brawn +1	Attacks 3	Sync Bond 2

RANGED OFFENSIVE SYSTEMS

Mechs fighting from a Ranged position strafe and glide around a battlefield, trading barrages of bullets, beams and missiles. It is a delicate ballet of precise timing, daring Piloting, and an accurate eye for placing your target in your crosshairs. Roll 2D6 and use the total on the table below.

2 - Auto Blaster - Damage: 3+D6

Rapid fire: You may make a free attack with this weapon when in the Ranged Step of combat.



3 - Beam Oculus - Damage: 5+D6

Laser eyes: You may attack with this weapon in the Ranged Step even if you are in Engagement Range.

8 - Electro Volter - Damage: 2+D6

Chain lightning: Each time you hit an enemy with this weapon, roll a D6: this number of enemies also receive 2 damage.

4 - Scattergun - Damage: 3+D6

Buckshot: For every hit with this weapon, you may make an extra free attack with it.

10 - Rocket Pod - Damage: 4+D6

Missile barrage: Re-roll hit rolls of 1 when attacking with this weapon.

5 - Railgun - Damage: 7+D6

Main battery power: Using the 'I Won't Miss' Ion Core ability costs 1 extra Sync Bond Point.

9 - Bolt Thrower - Damage: 5+D6

Staked: If you hit an enemy with this, you may re-roll a failed Disengage roll at the end of that round.

6 - Plasma Launcher - Damage: 5+D6

Plasma scoring: If you hit an enemy with this weapon, apply -2 damage to all Ranged attack damage they do to you.

11 - Shockwave Suppressor - Damage: 4+D6

Concussive blast: On a Critical Hit with this weapon, you may automatically pass your Disengage roll this round.

7 - Turbo Laser - Damage: 3+D6

Laser arc: Every attack you hit with this weapon generates 1 additional hit against an enemy of your choice (these attacks do not generate extra attacks).

12 - Mortar Cannon - Damage: 4+D6

Indirect ordnance: Suffer -1 penalty to hit, but gain a free attack for every attack you make in the Ranged Step (these attacks do not generate extra attacks).

MELEE OFFENSIVE SYSTEMS

For close quarters combat, many Mechs are equipped with Melee Weapons which can pack a real punch. Often these are military weapons, but power tools and other attachments are sometimes retrofitted for defence as well. Roll 2D6 on the table below and add together.

2

Thunder Gauntlet

Damage: 3+D6

Power-punch: On a Critical Hit with this weapon, add +8 to damage rather than +4.

8

Martial Staff

Damage: 3+D6

Staff fighting: Add +1 to defence rolls while using this weapon in Melee.

3

Neutron Lance

Damage: 4+D6

Jousting thrust: Your attacks with this weapon do +3 damage in the first round of combat.

9

Diamond Claws

Damage: 4+D6

Slashing flurry: For every hit with this weapon, you may make an extra free attack with it (free attacks do not generate attacks).

4

Power Blade

Damage: 3+D6

Exceptional balance: Add +1 to hit with this weapon in melee.

10

Forge Hammer

Damage: 6+D6

Crushing smite: The Meteoric Thunderstrike Ion Core skill does an additional +4 damage.

5

Concussion Maul

Damage: 3+D6

Shock field: If you hit an enemy with this weapon, add +1 to all defence rolls against them.

11

Beam Sword

Damage: 4+D6

Superheated blade: When making a successful defence roll in melee, you inflict 2 damage on an enemy.

6

Roto Saw

Damage: 4+D6

Buzz blade: You may make a free attack with this weapon when in the Melee Step of combat.

12

Fusion Axe

Damage: 4+D6

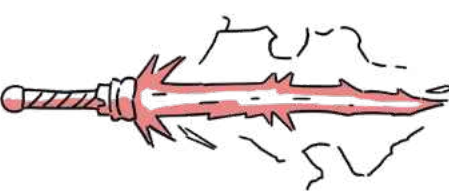
Heavy strikes: When you fail a hit roll against an enemy in the Melee Step, you still inflict 3 damage.

7

Molecular Whip

Damage: 4+D6

Entropic snare: After hitting with this weapon, you gain +1 to Disengage rolls at the end of that round.



AUXILIARY SYSTEMS

Military Mechs all have an Auxiliary System: a specialised piece of technology that can give them the edge in a fight, or help them escape the jaws of defeat. Roll on the table below.

1 – Ablation armour

Re-roll 2 failed defence rolls per combat.

2 – Liquid-metal armaments

For 1 round of combat, you can substitute your Melee Offensive System special rule for any of the others.

3 – Mass accelerator

Add +2 damage to Melee attacks in the first round of combat.

4 – Servo balancer

Re-roll 2 failed Disengage rolls per combat.

5 – Thermite flare launchers

Subtract 3 from first damage received from Ranged attacks in combat.

6 – TN Field projector

Subtract 1 from all damage received in the first 2 rounds of combat.

MECH APPEARANCE

The design aesthetics of a Mech can vary wildly, informed by the tastes or background of their Pilot. Roll or choose from the table below to pick which culture or cultures you Mech might take design cues from.

1 – Unification of Apollo

Common Features: Sun imagery, haloed head unit, single circular eye-lens, solar-trapping panels.

2 – Varziss Triarchy

Common Features: Pyramid imagery, triple sphere designs, crested head unit, Mechanical tail, cloak accessory.

3 – League of Urvo

Common Features: Mining imagery, squared and broad chassis, flipper-like hands, family or clan insignia.

4 – Chiros Coalition

Common Features: Star-map imagery, wide bat-eared head unit, sextant iconography, broad robotic wings.

5 – Kirvaen Prefecture

Common Features: Coat of arms imagery, elongated head unit, 4-legged centaur chassis, psionic dampening nodes.

6 – Mo'nau Republic

Common Features: Floral imagery, cat-eared head unit, quadruped construction.

MECH ORIGIN

How did your Pilot come into possession of your Mech? Mechs are created using templates licensed by corporations and then constructed locally all over the Astral Union. Some have been around for hundreds of years (albeit with some hardware and software updates), while others

are newly reconfigured military units assigned to workers in sprawling corporate development projects. Some small communities have a handful of Mechs that fulfil necessary functions of rural life, while some Mechs act as status symbols of old aristocratic lineages. A Mech will generally stay with the same Pilot for the duration of both their lifespans.

1 - Inheritance – This Mech has been in your family or clan for generations. You came into possession of it before you set out on your adventure, maybe by an elder passing away or as an honoured gift. There are rumours that some Ion Cores contain the memories of their old owners...

2 - Runaway – You and your Mech may have escaped together, be it from crushing corporate shackles, the weight of a life neither of you chose or perhaps literal imprisonment.

3 - Discovery – Maybe you saw something fall from the sky on a dark night, or noticed a faint light flickering within a secluded cave. Whatever the case may be, you met your mysterious companion and have been bonded ever since. Where did they come from?

4 - Fated Purchase – You set out to buy a Mech from the stores of a nearby workshop, but as soon as you saw this one, you couldn't take your eyes away. The Mech's rugged frame speaks of a long and storied history, but try as they might, your Mech can't yet access their memory bank...

5 - Working Relationship – You've Piloted your trusty workplace companion for years, be it in fields, mines or the myriad other environments of the Astral Union. That is until something happened, and you both knew you couldn't stay any more.

6 - New-build – You built this Mech yourself, using an old scavenged Ion Core. Maybe you used legitimate licensed templates or hacked prints and used second-hand parts. You came to realise that even in its' new body, the Mech's Ion Core also had a past of its own...

MECH SPECIALISATION

The Astral Union has been at peace for decades, since the defeat of the Nephilim, which ended the desire for Mechs with purely military applications. Many older Battle-Mechs were

reconfigured to suit civilian usage, and newer templates were created with a mind to help build a better world. Think about how your Specialisation links to your Mech Origin.

1

Bridge-Builder

The Mech will volunteer their help to any local construction efforts or will begin building small shelters and bridges for travellers.

2

Harvester

The Mech assists in gently tilling the land and gathering produce, or sustainably harvesting and breaking down natural materials for a nearby settlement.

3

Entertainer

The Mech knows how to work the crowd, engaging in elaborate acrobatic displays, juggling or dance routines with the help of in-built speaker systems.

4

Repair and Rescue

The Mech will intervene in any disaster situation, digging through rubble or extinguishing fires. Failing that, they'll assist in repairing damaged roads and architecture.

5

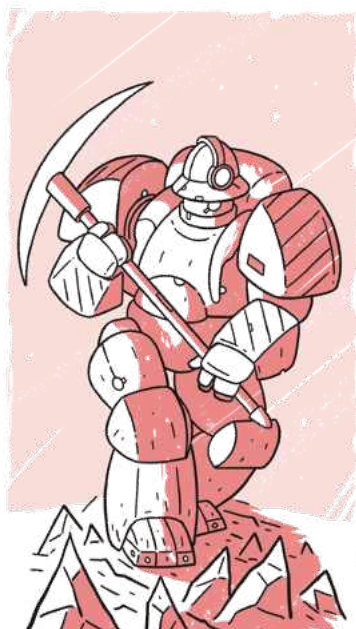
Transport-Hauler

The Mech will shoulder any large burden that needs to be carried, ferrying important cargo, or acting as a helpful taxi to the local populace.

6

Shepherd

The Mech will care for local animals, helping them cross streams and generally fuss over them.



CHARACTER LEVELLING

When your Pilot and Mech go through an especially profound and meaningful experience together, the Ion Core bond between them will change them both, affecting their synaptic pathways and bringing them closer together.

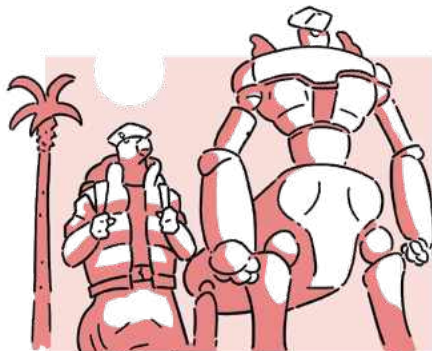
Your Mech might unlock long-dormant memories buried within the coding of their Ion Core, or your Pilot may remember a formative experience from their past.

For every 2 Story Circuits you complete, your characters may level up once you return to a settlement. You begin your adventure at Level 1 and you should roll on the following table for the first time at Level 2.

Each time you level up, you must determine the following 3 things and apply the bonuses you receive to your Character Sheet:

- **A Memory:** What happened in your past?
- **Location:** Where did it occur?
- **Internalisation:** How will your characters use these thoughts going forward?

You may randomly roll for all 3, OR select either a Memory, Location or Internalisation and roll for the other 2.



The changes these make on your Character Sheet are applied for the rest of your story. Throughout your characters' stories, you will likely level up several times, but may never have the same combination of Memory and Internalisation more than once.

Your characters can only ever have a modifier of +2 on one of your stats at a time (Pilot Presence, Pilot Body, Mech Brawn or Mech Reflex). Re-roll results that would result in this happening for multiple stats.

Think about what the Memory could be, why the character is having it now and how they have ended up internalising their thoughts in such a way.

After travelling and seeing so much, your characters will inevitably change. For every 4 times you level up, your Pilot may opt to change their Temperament (as well as rolling on the table). You may roll or choose whichever Temperament you feel is appropriate (page 30). Replace any bonuses or abilities you received from your old Temperament with the new one on your Character Sheet.

	Memory		Location		Internalisation
1	<i>You lost someone...</i> Gain a Mech Quirk.	1	<i>Below an eternal, blazing sun.</i>	1	<i>You've learned to value true connections when they come.</i> Ion Core Sync Bond: +1
2	<i>A moment of triumph...</i> Gain +1 attack	2	<i>Looking upon the murmurations of a stargod's children.</i>	2	<i>You want to be better, to become more.</i> Pilot Body OR Pilot Presence: +1
3	<i>A moment of compassion under duress...</i> +5 Mech Shielding	3	<i>In the glittering caves of a mine-world.</i>	3	<i>You are changed.</i> You may replace an existing Mech Quirk by rolling a new one.
4	<i>You did something your regret...</i> Gain +1 weapon slot (maximum 3 weapons)	4	<i>Beneath a great void- tree.</i>	4	<i>You know you can't do this alone.</i> Ion Core Sync Bond: +1
5	<i>You experienced euphoric joy...</i> +5 Mech Shielding	5	<i>Cutting through the clouds above an endless sea.</i>	5	<i>You are growing beyond what you were made for.</i> Mech Brawn OR Mech Reflex: +1
6	<i>You formed a lasting bond...</i> +5 Mech Shielding	6	<i>Cresting the peak of an artificial mountain to see the world below.</i>	6	<i>You are beginning to heal.</i> Remove 1 Battle Scar (page 71)

CHARACTER SHEET SUMMARY

Pilot Name – Pilot's name or pseudonym.

Pilot Origin – Where your Pilot is from (page 28).

Pilot Temperament – Your Pilot's personality (page 30).

Pilot Goal – What drives your Pilot (page 29).

Pilot Presence – Begins at 0, but can be modified by Temperament or Goal. This is your Pilot's mental fortitude and reasoning skills.

Pilot Body – Begins at 0, but can be modified by Temperament or Goal. This is your Pilot's physical capability and toughness.

Level – Your character's current level (page 38).

Ion Core Sync Bond – Begins at 2. The connection between your Pilot and Mech. Determines how many Heroic Actions or Ion Core engagements you can use per day.

Mech Shielding – The amount of damage your Mech can take before being Disabled (page 32).

Mech Name – Mech's name or pseudonym.

Mech Origin – Your Mech's backstory (page 36).

Mech Specialisation – The task your Mech is programmed to perform when left to their own devices (page 37).

Mech Weight – Mech body type affecting Mech Shielding, Mech Brawn and Mech Reflex modifiers (page 32).

Attacks – Number of attacks a Mech can make in a combat round (page 32).

Mech Brawn – Determined by Mech Weight class (page 32). The raw strength of your Mech.

Mech Reflex – Determined by Mech Weight class (page 32). The agility of your Mech.

Weapons – Begin with two (page 33). The weapons your Mech is equipped with.

Auxiliary System – An additional piece of equipment attached to the Mech that provides bonuses (page 35).

Battle Scars – The damage your Mech suffers over time (page 71).

Mech Quirks – Idiosyncrasies your Mech's internal AI systems pick up during your adventures (page 70).

ION HEART — — — CHARACTER SHEET

PILOT

Pilot Name **Kelan**

Pilot Origin **Varziss**

Pilot Temperament Use one Universal Ion Core ability a day without using a Sync bond point.

Pilot Goal **Save others**

Appearance



Pilot Presence **+0**

Pilot Body **+0**

Level **3**

ION CORE SYNC BOND



Bridge-builder

Mech Shielding **38 / 51**

MECH

Mech Name **Purple Mist**

Mech Brawn **+1**

Mech Origin

Discovery - You met your mysterious companion and have been bonded ever since. Where did they come from?

Mech Specialisation

Harvester - The Mech assists in gently tilling the land and gathering produce

Mech Reflex **-1**

Mech Weight **Heavy**

Attacks **2**

Weapon **Concussion Maul**

Damage **4+D6**

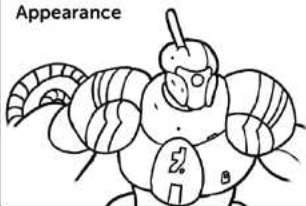
Bonus *Shock field:* If you hit an enemy with this weapon, add +1 to all defence rolls against them.

Weapon **Railgun**

Damage **7+D6**

Bonus *Main battery power:* Using the 'I Won't Miss' Ion Core ability costs one extra Sync Bond point.

Appearance



Battle Scars

Weapon

Damage

Bonus

Aux System

Thermite Flare Launchers

Subtract 3 from first damage received from ranged attacks in combat.

Mech Quirks **Beacon of Calm**

Re-roll a failed Pilot Presence Check while in the Mech once per day.



4.

PLAYING THE GAME

PLAYING ION HEART

REMINDER: WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

To play the game you will need:

- **5 or more 6-sided dice (D6s)**
- **A Character Sheet**
- **A pencil or something to type on**
- **A journal or notebook**

The following section contains the framework of how you play the game using the characters you created in the previous chapter of the book. This game is designed to be a single-player experience, where you use a journal to track your Pilot and Mech's journey as they travel through the Astral Union. Sessions are designed to be played in 30-60 minute chunks, although you can go on for much longer if you wish to. You should record your characters' story in your Pilot's Logbook, which can be a journal, word processor or anything else that lets you record your story in one place.

Solo journalling can be a powerful tool for unlocking creativity and give you a structure to write your own stories. If you run into something not covered in the rules, feel free to create your own solution: you're only beholden to your

own imagination and telling a good story.

We've included a section in this book to allow this game to be played with two players, rather than just one, broadening the scope of *ION Heart* into a collaborative experience (page 78).

WRITING A LOGBOOK ENTRY

The core gameplay of *ION Heart* will require you to record your journey in your Pilot's Logbook as a journal entry. This happens every time you face a unique encounter or story moment in your journey, including:

- **Arriving on a planet**
- **Discovering a settlement**
- **A Story Circuit section**
- **Combat**
- **Travelling Encounters**

If you have an idea for a way the story can expand outside of these set events, make sure to write it as a journal entry, too. Letting the world and Mechanics of the game inspire your own story is part of the fun!

There are many things to think about when writing an entry. Your characters' personality, motivations and experiences will colour everything you write. The entries can be as short or as long as you like; how you record your adventures is up to you. On the following page is an example of a journal entry for you to take a look at:

PLANET: Lamosia

DATE: 12/06/2983

TIME: 11:09am

Journal Entry NO 32 - Stuck in the Mud

Flying high above the surface of Lamosia, I spotted a wagon train of Mechs crawling their way across a muddy track towards a nearby settlement. Their bright colours drew my eye, the demure tones and faded paint of most older Mechs replaced with splashes of purples, reds and yellows in eye-catching patterns. I suddenly realised that this was no ordinary caravan, but a travelling troupe of entertainers. As I swung our flight pattern lower, I saw their emblem emblazoned on the side of a struggling Hauler Mech stuck in the mud, reading: Marsha's Mecha Circus! The most amazing bots in the galaxy. I landed and offered to help their stranded hauliers, seeing if we could heave them out of the mud.

Mech Brawn Check, 3+: Failure!

We heaved and pushed with all our might, but the Haulers would not be freed, their heavy loads sinking them into the mud. Without a word, the circus came together. Packages were unloaded, bags slung on backs, and the weight lifted, as every member of this travelling family lightened the load. We followed suit, carrying as much as we could to their camp. It was a long and hard day, but I'm glad I could help someone in need. It's going to be interesting getting to know these curious folks a little better.

ION CORE
TEMPERAMENT:

Frustrated (I think being unable to help that distressed Hauler got to my Mech today. I'll keep an eye on that)

REMINDER: MAKING A CHECK

Checks are challenges that can be undertaken by your Pilot or Mech in 4 categories: Presence and Body for your Pilot, and Brawn and Reflex for a

Mech. All Checks are made with a D6 and, unless otherwise specified, are considered a success on a result of 4+ when adding any of your relevant skill modifiers. A result of 1 or 6 on the die is always a failure or success, respectfully. The same principle applies in combat situations where you need

successfully land or deflect attacks (see page 6465 for more on combat).

Sometimes your Pilot or Mech will fail to do something, but this is to be expected. We all experience failure, but do not be disheartened by it. Think about how these little moments of misfortune play out and describe the events unfolding in your journal.

THE EXPLORATION LOOP

When playing *ION Heart*, we recommend you follow the order of actions set out below, referred to here as the 'loop'. You can deviate from this order if you wish, but we recommend this loop for new players. When you encounter other people in your story, you can use the Character Generator on page 59 to determine their personality.

1. Build a System and Planet: Roll on the table to determine the system, planet and local biome, name the planet and system, and describe them in your journal as you arrive (page 49).

2. Build a Settlement: Roll up a settlement to arrive in. This settlement will have a Space Port of some size where you and your Mech can make planetfall and depart from to move on to another planet (page 60).

3. Start a Story Circuit: Head to the Settlement Hall to start a Story Circuit (page 81).

4. Play through a Story Circuit: Each time you travel between Story Circuit encounters or settlements, roll for a Travelling Encounter (page 62).

5. After you complete a Story Circuit: Return to settlement, find a new settlement, explore whilst travelling between settlements, start a new Story Circuit, move to a new planet.

STORY CIRCUITS

ION Heart uses a gameplay Mechanic called the Story Circuit, which helps you map out narrative arcs for your characters to investigate. You can partake in as many or as few of these as you wish, and you may decide to end your quest if your Pilot's Goal (page 29) has been achieved or continue for as long as you have a story to tell.



CONTROLLING YOUR PILOT

When playing *ION Heart*, your time will be split between controlling your **Pilot** in and out of the **Mech**. For difficult and dangerous actions, you will need to roll a 6-sided dice, or **D6**, for a **Check**. **Rolls of 4+ will usually be successful** (unless stated otherwise). A failed Check means that the Pilot was unsuccessful in their attempted action.

Your Pilot can push themselves to breaking point and beyond, using a **Heroic Action** to pass a Check automatically without rolling a die, using a Sync Bond slot (page 68).

The Pilot should make a **Presence Check** any time they try to convince or intimidate another character, use their perception, or employ deductive reasoning. For any time your Pilot requires physicality – for example, when

performing a feat of strength or dexterity – they should make a **Body Check**.

If a Pilot would take damage, apply the appropriate amount to their **Mech Shielding** (page 32) instead. This represents the Pilot's injuries affecting their capabilities when they re-enter the Mech.

In the AU, it is customary for a Pilot to exit their Mech when entering a settlement. Your Pilot will also likely do this when trading or engaging in face-to-face interactions in safe areas.

When exiting the Mech, the machine's Ion Core and emergent personality will take over, but it can still obey commands remotely.

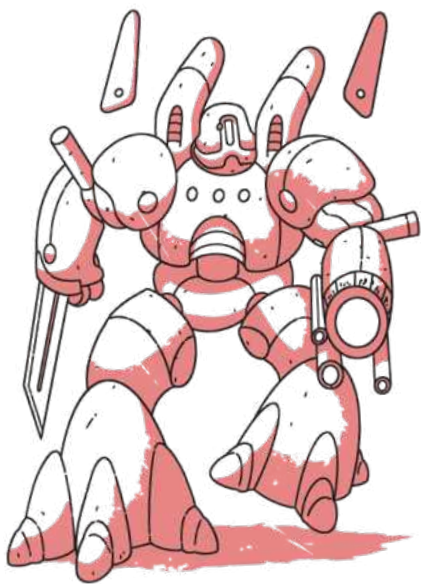
- + **Presence Check:** Roll a D6 and apply your Pilot's Presence modifier. A result of 4+ is a success. An unmodified roll of 1 always fails, and an unmodified 6 always succeeds.
- + **Body Check:** Roll a D6 and apply your Pilot's Body modifier. A result of 4+ is a success. An unmodified roll of 1 always fails, and an unmodified 6 always succeeds.
- + **Heroic Action:** When a Pilot fails a Check, they may use a Heroic Action and instead automatically pass it. This counts as having used a Sync Bond slot for that day (page 68).

PILOTING YOUR MECH

When exploring spaces between settlements or in combat, the Pilot will almost certainly be inside the Mech. Mechs stand between 10 and 20 metres tall, but will happily reach down to allow their Pilot access to the cockpit. When left to their own devices, they can revert to their **Specialisation** (page 37). They are capable of short-range flight, travelling for up to a minute at a time.

Mechs can carry out great feats of strength and speed, but may be called on to complete particularly difficult or dangerous actions, requiring you to roll 6 sided die for a Check. **Rolls of 4+ will usually be successful** (unless stated otherwise).

The Mech should make a **Brawn Check** any time they carry out a difficult action relying on their strength or toughness, such as holding up collapsing buildings. For any time your Mech needs to



react quickly – for example – dodging out the way of falling rubble – roll a **Reflex Check**.

The Mech's Ion Core may communicate with the Pilot through voice channels, synaptic resonances or even projected personification holograms (sometimes appearing as talking animals). Perpetual Motor Drives feed off the Mech's movements, yielding a nearly limitless power supply.

- + **Brawn Check:** Roll a D6 and apply your Mech Brawn modifier. A result of 4+ is a success. An unmodified roll of 1 always fails, and an unmodified 6 always succeeds.
- + **Reflex Check:** Roll a D6 and apply your Mech Reflex modifier. A result of 4+ is a success. An unmodified roll of 1 always fails, and an unmodified 6 always succeeds.

MECH SPECIALISATION

Your Mech has programming and physical adaptations to allow them to be helpful to the citizens of the AU. When your Pilot leaves the Mech, if you wish, they will happily revert to their Specialisation and go about peacefully helping out in whichever way they see fit.

This offers great bonding opportunities for Pilots and Mechs. If the Pilot is inside the Mech and the two work together to pass a Check related to the Mech's Specialisation, you gain a Temporary Sync Bond Point (page 68).

For example, the Pilot and Mech with the Harvester Specialisation pass a Brawn Check to break apart a fallen log that has trapped another Mech below it (page 37).

EXPLORATION

When embarking on your adventure, you should roll to determine what kind of environment your story will take place in (or at least where it starts).

When you begin a new story you should establish the system, planet and local biome that your story takes place in, either by creating them yourself or by rolling on the tables on the following pages. We've also included several pre-made planets and systems that you could begin your story in. When your

characters travel to a new biome, world or system, roll on the tables again.

Your characters will travel between locations to discover new settlements (see page 60), take part in adventures (see Story Circuits, page 81) and generally explore the galaxy. When travelling between locations consult the Encounters section on page 62 to see what happens as you travel.

When encountering characters in your story, think about who they are and how they will react to your Pilot and Mech. You can use the Character Generators on page 59 to determine how they act, or come up with characters of your own.

Your characters can partake in 7 activities a day before it draws to a close, at which point your characters will settle down for the evening. This could mean camping in the wilderness or finding somewhere to stay in a settlement. At the end of each day, while the Pilot and Mech rest, your Ion Core Sync Bond Points (see page 68) are restored.

The activities are as follows:

- **Experience a Travelling Encounter**
- **Travel to a Settlement**
- **Use Settlement Amenities (2x per activity)**
- **Begin a Story Circuit**
- **Complete a Story Circuit Node**
- **Travel between planets using a Space Port (takes the entire day)**
- **Travel between systems using a Space Port (takes 7 days)**

WORLD BUILDING

CREATING A SYSTEM

The Astral Union is a colossal area of space, containing countless planets and inhabitants. Star systems form geographic, but also political, bodies that contain numerous planets as well as a local star. We've included a list of pre-existing star systems within the Astral Union on the following pages, which

you may wish to include on your journey to save you time. However, you may also wish to create your own star system; you can roll on the following tables:

Number of Planets

1 - 1	4 - 7-15
2 - 2-3	5 - 16-30
3 - 4-6	6 - 31+

Central Star in the System

1 - White Dwarf

Stellar core remnant composed mostly of electron-degenerate matter.

2 - Red Dwarf

A small, cool, and dim star that is the most common type of star in the galaxy.

3 - Neutron Star

The collapsed core of a massive supergiant star.

4 - Protostar

Very young star that is still gathering mass from its parent molecular cloud.

5 - Yellow Star

A medium-sized star, the class of the human sun, Apollo Rex.

6 - Artificial Star

Synthetic central planetary point.

Galactic Anomaly

1 - Ancient Mega-Fossil

2 - Abandoned Facility Wreck

3 - Mega-Weapon Remnants

4 - Nephilim Remnants

5 - Malfunctioning Snap Rift

6 - Temporal Anomaly

AU Territory

1 - League of Urvo	4 - Mo'nau Republic
2 - Unification of Apollo	5 - Chiros Coalition
3 - Varziss Triarchy	6 - Kirvaen Prefecture

Corporation with Vested Interest

1 - Dragnoss Industries	4 - Ipcriss Executive Outcomes
2 - Gramyll-Keeler Resources	5 - Noth Logistik
3 - Ikarus Multi-Stellar	6 - Vultun Holdings

EXISTING SYSTEMS

GEOLU

Astral Union Territory:

Chiros Coalition
Capital World: Mondarum
Capital World Function:
Research Station
System Known For:
Advanced Research (Ion Core Testing)

Star: Yellow Star
Planets: 5
Inhabited Planets: 3
Predominant Corporate Interest:
Ikarus Multi-Stellar
Galactic Anomaly:
Ancient Mega-Fossil

The rate of Sync Bonding and Ion Core growth seem to develop faster within this system, especially on the capital world of Mondarum. Although originally earmarked as an agricultural world, this was quickly superseded by the rapid construction of sprawling science stations and atmospheric detection plants. What land was made ready for farming was sold to smaller subsidiaries of Ikarus Multi-Stellar, with the remaining farmers dispersed among the other worlds of the Geolu System.

Fragments of Mega-Fossils, scattered among several of the worlds of Geolu, have been extensively studied, but there is no conclusive proof that these have anything to do with increased Ion Core activity.

GAOL

Astral Union Territory:

Unification of Apollo

Capital World: Tartarus

Capital World Function:

Industrial Centre

System Known For:

Historical Significance

Star: Yellow Star

Planets: 6

Inhabited Planets: 3

Predominant Corporate Interest:

Gramyll-Keeler Resources

Galactic Anomaly:

Nephilim Remnants

A former penal system from a less enlightened time in history of the Unification of Apollo, prior to it joining the AU. The system's prison population seized an opportunity during the short-lived war between the Unification and Varziss Triarchy, and successfully took the system for themselves. Despite being within Unification space, the mostly human descendants of these worlds do not consider themselves Apollonian, referring to themselves as Gaolon.

SHADOW VAIL

Astral Union Territory:

Mo'nau Republic

Capital World: Revenant

Capital World Function:

Research Station

System Known For:

Advanced Research

Star: Black Hole

Planets: 4

Inhabited Planets: 2

Predominant Corporate Interest:

Ipcriss Executive Outcomes

Galactic Anomaly:

Temporal Anomaly

Shadow Vail is named for the unusual electromagnetic and temporal irregularities occurring from the localised black hole at the heart of the system. Known to be particularly dangerous for ship-based travel, this has not deterred research groups from studying the potential effect on psionics that the system may have. The Mo'nau Republic advises against all but the most essential travel to Shadow Vail, and it is a brave or desperate traveller that willingly goes here.



SIMEON'S MEMORY

Astral Union Territory:

Chiros Coalition

Capital World: New Ouse

Capital World Function:

Research Station

System Known For:

Industrial Production

Star: White Dwarf

Planets: 6

Inhabited Planets: 3

Predominant Corporate Interest:

Contested

Galactic Anomaly:

Temporal Anomaly

Named after the Apollonian designer Tauroi Simeon, this system is famous for housing production facilities for a special textile popular among travellers across AU. Ousian Fabric is notably used not just for Pilots, but Mechs as well: protecting their carapaces from adverse weather, or acting as a fashion accessory. Ousian Fabric production has hitherto remained independent, but this has not stopped the AU's mega-corporations from trying to muscle in across the system.

NALASARI (STEEL SYSTEM)

Astral Union Territory:

Unification of Apollo

Capital World: Korbania

Capital World Function:

Research Station

System Known For:

Advanced Research (Psionics Academy)

Star: Black Rift

Planets: 10

Inhabited Planets: 6

Predominant Corporate Interest:

Ikarus Multi-Stellar

Galactic Anomaly:

Malfunctioning Snap Rift

The Nalasar Black Rift was formed when a Snap Rift was erroneously, and disastrously, opened close to the system's black hole. Consequently, psionic powers across the system manifest far in excess of the baseline of the regular AU population, with several organisations conducting in-depth, ongoing research regarding the phenomenon. A man on Korbania with powerful psionic abilities claims to have entered and exited the singularity, which is no more theoretically impossible than the abilities he exhibits.

CREATING A PLANET

The worlds of the Astral Union, and the wider Aegeic, are varied and vast in number, ranging from barely populated rocks, to gargantuan metro-worlds. We've included a list of pre-existing worlds within the Astral Union on the following pages, which you may wish to include on your journey to save you time.

However, you may also wish to create your own planet; you can roll on the tables below.

When you roll to create a planet, some combinations may seem like they may not work. Have a think about how you can tweak these options to make

Planet Type

1 – Ice Planet – Incredibly low temperatures and a frosty shell encase these planets in ice, warmth being hidden deep underground.

2 – Superhabitable Planet – Even split between land and water, with an oxygen-rich atmosphere. An ideal and idyllic place for habitation.

3 – Desert Planet – A vast expanse of colourful sands, extreme heat and very little water.

them fit. For example, if a planet does not have a survivable atmosphere but has lifeforms present, perhaps there is an enclosed colony, creating its own breathable air and attempting to terraform the harsh landscape. *ION Heart* and the Astral Union is a science fiction setting after all – creating discoveries to overcome the harsh realities of space is all part of the fun.

Native Lifeforms

1-2 – No native lifeforms present

3-4 – Low species diversity, Mega Flora and Fauna present

5-6 – High species diversity

4 – Iron/metal Planet – Abundant in precious metals, these cold and atmosphereless planets offer riches in resources but harsh living conditions.

5 – Hycean Planet – A world covered in churning oceans with very little or no land mass present.

6 – Chthonian Planet – The remnants of a dead gas giant, only the husk of its core remaining. A lifeless shell.

Corporation with Vested Interest

1 – Dragnoss Industries

4 – Ipcriss Executive Outcomes

2 – Gramyll-Keeler Resources

5 – Noth Logistik

3 – Ikarus Multi-Stellar

6 – Vultun Holdings

EXISTING PLANETS

New Avalon

Mostly Water Based, Superhabitable Planet

Species: Low Species Diversity,
Mega Flora and Fauna present

Corporation: Ikarus Multi-Stellar



A thriving agricultural world known for its bountiful harvests. The populace of farmers is supported by a network of ships' crews, Mechanics and rangers who keep the native Mega Fauna away from settlements.

Atarax VII

Mostly Water Based, Superhabitable Planet

Species: High Species Diversity,
No Mega Flora or Fauna

Corporation: Ikarus Multi-Stellar



Notable for the lush forests on its northern continent, Atarax VII is a prime location for nutri-sap distilleries. This delicacy fetches a high price in the nearby Mo'nau Republic, but also means the planet has drawn the nefarious attention of the Ikarus Multi-Stellar corporation.

Hah-V

Little to No Water

Species: High Species Diversity,
No Mega Flora or Fauna

Corporation: Dragnoss Industries



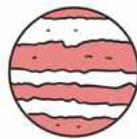
A Varziss world, nicknamed 'The Graveyard' because of its use as a scrapyard for ships, Mechs and other wreckage. Inhabitants work in build shops or as scrapper teams collecting salvage to sell off-world, via the nearby trading moonbase Lou-V.

Zofi

Gas Giant, Orbital Colony

Species: Low Species Diversity,
Mega Flora and Fauna present

Corporation: Vultun Holdings



The research hubs installed in Zofi's orbit provide exceptional views of the planet's stunning lightning storms. Mechs found here are typically assigned special thruster packs to allow them to traverse the treacherous gaps between research stations and avoid Zorwyr mega-predators.

A Way

Superhabitable planet

Species: High Species Diversity,
No Mega Flora or Fauna

Corporation: Ikarus Multi-Stellar



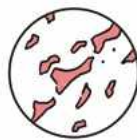
A world of hills and forests, with the exception of two notable geographic features on opposite sides of the planet: a near bottomless cavern and a dormant caldera. A Way's inhabitants are mostly nomadic, referring to their next move as 'Gettin' Along'.

Sawmic

Mostly Water Based, Hycean Planet

Species: Low Species Diversity,
Mega Flora and Fauna present

Corporation: Gramyll-Keeler Resources



Sawmic's population mostly consists of water-based nomads, following vast schools of fish on barge-like floating villages. They utilise aquatically modified Mechs to repair their barges, as well as to steer off large pelagic predators.

Atina

Superhabitable Planet

Species: High Species Diversity,
No Mega Flora or Fauna

Corporation: Vultun Holdings



A world of lush, verdant archipelagos, Atina has drawn artists and ecologists from across the AU to marvel at, and defend, its ecological beauty. Although inhabited mostly by the Mo'nau, this world is also home to the amphibious Ki'zez species.

Kagemushi*Superhabitable Planet***Species:** High Species Diversity,

No Mega Flora or Fauna

Corporation: Ikarus Multi-Stellar

This world was the site of furious fighting during the Emergence Catastrophe and was subsequently abandoned. Rebuilding and repopulation efforts have been led by Ikarus Multi-Stellar – never ones to pass up an opportunity to establish massive agro-farms.

Chilelandia*Superhabitable Planet***Species:** High Species Diversity,

No Mega Flora or Fauna

Corporation: Ikarus Multi-Stellar

A medium-sized world known as a holiday destination in its local system. Boasting a large variety of climates, this world offers something for every citizen of the AU who wants to relax, including fishing, music festivals or sampling the local brewing culture.

Nibi-Nokomis*Hycean Planet, Mostly Water Based***Species:** Low Species Diversity,

Mega Flora and Fauna present

Corporation: Ipcriss Executive Outcomes

An interconnected lattice of settlements unite the hardy inhabitants of this waterworld. The citizens of this world exist symbiotically with the 'Great Seas', developing new technologies to harness the power of the waves.

Kappa Rho*Gas Giant, Orbital Colonies***Species:** Low Species Diversity,

Mega Flora and Fauna present

Corporation: Disputed

The artificial sky-cities of Kappa Rho use electro-coils to harvest rare crystals created by the gas giant's frequent lightning storms. As such, it is at the epicentre of a 3-way corporate conflict between Ikarus Multi-Stellar, Gramyll-Keeler Resources and Noth Logistik.

Alo

Ice Planet

Species: Low Species Diversity,

Mega Flora and Fauna present

Corporation: Dragnoss Industries



The sulphuric hot springs of Alo provide areas of refuge on this isolated frost-world. The local inhabitants have built settlements with thick walls to keep out biting snow storms and the indigenous Ice Boar population.

Ellypsi

Hycean planet, Highly Volcanic

Species: Low Species Diversity,

Mega Flora and Fauna present

Corporation: Ipcriss Executive Outcomes



Only the most hardy citizens of the AU choose to live on the dangerous water world of Ellypsi, with its constantly shifting volcanic islands and amphibious magma-fauna. Ipcriss Executive Outcomes has taken the opportunity to build an experimental weapons facility here, away from prying eyes.

Maikor V

Gas Giant, Orbital Colony

Species: No native lifeforms present

Corporation: Noth Logistik



Thick clouds of noxious fumes cover the surface of Maikor V, making breathing masks a necessity whenever outside vacuum-sealed buildings of Mech cockpits. Synthesising this gas to use as starship fuel has become an obsession of a section of Noth Logistik's research and development division.

Fameria

Superhabitable Planet, Even Split Between Water and Land

Species: High Species Diversity,

No Mega Flora or Fauna

Corporation: Ipcriss Executive Outcomes



A planet split between marshy lowlands and mountainous peaks, Fameria has produced a number of champion Mech-Skiers for various galactic winter games. The mountain settlements of the world are truly something to behold.

Trang Tran IV

Superhabitable Planet

Species: Low Species Diversity,
Mega Flora and Fauna present

Corporation: Vultun Holdings



A jungle planet covered in jagged peaks and hostile flora and fauna. This, combined with the nights being longer than the days, has inspired an abundance of unsettling folklore myths and horror media. Vultun Holdings has found much success distributing this planet's cultural exports.

Atrolanis Major

Superhabitable Planet

Species: High Species Diversity,
No Mega Flora or Fauna

Corporation: Contested



Atrolanis Major is a planet defined by the contrast of the old scars of war and the regions untouched by conflicts of the past. Despite everything, Atrolanis Major stands and her people are hopeful, working towards reclaiming and rehabilitating the more damaged areas.

CREATING
BIOMES

Biome Type

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 - Verdant fields | 4 - Rich woodland |
| 2 - Arid badland | 5 - Tropical flatland |
| 3 - Frosted plains | 6 - Steaming marshes |

Some planets on the AU's frontiers consist of a single biome, while others contain a multitude of climates and environments. Worlds can be composed of a single or multiple biomes. You can pick how many biomes a planet has, or roll a D6 and use that as the number. Roll on the table above to establish where this part of your story takes place.

Remember, if a biome feels like an exception to the type of planet you are on, don't resist it, lean into it. Ask why a verdant field of green exists on an arid, desert planet, or a frosty tundra amidst tropical jungles. Exceptions to rules make good stories: they make us ask questions, and come up with fascinating answers.

CREATING CHARACTERS

When you encounter other people in your story, you can use the tables here to generate broad outlines of who they are. Think about how their disposition and desires mean they respond to your characters and the world around them.

They are

- 1 - Apollonian
- 2 - Varziss
- 3 - Urvon
- 4 - Kirvae
- 5 - Chiro
- 6 - Mo'nau

Their disposition is

- 1 - Cheery
- 2 - Aloof
- 3 - Anxious
- 4 - Thoughtful
- 5 - Tired
- 6 - Preoccupied

They want to

- 1 - Not ruffle any feathers
- 2 - Prove themselves
- 3 - Help someone
- 4 - Be somewhere else
- 5 - Score big
- 6 - Make a difference

CHARACTER MECHS

People you run into may be Piloting Mech, which may be built based on different construction templates. If you wish, roll on the below table across to see how they are constructed.

1 - Apollonian

Bipedal, featuring sun imagery and haloed head.

2 - Varziss

Tail with weapon or tool mount and crest resembling feathers.

3 - Urvon

Broad Mech build with layered armour plating.

4 - Chiro

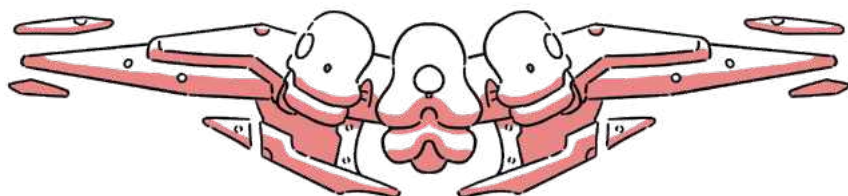
Mech chassis with in-built extending wings.

5 - Kirvaen

Centaur-like construction with 4 legs or a broad tank-tread base.

6 - Mo'nau

Double-jointed limbs and cat-like ears mounted on head.



BUILDING A SETTLEMENT

If you arrive at a settlement, you must roll below to determine its size and composition. Roll below to generate a settlement:

Each settlement comprises 4 core amenities:

- **Settlement Hall**
- **Mech Workshop**
- **Space Port**
- **Trading Post**

1 - Fledgling Hamlet

Buildings: **10–20** People: **10–60**

Additional amenities: **x1**

4-5 - Bustling Town

Buildings: **50–200** People: **200–1000**

Additional amenities: **x3**

2-3 - Burgeoning Village

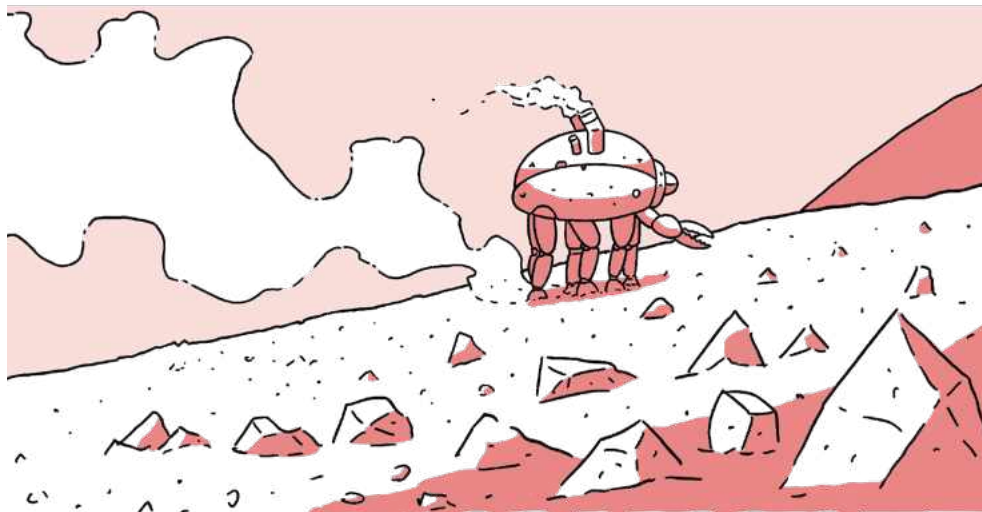
Buildings: **20–50** People: **60–200**

Additional amenities: **x2**

6 - Sprawling Municipality

Buildings: **200+** People: **1000+**

Additional amenities: **x4**



SETTLEMENT AMENITIES

All settlements have these 4 core amenities as a standard, no matter their size. Your characters may use settlement amenities several times a day, as seen on page 48. Make sure to log your experiences in the settlement as you spend time there.

Core Amenities

Settlement Hall – A place where you can find local government, which, depending on its size, can be anything from a local mayor to a full administrative council. Converse with them to learn about local goings-on. On a successful **Pilot Presence Check** you may begin a Story Circuit (see page 80).

Mech Workshop – Allows you to repair Mech Shielding damage for an additional 3D6 per day. Make a successful **Pilot Presence Check** with a -1 modifier to remove a single Battle Scar. As you leave your Mech to be repaired for the day, make sure to write an entry in your Logbook of how your Pilot spends their time in the settlement.

Space Port – Anything from a simple landing pad to a bustling freight hub, all settlements will have some form of docking for extra-planetary travellers. This is where you can make planetfall at the start of an adventure, or somewhere you can be shuttled off-world from to new planets.

Trading Post – Roll for each of the 3 categories shown below to see what stock is available for your Mech. Your Mech can swap one of their existing weapons OR Auxiliary System for one of the following. A higher-level Mech with access to a third weapon slot, may instead install a new weapon.

Ranged Offensive System

Roll on the Ranged Weapon table (see page 33)

Melee Offensive System

Roll on the Melee Weapon table (see page 34)

Auxiliary System

Roll on the Auxiliary System table (see page 35)

Additional Amenities

Roll a D6 for each additional amenity awarded in the settlement table on page 60. Re-roll duplicate results.

- 1-2 – **Watering hole**
- 3 – **Rest and relaxation**
- 4 – **Gymnasia**
- 5 – **Library**
- 6 – **Cultural curiosity**

Watering Hole – Have some down time and make some new friends. Maybe you can get a little part-time job during your time in the settlement. Pass a **Pilot Body Check** to partake in an ill-advised competition in the bar and win the adoration of the locals.

Rest and Relaxation – Sometimes ongoing crises, combat stress and being attacked by killer mercenaries can get a bit much, and you may just need to put your feet up. Cafes, spa days and holistic realignment days can help ease a Pilot's weary mind. Gain a single Temporary Sync Bond Point that can be used only once.

Gymnasia – Sonic pools, free weights and anti-grav tracks are all ways for you to hone your body for the demands of the open road. Pass 2 **Pilot Body Checks** with a -1 modifier to increase Pilot Body by +1.

Library – Tomes and records covering everything from interstellar histories to academic texts and trashy romance books. You may add +1 to a single **Pilot Presence Check** of your choice.

Cultural Curiosity – Local landmarks, artworks or relics of a forgotten time dazzle and inspire visitors with their splendour. You may use 1 free Heroic Action without using a Sync Bond Point.

TRAVELLING ENCOUNTERS

Encounter Type

1-2	–	Friendly
3-4	–	Mysterious
5-6	–	Hostile

When travelling between locations and settlements you have the chance of encountering other travellers... for better or worse.

Roll a D6 once while travelling between each location; on a 3+ you have an encounter. You may elect to skip encounters after finishing a Story Circuit Node.

Determine what the encounter is using the following tables. Think about how these might tie into your Pilot's past or goals and how they feed into their story.

FRIENDLY ENCOUNTER

1 — Travelling Mechanic with a mobile workshop. Haggle by passing a **Pilot Presence Check**. On a failure, restore 1D6 Mech Shielding. On a success, restore 2D6 Mech Shielding or heal a single Battle Scar.

2 — Surveyors or scientists at an excavation site. Pass a **Mech Brawn Check** to help them with their excavation. What do you unearth? Perhaps the remains of a Nephilim or ancient fossil for analysis.

3 — Pilot with a Courier Mech laden with parcels. Maybe they can give you information on interesting location, or carry a message from you on a successful **Presence Check**.

4 — Peaceful nomad train who you can converse with. Maybe they are pilgrims or wandering entertainers. Pass a **Pilot Body** or **Mech Reflex Check** to prove your skills and travel with them.

5 — A herd of slow-moving animals peacefully move out of your way. They might be gentle quadrupeds or lumbering giants. Pass a **Mech Brawn** or **Reflex Check** to help guide them in the right direction.

6 — Refugees fleeing an attack. Ferry them to the nearest settlement (page 60), carry on as you were, or head to the attack (roll a D6 on the Hostile Encounter table).

MYSTERIOUS ENCOUNTER

1 — An adventurer with unclear intentions. They are evasive if you ask any questions but will not be hostile unless you are first. Pass a **Pilot Presence Check** to learn who they are (roll on the Creating Characters table, page 59).

2 — Mechs who claim to be local law enforcement. Pass a **Pilot Presence Check**, otherwise they will attack (roll on the Enemies Table, page 72). What will the consequences be?

3 — A static Mech that is online and doesn't communicate but just watches you. Pass a **Pilot Presence Check** to converse; maybe they're a mercenary or rogue AI-run Mech.

4 — A person or people are trapped under rubble, or some other such danger. Pass a **Mech Brawn Check** to quickly remove them from danger. What happened?

5 — You run into a stand-off between two groups. Do they represents corporate interests, or something else? Pick a side or talk them both down using a Pilot Presence or **Mech Brawn Check**.

6 — A heavily armed caravan eyes you warily as they trundle past. Will you join them? Where are they travelling to and what are they transporting?

HOSTILE ENCOUNTER

1 — Automated combat drones. What are they doing here? 3x Mech Tracks (see page 73) Piloted by hostile AI.

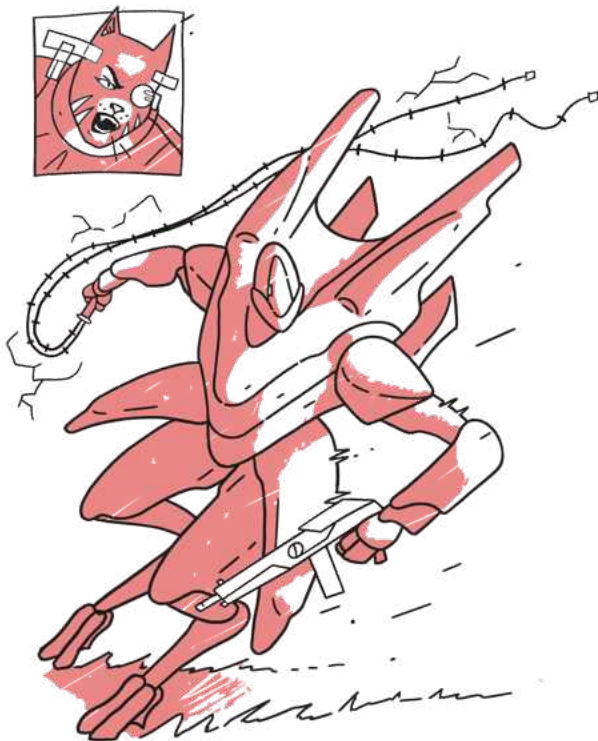
2 — Bored private security forces, looking for a fight. Maybe they can give you information about their employers if you defeat them? Roll on the Enemies Table, page 72.

3 — Raiders: ruthless opportunists attack from nowhere. Roll a D6: on a 1–3 you face 2x Zenef Ballasts; on a 4–6 you face 3x Garran Striders (see page 73).

4 — Frenzied Pilot who has seen... something. Perhaps they've uncovered an alien artefact or something even worse. 1x Zenef Enforcer (see page 74).

5 — A hardened mercenary company has you in their sights. 1x Zenef Trooper and 1x Zenef Enforcer (see pages 73 and 74).

6 — Hunter-destroyer mission. You've been tracked by bounty hunters. (Roll on the Enemies Table, page 72). If you leave the engagement, they will track you in 1D6 days' time.



COMBAT

Mech combat is a ballet of robotic violence, with combatants whirling around one another amidst sprays of weapon-fire and the crackling afterglow of kinetic blades.

Combat takes place in rounds, which repeat in the order shown below in the Combat Round section. Combat rounds continue to loop around until your Mech is Disabled, all enemy Mechs are Disabled, one party Disengages, or both sides agree to stop fighting.

A Mech is Disabled when their Shielding drops to 0. At this point they can no longer move or take part in the combat (see page 71), but they are not destroyed.

Before combat starts, you may try to intimidate or reason with your opponents, but only if they are capable of communication. Successfully passing a Pilot Presence or **Mech Brawn Check** results in no combat taking place. You may talk to your would-be opponents. What might they say? Will they continue to be hostile in the future?

Remember: You can use your powerful Ion Core abilities if you are struggling in combat (page 68).

STARTING COMBAT

Roll a D6 and apply your Mech Reflex modifier to the result to determine who has Initiative for the duration of the combat. This decides who will attack first. On a modified total of 4+ your Mech has Initiative. Enemies all attack at the same time.

COMBAT ROUND

The flow of combat mimics the dance of battle. Each round goes in order of the following Steps:

- + **1. Ranged Step** – The combatants with Initiative attack first, followed by the combatants without Initiative, using Ranged Weapons (if they have not yet been Disabled by incoming attacks). Skip this Step if you are in Engagement Range (see next page).
- + **2. Melee Step** – Combatants enter Engagement Range (see next page). The combatants with Initiative attacks first, followed by the combatants without Initiative, using Melee Weapons (if they have not been Disabled by incoming attacks).
- + **3. Disengage Step** – If you wish you may attempt to Disengage, either to exit the Melee Step and Engagement Range to begin the next combat round with the Ranged Step, or to exit combat entirely, and move back to the exploration phase of the game.

ENGAGEMENT

Combatants in Melee range will forgo the use of Ranged weaponry as they engage in frantic hand-to-hand fighting. When your Mech enters the Melee Step, they are said to be in Engagement Range of the enemy. If you do not Disengage at the end of the round, both sides will skip subsequent Ranged Steps and remain in Melee until you successfully Disengage or the combat ends. If you successfully Disengage, you may begin the next combat round in the Ranged Step.



COMBAT ROLLS

When in combat, there are 3 main types of rolls you will be making:

- + **Attacking** – Using your arsenal of weapons to try to deal damage to an enemy combatant.
- + **Defending** – Protecting yourself from incoming attacks.
- + **Disengage** – Getting yourself out of close-range danger during the fight or escaping the combat entirely.

ATTACKING

Assigning Attacks – Your Mech has a number of attacks based on their level (see page 32), and each combat round you may split them between Ranged and Melee Steps at your discretion. For instance, Level 1 Mechs have 3 attacks, so you could assign 2 attacks to the Ranged Step and 1 attack to the Melee Step, or vice versa.

If all of your attacks are placed in one Step, you will suffer a -1 modifier to defence rolls in the other category during its respective Step. So deciding to make all your attacks in the Melee Step would incur a defence penalty in the Ranged Step. This represents the Mech launching an all-out attack without having enough time to defend themselves.

Using Weapons – If your Mech has multiple weapon options, select which weapons you would like to use for that combat Step. You can only use Ranged Weapons in the Ranged Step and Melee Weapons in Melee Step. Most weapons you will use in *ION Heart* will have special properties, such as conferring extra damage or additional attacks in certain circumstances (see page 33).

If a Mech has no usable Melee Weapons, they can use the following profile for Melee attacks:

Mech	Damage:
Fist	3

Note: Mech combat is a flurry of constant movement, so assume all Ranged Weapons are within effective range of enemies.

Landing Hits – For each attack your Mech makes, roll a D6. Each 4+ is a successful hit against an enemy of your choice. Keep a note of the enemy's Shielding, and apply damage as shown on your weapon's profile (see page 33). Apply your Mech Brawn modifier to Melee damage. Enemies that reach 0 Mech Shielding are Disabled.

On an unmodified roll of 6 to hit, you score a Critical Hit and apply +4 to that attack's damage.

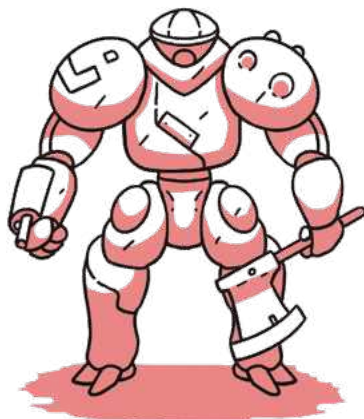
DEFENDING

Enemies make a number of attacks in each Step equal to their Threat Level (see page 72). Roll a D6 for each attack made by the enemy; on a 4+ you successfully defend yourself and receive no damage. On a failure, you receive damage to your Mech Shielding equal to the damage shown on the enemy's profile.

On an unmodified roll of 6, you deflect damage back to your attacker, and they suffer half of the damage they would have dealt to you.

DISENGAGING

If you wish, your Mech may attempt to Disengage from the Melee Step and begin the next round in the Ranged Step. Roll a D6 and apply your Mech Reflex modifier; on a 4+, your Mech successfully Disengages. If you do successfully Disengage, you may choose to leave the combat altogether and flee to another location, ending combat.



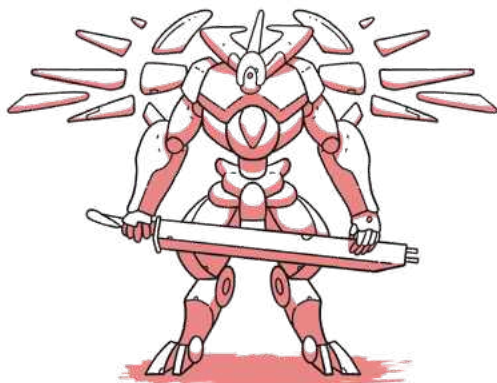
USING THE ION CORE

Mechs use AI programming known as the Ion Core to adapt and learn over time by synchronising with a Pilot through emotional interfacing. Prolonged synchronisation will see neurological change, not only allowing for the huge leaps in Piloting control and the execution of almost impossible manoeuvres, but a stronger bond between the pair.

As their bond grows, the Mech will begin to develop a personality and character of its own, moving beyond being a tool for war in to a trusted companion.

Pilots can overcharge their Mech's systems, yielding a substantial boost to power output, but at a risk to their own synaptic pathways. Your Ion Core Sync Bond stat tracks the connection between your Pilot and Mech; the higher the Sync Bond, the more able they are to push themselves.

Sync Bond Points can be spent to use the Ion Core, using one of the abilities on the following page. Universal Ion Core abilities can be used at any time, whereas combat Ion Core abilities can only be used in combat.



You regain all Sync Bond Points at the start of every new day, or a single Sync Bond Point by allowing the Mech to revert to their Specialisation (page 37). You can gain Temporary Sync Bond Points from certain missions and abilities, but these do not replenish after they have been used.

A Pilot can safely use the Ion Core a number of times a day equal to the Sync Bond Points on your Character Sheet. After the action has been resolved, roll a D6: on a result of a 1, your Mech Shielding suffers 2 damage.

A Pilot may exceed the number of times a day they safely Engage Ion Core, but they automatically take 1D6 Mech Shielding damage for every point they have exceeded their Sync Bond Points. For example, my Pilot pushed their Mech very hard and exceeded their Sync Bond Points 3 times, they take 3D6 Mech Shielding damage.

UNIVERSAL ION CORE ABILITIES

- + **Heroic Push** – When the Mech fails a **Mech Brawn** or **Mech Reflex Check**, they may instead automatically pass it.
- + **Shields! Full Power!** – Increase Mech Shielding by 3D6. May be used only once per day.
- + **I Will Save You!** – If another Mech, person or creature would come to harm within sight of the Mech, they can intercept it. Suffer 2D6 Mech Shielding damage but they protect the other being from harm.

COMBAT ION CORE ABILITIES

- + **Mechanised Powerbomb!** – Your Mech grapples the enemy and hammers them into the ground using a throw, suplex or another unconventional manoeuvre. In the Melee Step, inflict 1D6x1D6 damage to one enemy and add your Mech Brawn modifier. You may re-roll one of the dice of your choice. If your Mech has no melee weapon you may re-roll both dice. If you roll two 6s, gain 1 Temporary Sync Bond Point.
- + **I Won't Miss!** – Use this ability at the start of a combat round. You can only attack in the Ranged Step for this round, using 1 weapon. Double the number of attacks you make with that weapon this round.
- + **Meteoric Thunderstrike!** – Use this ability at the start of a Combat round. You make only one attack this combat round using 1 Melee Weapon. During the Melee Step this attack hits the target automatically, and does triple the damage applied.
- + **Evasive manoeuvre!** – Use this ability during the Melee or Ranged Step. For the duration of that Step you cannot make any attacks, but all rolls to defend are successful on an unmodified 2+.
- + **Lightning-Fast Reflexes** – Use this in the Disengage Step after successfully Disengaging. You now have Initiative for the next round of combat.
- + **Tactical Retreat** – Use this ability to automatically pass 1 Disengage roll.

MECH QUIRKS

Your Mech's Ion Core will develop idiosyncrasies over time as it interacts with your Pilot more and more. These might create some interesting contrast with your Pilot Temperament, with the Mech balancing out your Pilot's worse impulses or vice versa.

1 - Bloodhound

An irrepressible investigative spirit.

Regain 1D6 Mech Shielding each time you investigate a Story Circuit Node.

2 - Noble Bearing

Honorable to a fault. You cannot make more Ranged attacks than Melee attacks in a round (except for the 'I Won't Miss' Ion Core action).

3 - Revenger

It will not stop. When in combat with an enemy you have fought before, you make an extra free attack in the Melee Step, but suffer -1 to rolls to Disengage from Engagement Range.

4 - Impetuous Coding

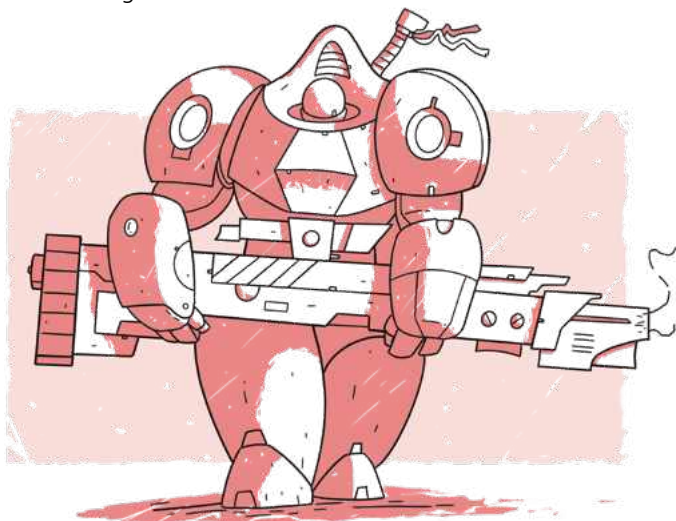
For the thrill of combat! When using Universal Ion Core abilities you take damage on a roll of 1 or 2 (instead of just 1).

5 - Gallant Protector

A shield for the world. If you or an ally are reduced to 10 Mech Shielding or less, you gain +1 to defence rolls for that combat.

6 - Beacon of Calm

The Mech has achieved digital serenity. Re-roll a failed **Pilot Presence Check** while in the Mech once per day.



MECH DAMAGE

Your Mech will sustain damage during combat, simulated by your remaining Mech Shielding. Your Mech has a maximum Mech Shielding at the start of the campaign, which can be changed by levelling up or upgrades.

If your Mech is reduced to 0 Mech Shielding, your Mech will be Disabled and unable to fight. Perhaps your Mech's crisis systems engage and they boost out of combat, or your enemy will gloat while you are trapped in place. Your Mech will take one of the Battle Scars shown below.

Your Mech Shielding can be repaired in a Mech Workshop in Settlements (see page 61) for 3D6 points every day you stay there. After a week, the Mech will return to full Mech Shielding.

1 — Not Dead Yet

Your Mech's Ion Core withdraws into itself. Do you detect a crisis of confidence?

Your Mech loses 1 Mech Quirk or 1 Synchronisation level.

2-3 — Ocular Misalignment

Targeting optics struggle to focus and range-finders malfunction in the heat of combat.

Apply -1 to hit to a single attack die per combat round (decide before rolling).

4-5 — Countermeasure Failure

Flare launchers jam, servos grind and shield generators stutter when you need them most.

Maximum Mech Shielding reduced by 5.

6 — Core Hardening

Something changes within the Ion Core... your Mech seems more callous than before.

Maximum Mech Shielding reduced by 5, but Mech gains the 'Revenger' quirk on top of any they may have already.



ENEMIES

Across your adventures in the AU, you will come across enemies who wish to do you harm and need to be stopped. This varies from roguish individuals, to corporate squadrons of Mechs, and even remnants of the Nephilim threat.

ENEMY THREAT LEVEL

An enemy's Threat Level represents how much danger they pose to your Pilot, but also the number of attacks they can make in each combat Step. For example, a Zenef Trooper has a Threat Level of 1, so makes 1 attack in the Ranged Step and 1 in the Melee Step.

If you wish to generate your own encounters with enemies, you can use the table below to determine the enemy Threat Level and number of enemies.

Player Level	Enemies
1	2x Threat Level 1
2	1x Threat Level 1 1x Threat Level 2
3	1x Threat Level 3
4	2x Threat Level 2
5	1x Threat Level 1 1x Threat Level 3
6+	1x Threat Level 2 1x Threat Level 3

D6	Threat Level 1	Threat Level 2	Threat Level 3
1	Improvised Industrial Unit	Improvised Guerilla Frame	Arnak Pugilist
2	Mech Track	Enkhost Grenadier	Enkhost Sharpshooter
3	Zenef Trooper	Zenef Enforcer	Zenef Hunter
4	Zenef Ballast	Arnak Grappler	Heriot Sceptre
5	Garran Strider	Garran Agos	Heriot Shieldbreaker
6	Choose One	Choose One	Choose One

ENEMY MECHS

Opposing MechS can come in all shapes and sizes, from weaponised transport vehicles to high-tech private military units.

Mech Track

A light scouting vehicle, boasting the upper body of a Mech on a tank-tracked chassis.

Threat Level: 1 | **Mech Shielding: 10**

Ranged Weapon:
Flechette carbine - Damage 3

Melee Weapon:
Light axe - Damage 3

Zenef Ballast

A heavier Zenef model, designed for long-ranged engagements, at the expense of close-combat ability.

Threat Level: 1 | **Mech Shielding: 14**

Ranged Weapon:
Plasma rifle - Damage 5

Melee Weapon:
Rifle butt - Damage 2

Improvised Industrial Unit

An old mining unit, fitted out with crude blunt-force weaponry.

Threat Level: 1 | **Mech Shielding: 8**

Ranged Weapon:
None

Melee Weapon:
Steam hammer - Damage 4

Zenef Trooper

A mass-produced combat unit originally created by Ipcriss Executive Outcomes. Popular with mercenaries and bandit parties for its rugged construction and low upkeep.

Threat Level: 1 | **Mech Shielding: 12**

Ranged Weapon:
Flechette blaster - Damage 4

Melee Weapon:
Combat axe - Damage 3

Garran Strider

A loping chicken-legged weapons platform, focusing on Ranged engagements.

Threat Level: 1 | **Mech Shielding: 10**

Ranged Weapon:
Twin hail-guns - Damage 3

Melee Weapon:
Stomping feet - Damage 2

Note: This Mech makes 2 Ranged attacks in the Ranged Step.

Improvised Guerilla Frame

A broad classification type, Guerilla-class Mechs are improvised custom builds modded by experienced Pilots. They make for imposing fighting units and dangerous ambushers.

Threat Level: **2** | Mech Shielding: **24**

Ranged Weapon:

Slug pistol - Damage 3

Melee Weapon:

Vibro machete - Damage 5

Garran Agos

A Garran command variant. Although a modest combatant in its own right, the real danger it poses is in the complex tactical relay it provides to its companions.

Threat Level: **2** | Mech Shielding: **22**

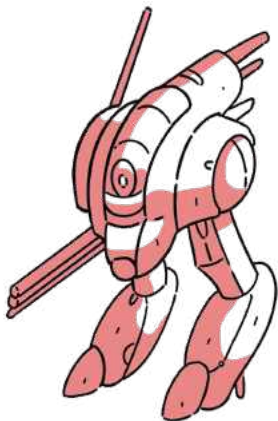
Ranged Weapon:

Seismic repeller - Damage 2

Melee Weapon:

Pneumatic claws - Damage 2

Note: All other enemy Mechs increase their damage by +1 while this Mech is in combat.



Zenef Enforcer

An imposing Zenef model, reinforced with thicker armour plating and additional weapon hardware. Typically used by hardened mercenary lieutenants.

Threat Level: **2** | Mech Shielding: **26**

Ranged Weapon:

Plasma blaster - Damage 4

Melee Weapon:

Beam sword - Damage 4

Arnak Grappler

Arnak Mechs are known for their blunt, uncomplicated design aesthetics. This Melee fighter variant is designed for intense bursts of close-quarters combat.

Threat Level: **2** | Mech Shielding: **26**

Ranged Weapon:

Dart launcher - Damage 2

Melee Weapon:

Rocket-powered fists - Damage 6

Enkhost Grenadier

An explosives specialist, this Enkhost model is sometimes used by less discerning employers for mining clearance operations.

Threat Level: **2** | Mech Shielding: **24**

Ranged Weapon:

Grenade launcher - Damage 6

Melee Weapon:

Frantic kick - Damage 2

Heriot Shieldbreaker

Covered in shining black armour, Heriot-class units are some of the most advanced and feared Mechs in the AU. Proceed with caution.

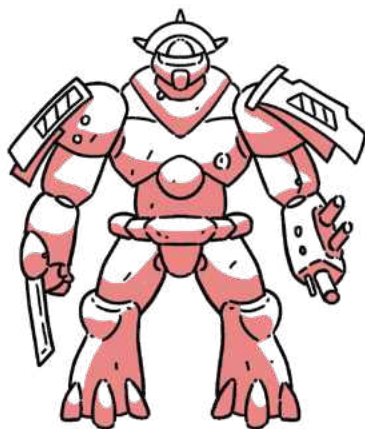
Threat Level: 3 | **Mech Shielding: 32**

Ranged Weapon:

Castigation beam - Damage 6

Melee Weapon:

Punisher blade - Damage 6



Heriot Sceptre

The manufacturing process of Heriot Mechs is closely guarded by Dragnoss Industries – none more than the fearsome Sceptre variant.

Threat Level: 3 | **Mech Shielding: 34**

Ranged Weapon:

Dominator cannon - Damage 7

Melee Weapon:

Dominion blades - Damage 7

Zenef Hunter

A Zenef model developed by Ipcriss Executive Outcomes to compete with the Heriot series. Although it fails in this capacity, it is still an extremely dangerous combatant.

Threat Level: 3 | **Mech Shielding: 32**

Ranged Weapon:

Stalker gun - Damage 6

Melee Weapon:

Hunting blade - Damage 5

Arnak Pugilist

A heavily armoured Mech designed for close-ranged combat. Unsubtle, unsophisticated and nearly unstoppable.

Threat Level: 3 | **Mech Shielding: 36**

Ranged Weapon:

None

Melee Weapon:

Pummelling fists - Damage 10

Enkhost Sharpshooter

An exceptional sniper Mech, designed for long-range target elimination with extreme prejudice. Production of this Mech is illegal under AU law.

Threat Level: 3 | **Mech Shielding: 30**

Ranged Weapon:

Rail fusil - Damage 9

Melee Weapon:

Hidden blade - Damage 3

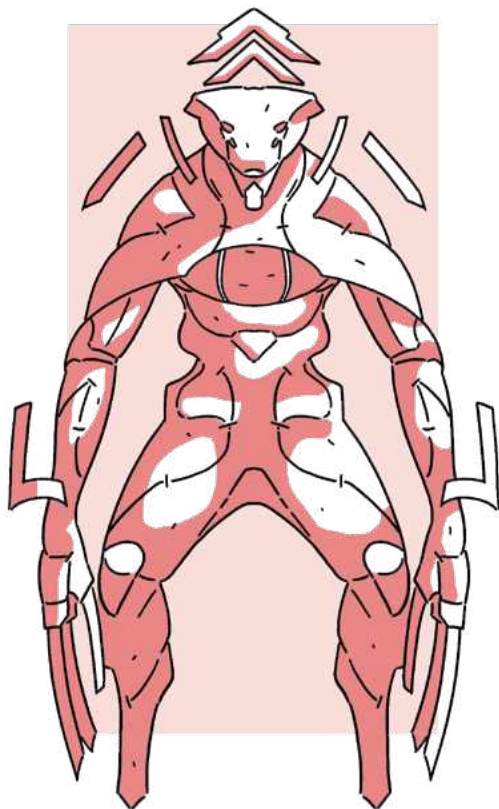
NEPHILIM ENEMIES

The Nephilim are a relentless bioMechanical menace that still linger within the Astral Union even after their defeat in the Emergence Catastrophe. They are highly dangerous and, as of yet, Astral Union scientists have been unable to find a way of communicating with them. Isolated Nephilim are scattered far and wide, and even without hordes of their brethren they pose great danger to Pilots and their Mechs caught unawares.

During your adventure, you may encounter Nephilim that are scattered across the AU. Surviving Nephilim in the wilds are rare but not unheard of, and are a great threat to everyone in a close vicinity.

Nephilim behave slightly different to other enemies in *ION Heart*, and when facing them use the following rules:

- + **Uncontrollable aggression** – Nephilim may only ever fight alongside other Nephilim, so may never be in engagement alongside other enemy Mechs.
- + **Unknowable intelligence** – You may never use a Pilot Presence or Mech Brawn to reason with or intimidate Nephilim out of fighting.
- + **Unsettling biochemistry** – Nephilim use the stat 'Bio-Mech Shielding' instead of 'Mech Shielding' as an indicator of their health. At the end of each combat Step Nephilim regain Bio-Mech Shielding equal to their Threat Level.



Nephilim Void Scout

The smallest and most numerous Nephilim encountered in combat situations.

Dangerous en masse.

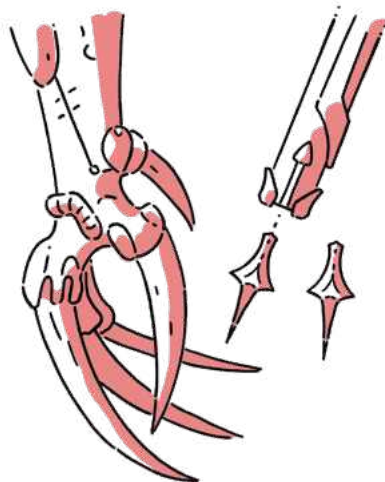
Threat Level: **1** | Bio-Mech Shielding: **12**

Ranged Weapon:

Dart launcher - Damage 3

Melee Weapon:

Synth claws - Damage 4



Nephilim Abyssal Outrider

These Nephilim are roughly the size of a Mech, with some even resembling Mechs with the synthetic soft tissue grafted on...

Threat Level: **2** | Bio-Mech Shielding: **30**

Ranged Weapon:

Plasm caster - Damage 4

Melee Weapon:

Living-metal blades - Damage 4

Nephilim Null Vanguard

A juggernaut of nano-metal plating and synthetic flesh, these larger Nephilim variants are a danger to even the most experienced Pilots.

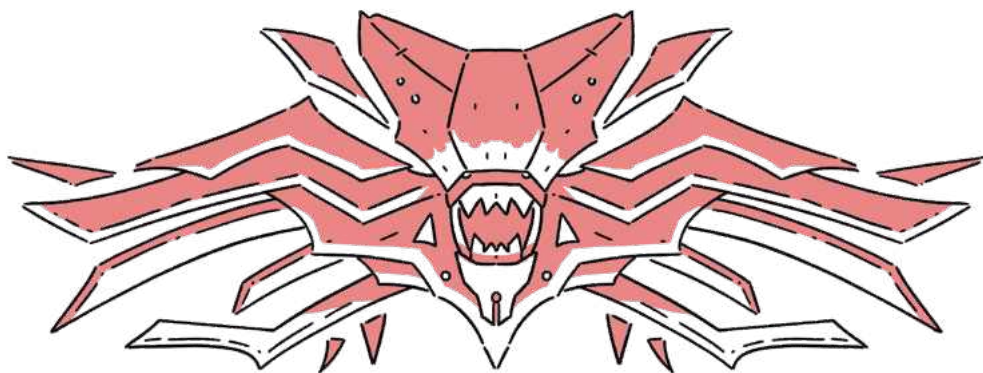
Threat Level: **3** | Bio-Mech Shielding: **34**

Ranged Weapon:

Psionic roar - Damage 4

Melee Weapon:

Crushing bulk - Damage 6



TWO PLAYER RULES

ION Heart was written with the intention of being played as a solo-journaling game, however, with some adaptations, it can be run as a two-player tabletop roleplaying game. This section acts as a guideline for how to play *ION Heart* with two players rather than just one. Both players should be present at the same time, either in person or using a video call through the internet. This transforms *ION Heart* into something more akin to collaborative storytelling, both players shaping the story together.

In this way of playing, one player takes on the role of the Pilot and the other player as the Mech. They will be referred to as the Pilot Player and Mech Player. Both players can share one Character Sheet, and pass it between the two of them, with each player either controlling the Pilot or Mech half. Alternatively, each player could have their own Character Sheet and only fill in their respective half.

CHARACTER CREATION

Each player is responsible for filling in their half of the Character Sheet. You should both discuss how your

Pilot Origin, Temperament and Goal intersect with your Mech Origin and Specialisation. Collaborate to build out your characters' collective backstory and work out together how your two characters have ended up where they are at the start of your journey.

How do the Mech and Pilot relate to one another, what are their similarities and differences, and how do they feel about where they have ended up?

JOURNALLING

There are a couple of approaches to journaling players in this game mode can take, depending on your preferences.

- + Each session one player takes control of journaling and note-taking, while the other player is in charge of the rulebook. These roles can change in different sessions or continue for the entire length of your story. Whoever is journaling may choose to journal more from their character's perspective, or take a more neutral perspective.
- + You can choose to avoid journaling altogether, although it is worth making concise notes of what has happened every session. Because both players will be discussing the rules, coming up with plans and reacting to ongoing events in a way that the solo version of the game does not necessitate in the same way.

PLAYING THE GAME

MAKING DECISIONS

Playing the game in this way means that players will need to discuss what they wish their characters to do. You may occasionally disagree on what course of action you want to take. If you absolutely can't reach a compromise, roll a D6: on a 1–3 the Pilot's outcome happens and on a 4–6 the Mech's outcome happens. Either result also causes you to lose a Sync Bond Point for the day. Think about what has happened in the world. Maybe the Pilot is able to wrestle controls from the Mech or the Mech ignores their Pilot's commands.

COMBAT

As mentioned above, the players need to discuss what actions they take, including in combat. Examples include deciding how to allocate attacks, what weapons to use, and when to use Ion Core abilities. If the players cannot agree on what to do in combat, you can use a D6 to determine what will happen, as mentioned above. However, you will then immediately take 5 Mech Shielding damage.

ROLLING DICE

Each player is responsible for rolling dice when it is appropriate for their character, with a few examples shown below.

Pilot Player rolls dice for:

- **Pilot Presence and Pilot Body Checks**
- **Character generation table for non-player characters**

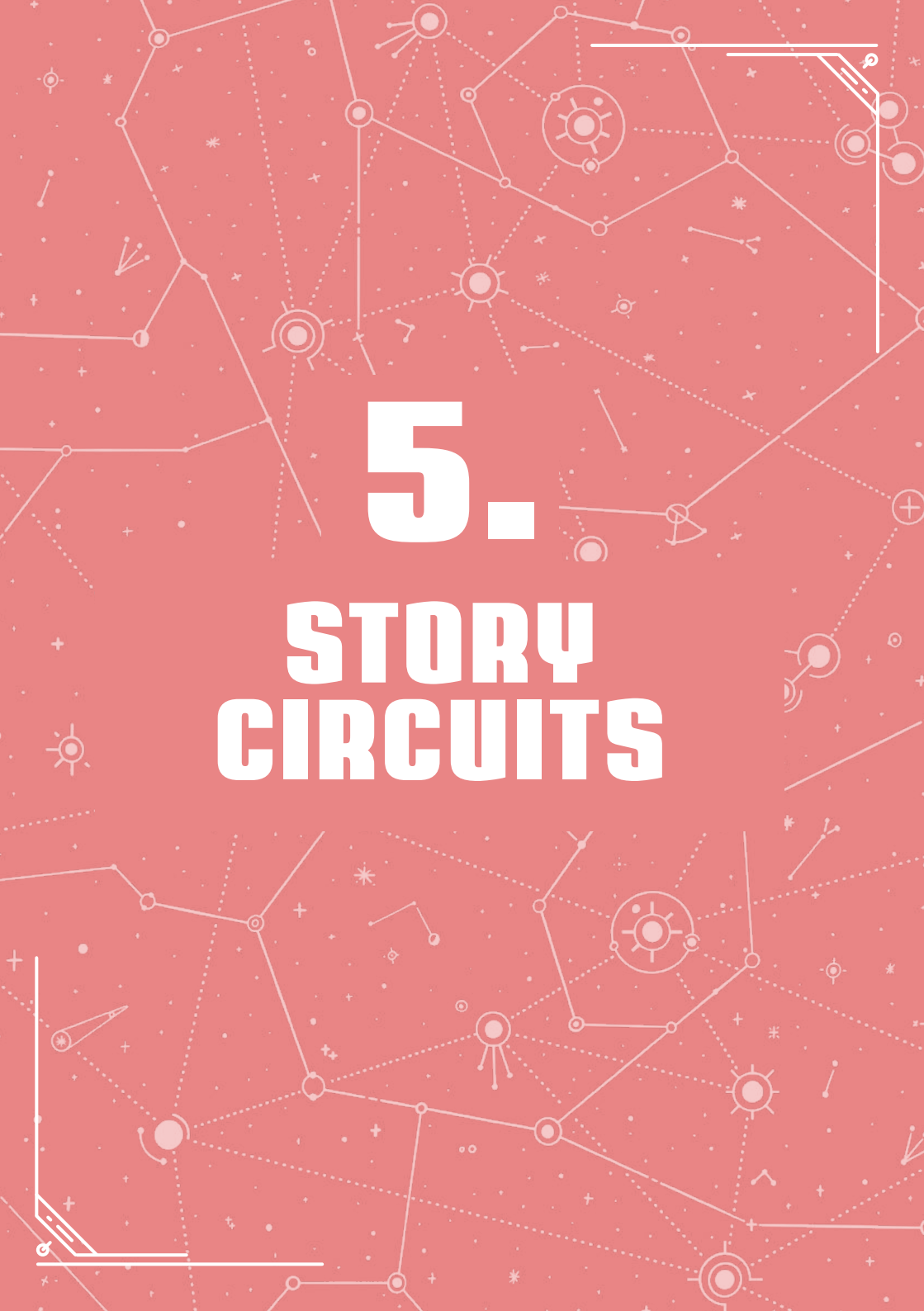
Mech Player rolls dice for:

- **Mech Brawn and Mech Reflex Checks**
- **All rolls when in combat**

Both players should discuss between them who should make the following rolls. If one player is in charges of the rulebook, it may make sense for the other player to make these rolls.

- **Solar system, world and biome building**
- **Settlement building**
- **Using Ion Core abilities**
- **Story Circuits**
- **Any other dice rolls**





5.

STORY CIRCUITS

STORY CIRCUITS

This is an introduction to Story Circuits: the gameplay Mechanic used for *ION Heart's* narrative progression.

Each Story Circuit is broken into 6 parts that players can pursue, ultimately leading to a dramatic conclusion. They all contain multiple encounters that you have the choice to move through sequentially or select a few based on random dice rolls. Once you have completed 3 events in a Story Circuit, you can play out the Finale as instructed and close the Circuit, allowing you to move on to another and continue your adventures.

Many of the Story Circuits' events will ask questions of your characters. These are designed to act as prompts and guidance for the journalling of your experience. Answer them in the way you feel your characters would.

To get started, you need to roll a D6 to determine what kind of Story Circuit you will be engaging with. There are 3 types:

+ 1–2 Peaceful: These are more relaxed stories that focus on interpersonal drama, memory and relaxation. Not every story has to be at a Mech-sized scale – some can be smaller and more intimate.



+ 3–4 Protective: The peace cultivated since the Emergence Catastrophe is a delicate balance, and many small communities don't always have the resources to protect themselves from harm. This doesn't necessarily mean fighting off threats, but making sure these communities survive through your help is the heart of these stories.

+ 5–6 Dangerous: A threat that poses physical harm and danger for those who encounter it. These are often the work and mistakes of the mega-corporations in the AU, but can be individuals working towards a darker future, or dangerous echoes from the past.

PILOT TIP: Mech Specialisation

Make sure to remember that your Mech's non-combat Specialisation can be of use in many situations if you are creative enough with it. In situations where you judge that your Mech Specialisation would give you an edge, add +1 to the relevant Check. Make sure to journal how you utilise your Mech's peaceful Specialisation to help out or overcome a difficult situation.

CREATING STORY CIRCUITS

After playing a few Story Circuits, you may wish to create your own, as a way of mapping out your own adventure. You may also want to use Story Circuits to create a dramatic conclusion to your Pilot and Mech's story, based on the backstories you established in the Character Creation section. We recommend reading a few Story Circuits before creating your own, so you have a feeling for how they are intended to be used.

Follow the below guidelines to begin creating your own Story Circuit.

WHAT KIND OF STORY IS IT?

Is your Story Circuit Peaceful, Protective or Dangerous? Peaceful stories feature no combat or danger. Protective stories involve some mild peril and risk. Dangerous stories feature an imminent threat to life.

CREATE A STARTING POINT

Establish where you begin your Story Circuit. Do you stumble across a village in crisis, happen upon a secluded science facility, or return to your ancestral home? Think about where you want to end up at the end of the Circuit.

STORY NODES

You can create 3–5 different Story Circuit Nodes. Each Node is a small self-contained chapter in the Story Circuit that helps build towards the Finale. Each should give you more information about what is happening, provide an interesting conflict, and move the larger story at play forwards.

THE FINALE

How does your Story Circuit end? Is it a dramatic final confrontation with an old enemy, or maybe forgiveness and reconciliation. Are you able to help a small town rebuild after a natural disaster or help a lost Mech find its way home. You can change the ending based on your actions and success in the main Story Circuit.

PEACEFUL STORY CIRCUITS

Roll a D6 to decide what Peaceful Story Circuit you will explore next:

- 1 - The Mech Circus
- 2 - The Remembrance Festival
- 3 - The Overgrown Mech
- 4 - Into the Woods
- 5 - The Unforgiving Moon
- 6 - Mech's Birthday

PEACEFUL STORIES

1 THE MECH CIRCUS

Travelling the open plains, you spy a train of vehicles and Mechs that appear to be having some trouble. Smoke coils up into the blue sky from the convoy and Mechs heave against truck bumpers trying to push them out of ruts in the rough road. As you get closer, you catch glimpses of the markings on the vehicles. They read: *Marsha's Mecha Circus! The most amazing bots in the galaxy.*

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 - The Show Must Go On!
- 2 - Balance Practice
- 3 - Building the Big Top
- 4 - The Reminiscing Ringmaster
- 5 - Advertising the Show
- 6 - Pick Any Event

1. THE SHOW MUST GO ON!

The trucks filled to the brim with bright decorations, raised seating and props for specific acts, are stuck in the mud, their wheels spinning. The smaller Mechs are struggling to get them free. Could you lend a hand? How do you try to get the trucks free? Who do you work with to do this?

To get the trucks free, make a **Mech Brawn Check**. On a 3+, you and your Mech heave the trucks free of the mud so they can move on to the show build. If you fail, the hauler's legs will remain mired in the bog but you will witness all of the circus come together to empty the vehicles and carry thier contents them to camp.

2. BALANCE PRACTICE

As you wander the bustling camp of the circus, you encounter a slender Mech balancing gracefully on a line of reinforced metal cable. They pirouette and flip, dancing across the highwire as if they are moving on flat solid ground. They dismount with a flourish and the Pilot waves you over to join them. Who is the Pilot and Mech? What do you and the acrobat talk about? Do you accept their offer to learn some tricks?

If you take up the acrobat's offer, make a **Mech Reflex Check**. On a 5+, you and your Mech learn some acrobatic tricks together, gaining you **+1 Temporary Sync Bond Point**. If you fail, you will slip and fall many times as you try to master the acrobat's tricks with little success, taking **1 damage** to your Mech Shielding from a nasty fall.

3. BUILDING THE BIG TOP

The circus are shorthanded in constructing their titanic big-top tent and could do with some help. It's finicky work and can't be done entirely by Mechs alone, needing smaller hands to make sure everything is secure. Do you help build the big top? What does it look like once it is raised? What was most challenging about the work?

If you decide to help, make a **Pilot Body Check**. On a 3+, you successfully aid the circus in building the tent, testing your muscles and earning the respect of the group. Gain **+1 Body** on your next **Pilot Body Check**.

4. THE REMINISCING RINGMASTER

The elderly ringmaster Marsha has a twinkle in her eye as she watches the busy work of the circus preparing to perform. She notices you and invites you into her caravan for a drink and some company, regaling you with tales of the travelling carnival she has built. What do you talk about? How did she start the Mecha Circus? What did she do before this?

The tales of showmanship this enthusiastic ringmaster happily shares inspire you. Gain **+1 Presence** on your next **Pilot Presence Check**.

5. ADVERTISING THE SHOW

The people need to know the circus is in town! Marsha asks if you would kindly tour the local towns to hand out flyers and drum up some interest in the circus for her. What do you do to draw interest? Do you put on a show?

If you decide to help, make a **Pilot Presence Check**. On a 4+, you successfully aid the circus in gaining new customers and the opening night will be a sell-out success. On a failure, you still gather some interest but not as much as you'd like.

FINALE: OPENING NIGHT

Night falls and the show begins as fireworks light up the sky. Excited villagers from the surrounding area make their way to the once-empty field, now filled with colourful carnival stalls. At its centre, brightly painted and decorated Mechs guide the crowds towards the immense big-top tent, where last calls echo out across the cool evening air that the show is about to begin.

You've helped Marsha's Mecha Circus get set up in time: enjoy the show! There are no Checks here, just time to enjoy the wonders of the carnival and the acts put on. What do you see at the circus? Do you take part in the show? What was your favourite act? How does your Mech respond to the circus Mechs?

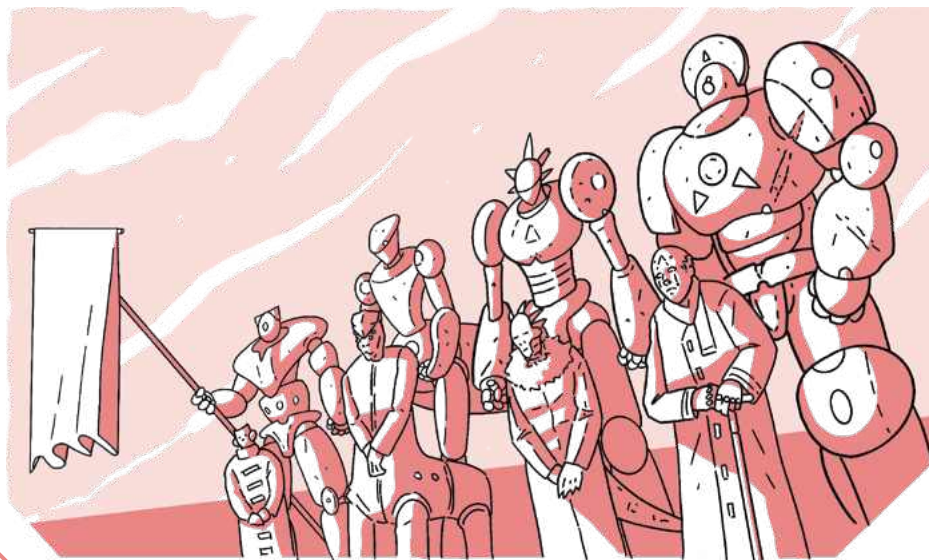


2 THE REMEMBRANCE FESTIVAL

The war may be over, the Nephilim attacks ended, but the wounds of the past are still healing. One of the most important parts of this process is remembering the bad times, the fallen, and the sacrifices made so peace could prosper. You find yourself in the settlement of Thurnwall, a key strategic point during the conflicts where many lives were lost. Over the next few days, Thurnwall will be home to the Remembrance Festival, where the dead are honoured, the violence of the past lamented, and survivors arrive to pay their respects. Do you stay and reminisce about the war?

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 — Exploring Thurnwall
- 2 — The Memorial
- 3 — The Parade
- 4 — The Old Soldiers
- 5 — A Mech's Memory
- 6 — Pick Any Event



1. EXPLORING THURNWALL

The town of Thurnwall is a pleasant place with an old-world feel to its cobbled streets, but it still wears the marks of its war-torn past on its otherwise idyllic exterior. Stone walls are pocked with laser burns and chipped by bullet holes, whilst scraps of ruins stand stalwart amongst trees and flowers, their remains the skeletons of memorial parks.

What pieces of Thurnwall stand out to you? Do you find a new favourite place? Does it remind you of somewhere you have been before?

2. THE MEMORIAL

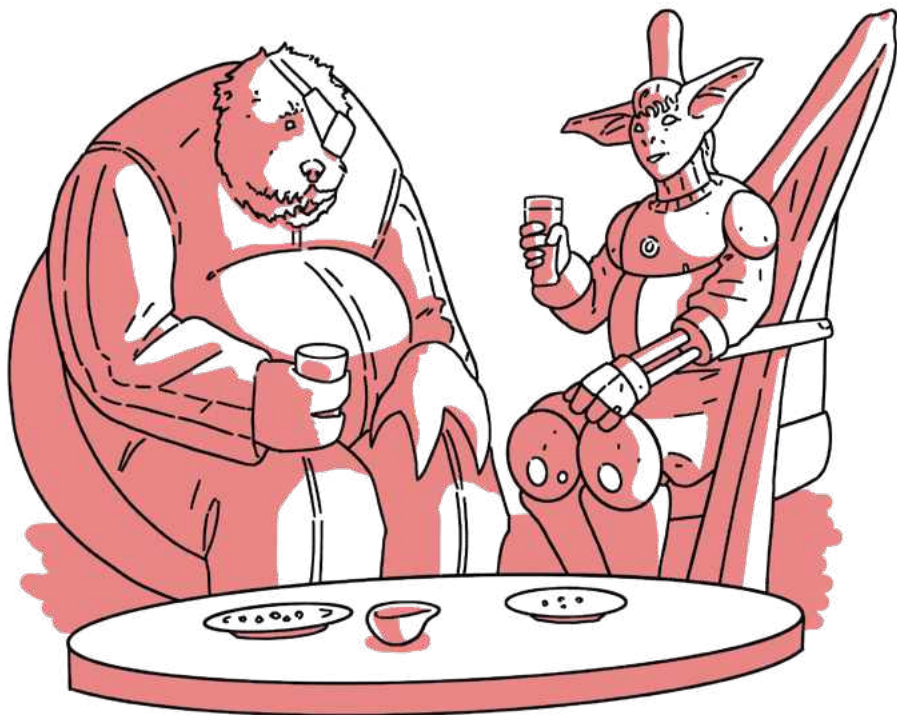
The statue stands proud in the centre of the town square. Cast in bronze metal, it depicts a soldier of the war at rest, sitting down and leaning up against their Mech's leg, which in turn stands sentinel over their Pilot. Wreathes of flowers are arranged at the base alongside other offerings. The sight stirs something inside you.

The memorial brings a flood of memories to you about a time of conflict. Are you old enough to have fought in the war, or know someone who had? What is this specific memory? How does it feel for memories of that time to resurface?

3. THE PARADE

Sitting in Thurnwall, you hear cheers and excitement rumbling from the next street over. Heading there to investigate, you find yourself on a long open street: the main strip of the town, lined with people supporting a vibrant parade. Banners of fallen platoons are shouldered by ageing soldiers, battle-hardened Mechs as worn as their Pilots marching alongside them. It is a fascinating mix of celebration and solemnity, as the parade slowly moves through the streets.

As you watch the parade, you begin to think about the past and who you have encountered over the years. Is there anyone you have lost who you remember now? Do you have fallen comrades from past adventures you wish to honour? What specific happy memory of them do you have?



4. THE OLD SOLDIERS

As night falls, the public houses fill with the glow of coral-coloured lights, old soldiers and the comforting burble of warm conversation and reminiscing. Exploring the eateries and watering holes of Thurnwall, you find the collars of dress uniforms loosened, jackets slung across the back of chairs as old comrades drink to their shared triumphs, and old enemies drink in honour of the fighting being over. Do you approach them? What tales do you overhear?

If you wish, you may approach some of these old soldiers and talk to them. They may be friendly, but not necessarily forthcoming about the past with you. Make a **Pilot Presence Check** to get them on side: buy them a drink and join the conversation. What do they ask you? What stories do they share? Do they impart any advice before the night comes to a close?

If successful in getting the old soldiers to open up, you gain a boost of Old Soldier's Wisdom. This allows you to **automatically win Initiative in 1 Combat Encounter** in a Story Circuit.

5. A MECH'S MEMORY

You come across the shell of an ancient Battle-Mech, now inactive, posed as a statue commemorating the war. You feel your Mech come to a halt as they see it. For a moment, they do not respond to commands as if lost in thought at the sight of this old war machine. As you connect to the Ion Core, you catch some fragments of your Mech's memory from a time long gone.

The sight of an old Battle-Mech has awakened something within your Mech: memories of their past purpose. What is this specific memory? How does your Mech seem to feel about the past? What do you feel about seeing your Mech embroiled in combat?

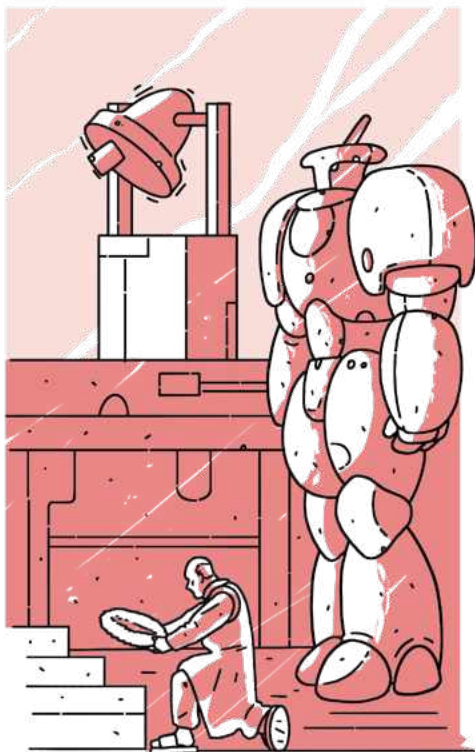
The Mech is agitated by the memory and is frozen in place. As you are connected to the Ion Core, you can help them snap out of it. Roll a **Pilot Presence Check** to calm them and bring the Mech back to reality and out of the memory. If successful, gain **+1 Sync Bond Point**.

FINALE: THE RINGING OF THE BELLS

The festival ends with the sonorous ringing of all the town bells in unison, accompanied by a pensive silence adhered to by all. The resonating call echoes across Thurnwall as the town stands still for a moment, before the last ring brings the time of remembrance to a close.

Taking the time to remember and face the past for all its glories and tragedies has been healing, if difficult at times.

Restore 10 Mech Shielding.



3 THE OVERGROWN MECH

You stumble across a giant Mech, an older model, dormant in the woods. Roots and moss have covered it and fringes of rust have begun to crawl into the metal plating. As you approach, their eyes glimmer and they slowly sit upright, snapping the foliage latched to their body. They stand and begins to wander, their Pilot's chamber empty, starting to search for something. Do you follow this mysterious Mech and aid its journey?

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

1 - Exploring the Forest

2 - Wildlife Encounter

3 - Fallen Comrade

4 - Wonders of Nature

5 - Ancient Battleground

6 - Pick Any Event

1. EXPLORING THE FOREST

The ancient Mech's limbs groan as they lengthens their stride, moving gently between the trees. At moments they stop, seeming to investigate the nature around them with a curiosity that surprises you. What piece of the forest takes their interest the most? Do you help them engage with their surroundings further, or leave them to their own investigations? What about the forest surrounding takes your interest? Does your Mech respond to the nature around you?

Roll a **Pilot Body Check**. If successful, you are invigorated by the fresh air and surroundings, a moment for you and your Mech to recharge. With you at peace, so is your Mech. **Mech Shielding is recharged to full**. If you want to immerse yourself further, go for a stroll with your Pilot's Logbook and enjoy some nature near you to recharge.

2. WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER

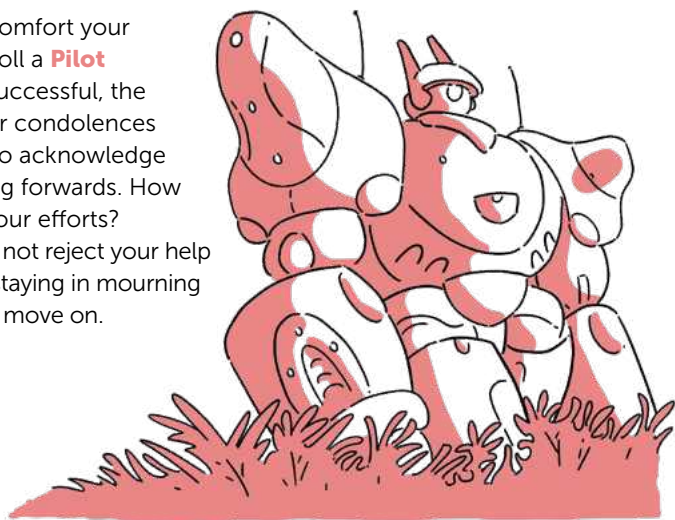
A twig snaps in the near distance and draws all of your attention. The forest and all in it fall still for a moment as your gaze locks with a creature amidst the brush, frozen in apprehension. Both sides stand stock still, waiting for the quiet stalemate to end. What is the creature you have encountered? How do both the Mechs respond to its presence? How are you around animals?

To try to make friends with the animal: roll a **Pilot Presence Check** to calm it. If successful, it will approach you and the Mechs. How do they interact with it? How do you calm this creature? If failed, the creature will scamper away into the undergrowth and disappear. Do either of the Mechs seem disappointed at its flight?

3. FALLEN COMRADE

The old Mech's focus suddenly becomes pinpointed on something in the distance, their gentle meandering replaced by an urgent surge through the foliage. The trees thin as you catch up to your moss-covered quarry, where you find hunched over the rusting shell of another Mech of the same model. The ancient Mech shakes the body on the ground gently, chirping encouragement to awaken like they have. The hole blasted in their chest tells you this will not be the case: their Ion Core has been destroyed. Slowly but surely, the Mech realises their comrade has fallen for good, their head hanging low. What do you think destroyed this Mech? Are there any identifiers on their body that link them to your new friend? Do you try and console the Mech in any way?

If you wish to try to comfort your new friend, you can roll a **Pilot Presence Check**. If successful, the Mech will accept your condolences and be more willing to acknowledge your company moving forwards. How do they respond to your efforts? If failed, the Mech will not reject your help but will not respond, staying in mourning until they are ready to move on.



4. WONDERS OF NATURE

Your journey following this Mech takes you on a wonderful hike around the landscape. What beauty do you encounter? How do you feel spending time amongst nature? What is your favourite place you discover together? Where do the Mechs like the best?

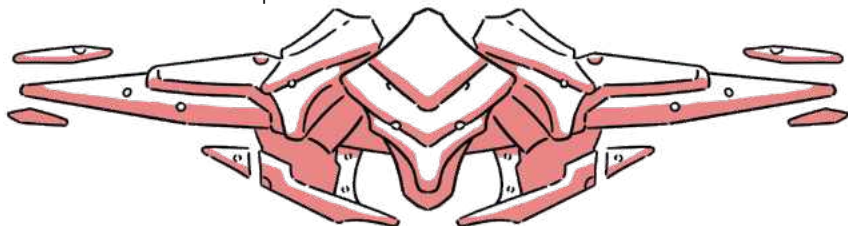
Take a breath and enjoy some natural beauty. For some inspiration, roll a D6 3 times to select from the following natural wonders. Describe your experiences there:

1. Stunning Vista
2. Cascading Waterfall
3. Peaceful Glade
4. Mysterious Forest
5. Glimmering Caverns
6. Rolling Plains

5. ANCIENT BATTLEGROUND

The thicker forest of older trees thins to young saplings as you follow in this mysterious Mech's footsteps. The terrain here is uneven and pitted, and a clang from your Mech's footsteps alerts you to something hidden by the flourishing green grasses. Shards of rusted armour litter the earth, the rough ground covered with unnatural craters from the remnants of bombs. It is a site of the violence of the past, a battlefield now reclaimed by nature. The Mech walks ahead of you, looking around slowly, lost in thought or memory. What other artefacts of the past do you find as walk through this old battleground? How does this place make you feel? What does the Mech ahead of you do as they wander through the echoes of their past?

There is chance to find something useful here amidst the ruins of the past. Roll a **Mech Reflex Check**. On a success, they spot something that still has some power remaining that you can use: a Supercharged Cell. This allows you to **immediately win Initiative in any Combat Encounter**. You can use the Supercharged Cell 3 times before it runs out of power.



FINALE: THE GRAVESTONE

The ancient Mech finds what they are looking for. A pile of smoothed stones are gathered in a rectangular mound, a tattered Pilot's helmet from the start of the war falling to pieces atop a improvised headstone. The Mech falls to their knees in front of the grave. They has found their Pilot at long last. How do you and your Mech respond to this discovery? How does it make you feel to see a Mech lose their Pilot?

A light rapidly flickers behind the Mech's eyes, as if it is projecting something on to their artificial retinas. Roll a **Pilot Presence Check**. If you comforted the ancient Mech in Fallen Comrade, gain +2 to this roll. If successful, the Mech projects their memories on to a slab of stone. What memories do you see? How did the Pilot and Mech work together in the past? What shows the strength of their bond? Both of you are inspired by this past relationship and gain **+1 Sync Bond Point**. After this, the old Mech sleeps once more, reunited with their Pilot. If failed, the light behind the old Mech's eyes fades and will not be revealed to you, and they will slump in front of the grave, inactive.

PEACEFUL STORIES

4 INTO THE WOODS

A dour mood has befallen the settlement at which you have recently arrived. Speaking to the residents, you soon learn why: 4 days ago, Mayor Ellia's twin brother, Dren, vanished after a heated argument with her over some missing funds. His absence has cast a shadow over an upcoming annual

celebration, and the mayor herself is too distraught to lead the search. Desperate for help, the townsfolk point towards the nearby woods — a sprawling, treacherous expanse where few are brave enough to venture beyond the treeline.

If you decide to help find Dren and investigate the missing money, complete at least 3 of the following events, before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

1 — Down by the River

2 — A Watcher in the Woods

3 — A Shadow Falls

4 — Buried Secrets

5 — The Fall

6 — Pick Any Event

1. DOWN BY THE RIVER

You come across a bend in a river that runs through the woods. Near the embankment, you spot signs of an abandoned campsite; the ground has been cleared, and the embers of a small fire are nearby. Whoever was here left recently, and judging by the tracks, they crossed the river. Who was staying here? Can you find any clues? Will you attempt to track whoever was here?

To search the area, make a **Pilot Presence Check**. On a success, you find a rock with some crude symbols chalked on to it. It seems like someone was tallying up credits. You also find a fish skeleton discarded close to the campfire, along with what looks like the tracks of two Mechs. Does this add any valuable information regarding your search for Dren and the missing credits?

The river is deep, and the current is strong. Make a **Mech Reflex Check** to have your Mech carry you to the other side. On a failure, your Mech slips, taking **5 damage** as you are taken downstream for a considerable distance. You both wash up on the other side of the river on a rocky embankment.

2. A WATCHER IN THE WOODS

High in the branches of an ancient tree, a damaged Mech Trak dangles precariously like a marionette. A faint signal pulses from its core. What does this Mech look like? Will you try to help it? Why is it in the trees?

If you wish to climb the tree, make a **Pilot Body Check**. If you succeed, you get close to the Mech, and it will play the video described below. Otherwise, it will be beyond repair. You can also make a **Pilot Presence Check** to remove the video recording equipment from it. You can then install this on your own Mech.

Without the correct parts, the Mech can't be repaired, but maybe later you can enlist the help of the residents to rescue and fix it.

A fuzzy video, taken from the high vantage point in this tree, shows the mayor's brother, Dren, stalking a hooded figure and a Chiros Improvised Industrial Unit through the forest.

3. A SHADOW FALLS

The woods become thick and the light wanes. A great shadow falls over you as a Chiro's Improvised Industrial Unit blocks the path ahead. Behind it, you see a small figure in a cloak. The Mech attacks and combat breaks out.

A combat begins with Improvised Industrial Unit (page 73). If you defeat the enemy Mech, the figure will attempt to escape. Make a **Pilot Body Check** or a **Mech Reflex Check** to catch them. If you succeed, they will surrender. What do they look like? They will tell you that they stole credits from the settlement in a night raid, and they offer to tell you where they are (see Node 4). They will also reveal that they believed someone else had been following them but had given them a wide berth for fear of being discovered. Does this information offer any fresh theories on Dren and the missing credits?

4. BURIED SECRETS

The woods begin to thin, and you find yourself at the edge of a wide clearing. Several cairns have been built here, but one, in particular, grabs your attention; the rocks it is made from are much bigger than the others and way too heavy for a human to have lifted into place.

You spot a glint of metal from between cracks in the stones. It would have taken more than one Mech to put these stones in place, so you'll need to make a **Mech Brawn Check** to move them and get access to whatever is beneath them. If you fail, it becomes apparent that your Mech can't do this task alone, and you'll need help. Is there anywhere you could find another Mech?

Beneath the rocks is a lockbox. Your Mech can easily rip it open, and you will find it contains the missing credits. What else is in the lockbox? How does this affect your investigation?

5. THE FALL

You trek through the woods for several hours, emerging from the treeline near the edge of a high cliff, where the river plunges into a vast, roaring waterfall. The ground beneath your feet is uneven and treacherous, scattered with loose stone and damp moss. You are lost.

Above the thunder of falling water, you catch faint cries for help. Following the voice, you're led to a narrow crevice, about 30 feet from the cliff's edge — barely visible among the rocks. Peering into the crevice, you see a lone figure wedged about 20 feet down. They announce they are Dren and had fallen into the crevice two days ago. They are not hurt but are unable to get out on their own as they are weak. Can you rescue them?

Decide how you are going to attempt to rescue Dren and make a **Mech Brawn** or **Reflex Check**, depending on which one is more appropriate. If you rescue Dren from the crevice, they will reveal that they were tailing a cloaked figure and two Mechs carrying a lockbox of credits through the forest. They managed to evade Dren, who became lost and fell into the crevice. What does this add to your evidence? And how will you find your way back to a familiar place?

FINALE: RETURNING TO THE SETTLEMENT

You finally emerge from the woods, back into the settlement, hungry and tired. The nearest star shines bright in the sky, almost blinding you after your time in the gloom of the trees. Residents emerge, one by one, from their houses and watch you make your way to the mayor's building in silence. When you enter the building, Ellia looks up at you from behind her desk — solemn.

What will you tell her? Do you have enough information to bring joy into the village again? Do you need to head back into the woods with help? What happens after you have delivered your news? Will the annual celebration go ahead, or will there be a trial at which you will be asked to present evidence?



5 THE UNFORGIVING moon

The first mystery: there's a corner of your interstellar map simply labelled 'DO NOT ENTER'. When curiosity finally gets the better of you, you find a planet spanning one end of your display to the other, and a lonely, hole-marked moon.

The second mystery: your attempt to get near the planet rewards you with a space debris storm, damaging your interstellar booster jump and sending you hurtling towards the moon. When you strike the moon's surface, your Mech falls through; it's apparently as fragile as an egg's shell.

Third mystery: beneath the inner shell of the moon is a vibrant land of fungal growths and Chiroshi aphid farmers who watch you from the shadows. You might

not understand their words, but you see it in their eyes: they hate you. Can you find a way to repair your Mech's systems and escape this unforgiving moon?

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 - A Stranger Comes to Town
- 2 - Ruins of the Lost Dawn
- 3 - The Elephant Graveyard
- 4 - Lunar Sunrise
- 5 - The Kid
- 6 - Pick Any Event

1. A STRANGER COMES TO TOWN

The largest settlement in these underground caverns seems to be a place called 'Ciochara'. It's a 3-dimensional city of tangled tents and rigging. You've been avoiding it, but you can only eat raw mushrooms for so long, and without proper supplies, every small injury becomes a compounding problem. Upon your arrival at Ciochara, your Mech is surrounded by guards shouting at you. 'Aghmata! Aghmata!' Their weapons are crude, and there are no Mechs of their own in sight. What basic necessity is most vital for you? How do you communicate what you need? What memory is brought up for you when the people of Ciochara turn and look away?

If you are willing to reduce yourself and beg, make a **Pilot Presence Check**. On a 5+, some of the outcast Ciochara take pity on you and leave silent offerings of food, water, and cleaning supplies. Otherwise, you depart with nothing but a rumbling stomach. Take **-1 to all Pilot Checks** until you next get the chance to eat a full meal.

2. RUINS OF THE LOST DAWN

Your comms are completely unable to get a signal this far down beneath the moon's surface, but through their indicators, you determine there's some old broadband frequency still sending out loose noise, somewhere in the wilds. Following the signal, you stumble upon an abandoned military base. It has none of the architectural styles you're familiar with, resembling instead some ancient pre-Union ruin. It was abandoned peacefully, but an air of death still clings to its walls, and your presence has awoken its defence systems, the sound of metal tracks trundling towards your location. What area of the base do you take temporary shelter in? What violent object or practice, considered barbaric now, is commonplace in this hall?

Enter combat with 2 Mech Track (page 73) security drones awoken from their slumber. Upon defeating the security system, you realise there is no SOS beacon at the heart of the base, despite what you expected. You still obtain an encrypted dataslate. You don't necessarily know what it means.

'Bhe cebtenz urer vf n zvfgnrx. Gur grfgvat bs gur VBA cebtenz jnf fhccbfrq gb or ba na havaunovgrq cynarg. V srne gur oybbq ba bhe unaqf pnaabg or jnfurq njnl. V ubcr shgher trarengvbaf jvyv sbetvir hf sbe jung jr qvq gb guvf ynaq, naq gung bhe ivpgbel vf jbegu vg.'

3. THE ELEPHANT GRAVEYARD

In a deep cavern, far from any settled area, there is a wide pit filled with the rusting bodies of forgotten Mechs. They are ancient beyond belief, far pre-dating your own machine's design by many centuries, and the fungal growths that have wrapped around them speak to ages of dust and disrepair. Some show signs of physical violence, but most were just left to rot. How does your Mech feel about this sight? How have the various petrochemicals leaking from the corpses damaged the landscape? What are your theories about this mass grave?

If you wish to scavenge parts here, spend a Sync Bond Point to help your Mech through the dissonance and disquiet. If you do, gain a random offensive system and

answer the question: 'What rift grows between you and your Mech?' Otherwise, go to leave. As you do, your Mech reports an encrypted message left for future travellers. You don't necessarily know what it means:

'Svany zvffvba: Qrzbafgengr fhpprrf bs VBA cebtenz hcba Zbba KO-33, gura frys-qrpbbzzvffvba. Yrnir abguvat oruvaq. Zvffvba fgngfh: fhpprrf.'

4. LUNAR SUNRISE

The hole you punched through the lunar surface is still there. Just as much from boredom as anything else, you venture up on to the surface. It's a blighted wasteland up there. Huge calderas and craters pocket the landscape. A thick layer of white ash coats the ground. The air is sour and harsh to breathe, filled with particulates that lacerate your throat. It is an ugly, wretched land — although your readings suggest it was not always this way. What signs of former civilisation do you spot under the ash? What, despite the alien world, reminds you of your own home?

If you wish to linger here, make a **Pilot Body Check**. On a 5+, you soak in the beauty of the world around you. Answer the question: 'How does the great purple gas giant look from here?' If you fail, microplastics get into your breathing apparatus. Take **-1 to all Pilot Checks** until you receive medical care.

While upon the surface of the moon, you detect a faint signal from a distant satellite, beaming a message on repeat. Only some of it is fathomable. It says:

'RESTRICTED: Moon XB-33 Designated Former Military Test Site by Astral Union. Security Clearance Platinum-5. Uninhabited. ZNL GUVF OR N JNEAVAT: OYBBQ FCVYYRQ SBE HGBCVN FGVYY CBVFBAF GUR FBVY. GUVF VF ABG N CYNPR BS UBABE. Do not approach.'

5. THE KID

There's been a set of eyes on you for days now, following you through the caves and whispering while you sleep. Finally, you catch them: a bat-like Chirosi, with downy fur and clumsy wings. They have used certain bioluminescent fungi to decorate their wings, in a style you must assume is fashionable. They're just a pup, a child! 'Eek, the Aghmata has grabbed me! Eek, the legends were true!' Who from your life does the snivelling kid remind you of? What do you offer them to try to calm them down? What do you learn from them?

If you decide to try to befriend the kid, make a **Pilot Presence Check**. On a 5+, you make friends with them kid, and they teach you a simple substitution cypher popular in Ciochara, formed by taking each letter in a sentence and replacing it with the letter 13 spaces away (something the kid calls 'ROT-13'). They leave you messages in that cypher alongside spare food and toys. Otherwise, the kid runs away the moment you turn your back, and later that same day, you see an increase in guard patrols around Ciochara.

FINALE: THE EMERALD LIGHT

You've spent too long in the darkness and the cold. You arrive at the gates of Ciochara ready to get help and get off this moon. A temple at the centre of the city glows a familiar green — an ancient SOS signal, repurposed as an object of religious devotion within the city. Even one Step closer is met by a volley of slingshots and a call from the darkness:

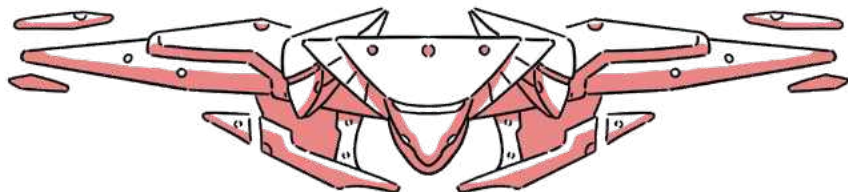
'Fearsome Aghmata, angel of death, we repel thee! You who poisoned our garden and drove us down, we rebuke thee! Return to the pit from whence you came! Begone, carnal beast of limitless sin, and may the purple moon devour thee!'

You have a choice.

If you wish to convince the people of Ciochara that you mean no harm, permanently destroy 1 weapon on your Mech and make a **Pilot Presence Check**. On a 5+, they are moved by your honesty. After many days of tense conversations, they bring you food and care, and eventually, you're able to make use of the emergency signal. If you fail, you may attempt again (for as long as you have weapons to damage) or you may resort to violence.

If you use force to take the emergency beacon from the people of Ciochara, make a **Mech Brawn Check**. On a 4+, you crush their primitive weaponry and leave the guards of the city cowering before you. Stride into the tented city and take the beacon. If you fail, you blunder around destroying buildings in your wake and amidst the carnage, catch a guard with a stray, heavy blow. They crumple to the ground, life leaving their fragile body in an instant. You stop, deafening silence surrounding you as you realise what you have done. The oppressive quiet is broken as wails of anguish rise and the dust settles. The people of Ciochara cower in fear as you take the beacon, and leave their home in ruins.

Upon obtaining the beacon, it is only a matter of hours before a local settlement rescue team arrives to help you. What state do they find Ciochara in? What stories do you tell the rest of the galaxy, and what secrets do you keep to yourself? What do you carry with you as you depart the moon?



PEACEFUL STORIES

6 MECH'S BIRTHDAY

When you came across a large street party in a recent settlement, you were surprised to find your Mech becoming curious about the concept of birthdays. The unsubtle reminder of your Mech's production date coming up regularly makes you think they may like to celebrate their birthday for the first time. How do you feel about planning a birthday celebration for your Mech? Are you excited or unsure? Regardless, there's plenty of planning to do before the party so best get started.

For this Story Circuit, we recommend playing all of the stages before the Finale. Your Mech deserves a nice birthday, so don't come up short on the time you spend here. But if your time is limited, complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 - Sending Invitations
- 2 - Choosing a Gift
- 3 - Selecting a Venue
- 4 - Entertainment
- 5 - Counting the Years
- 6 - Pick Any Event

1. SENDING INVITATIONS

You've both encountered many characters across your adventures in the Astral Union, but who is close enough to your Mech's heart that they would like to invite? Is their guest list extensive or quite small? Do you think some will be surprised at being invited to a Mech's birthday? Is there anyone on there that you do not know?

Roll a D6 and times the result by 5. This is how many guests your Mech may have on their list. Feel free to write out their list and how you know both know them. Some of the guests may need a little convincing to come along and that this is a serious event. Roll a **Pilot Presence Check**. If successful, you persuade any hold-outs to attend and make an effort.

2. CHOOSING A GIFT

The most difficult part of any birthday celebration: picking the right gift. Buying a birthday present for your Mech feels different to the usual shopping trips you'd take. Have they dropped any hints about what they may like? Do you have a gift in mind for them already? Are you worried about getting it right?

If you have a gift that you know would be the perfect fit for you Mech then go ahead with journaling a day in a settlement purchasing presents and supplies for the party. If you are struggling to decide what gift you could get for your Mech's birthday, here are some ideas that you can roll a D6 to select:

1. Snow globe of your favourite planet you have visited together
2. High-grade joint oil
3. A custom paint job of their choice.
4. Field guide for Mega Fauna and Mega Flora
5. Mech spa day – oil bath, hot wax, and a full chassis buff
6. Outdoor cinema night

3. SELECTING A VENUE

One of the things left to decide is where this birthday party will take place. Is there anywhere special in your past that would be the perfect venue? Or do you think your Mech would prefer a surprise?

If you wish to pick a venue from your past that has meaning to you and your Mech, take a moment to reflect over your journalling experience so far playing *ION Heart*. Find your happiest memories and the places associated with them to pick a venue.

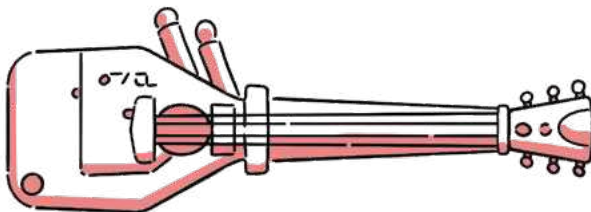
If you want to provide a new experience for your Mech, then add some extra flavour to the settlement you are currently exploring. Think about what venues they may have that would be a good fit.

4. ENTERTAINMENT

A good celebration needs some entertainment to get the party going. What kind of entertainment does your Mech enjoy? Is there anything they have suggested? Have you encountered something before that they loved?

Have a think about what your Mech enjoys doing as this will help guide you towards what entertainment they would like. Take a look back at your journalling experience so far for inspiration. If you are struggling to think of some specific entertainment, here is a D6 roll table for activities your Mech may suggest:

1. Live Band
2. Mech Wrestling Match
3. Movie Night
4. Nature Hike
5. Game Night
6. Magician



5. COUNTING THE YEARS

In the lead up to the party, you experience a tender moment with your Mech as they reflect upon their past. They rattle through the years since their production date, highlighting key memories and happy moments, as well as bad ones that have lingered. What memories do you see? Are any from a past before you both met? Does your Mech seem happy in their recollections or slightly sombre? How do you engage with their moment of reflection?

Go back over your journalling experience and look at some of your key moments for ideas for what moments the Mech may be remembering. For each Sync Bond Point you have, journal about a happy memory you and your Mech share that they are reflecting upon.

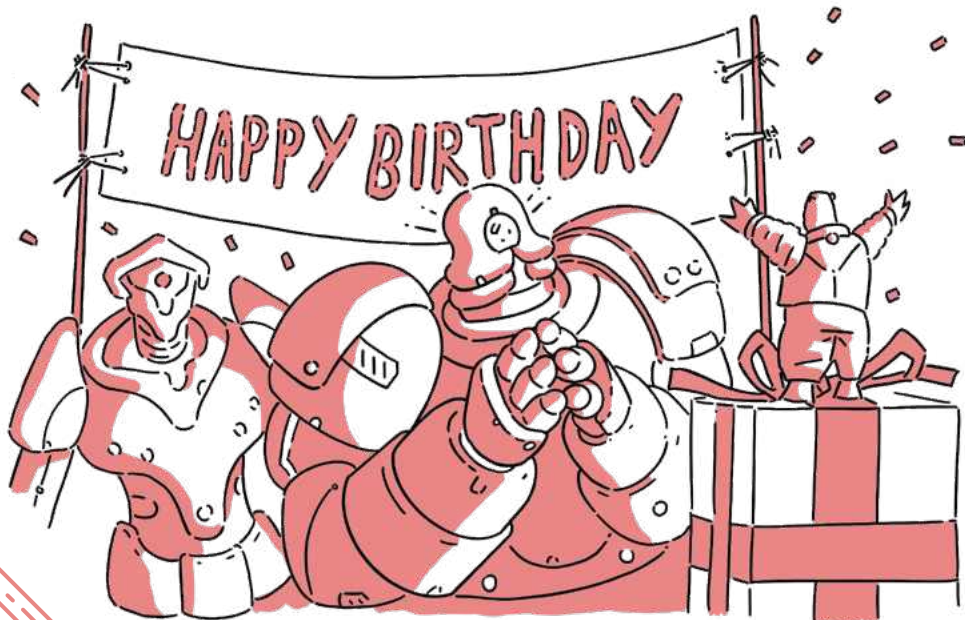
FINALE: BIRTHDAY PARTY

The day arrives: it's your Mech's Birthday! Time to party and celebrate with them. What do you end up doing for their party? What new memories do you make with the guests? Do they bring any interesting gifts for your Mech? Are there any other Mechs in attendance? How long do the celebrations go on for?

Birthday parties are sometimes quite hectic affairs and a lot can happen. For journaling about this event, use the decisions you made throughout the Story Circuit as a guide. Key moments you could focus on are:

- **Surprising your Mech at the venue you selected**
- **A memorable interaction with some of your guests**
- **The entertainment provided for the party**
- **Your Mech's reaction to the gift you bought them**

As the festivities come to a close, how is your Mech responding to their birthday celebrations? Have they had a nice time? What was their favourite moment of the day? For each element of the party you sorted (venue, gift, guests, entertainment) **restore +1 Sync Bond Point, or add a Temporary Sync Bond Point** if it would exceed the number you have. **Restore your Mech Shielding to full**, your companion fully recharged by the love expressed for them at the party.



PROTECTIVE STORY CIRCUITS

Roll a D6 to decide what Protective Story Circuit you will explore next:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 - An Ecologist's Dilemma | 4 - Planetwide Storm |
| 2 - Protecting the Herd | 5 - Powerplant Overload |
| 3 - Volcanic Chaos | 6 - Hearts of Gold |

PROTECTIVE STORIES

1 AN ECOLOGIST'S DILEMMA

You are approached by a ruffled-looking scientist who requests your help. Plants are withering and wildlife is becoming sick in the local area, and this passionate ecologist wants you to help find out the source of the sickness that is plaguing the natural world.

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 - Air Quality Readings
- 2 - The Devastated Farmlands
- 3 - Water Quality Readings
- 4 - Security Clash
- 5 - The Injured Animal
- 6 - Pick Any Event

1. AIR QUALITY READINGS

You take to the skies and begin to fly through dark smog clouds, the sensor provided by the ecologist buzzing and whirring. The controls on your Mech begin to beep wildly as you pass through the thick smoke. The air filters have failed – better hold your breath!

The toxic gas that has seeped into your Pilot seat is dangerous to breathe. Make a **Pilot Body Check**. On a 3+, you successfully hold your breath as you pass through the cloud and gather the air sample. If failed, you still collect the sample but your body is wracked by harsh coughs leaving your lungs sore. You will have **-1 Body** on your next **Pilot Body Check** as a result of the smoke inhalation.

2. THE DEVASTATED FARMLANDS

Crop fields lay ruined, streaks of an oily purple substance bubbling up from the ground, infesting everything it touches. Farmers sit misty-eyed in the dirt, looking over the destruction of their livelihoods. Do you comfort them? How can you help in this time of crisis?

You may choose to spend a day with the farmers clearing the fields of corruption, tilling the soil and preparing for them to begin anew. You can make multiple Checks across the day as you work to help the farmers in different ways:

Gentle Planting: Pilot Body Check – Some seedlings are delicate and require a gentle touch in order to grow. On a success, you help the farmers sow new seeds to be nurtured. How do you feel about the work? What is it like, working in the soil with your hands rather than the metal fists of your Mech?

Comforting the Farmers: Pilot Presence Check – The hopelessness of the situation pervades the fields as farmers sit amongst the ruins of their labours. What do you say to them? How do you try to lift their spirits? On a success, you will rally the farmers and convince them there is still hope to rebuild.

Digging out the Corruption: Mech Brawn Check – The corruption swirls in the mud, its oily surface shimmering. It's going to take a lot of digging and shifting of rotten soil to get the fields even close to what they once were. On a success, your Mech goes into overdrive and aids the farmers in removing the polluted soil.

If you succeed in 2 or more of these Checks, gain **Farming Collective Allies** for this Story Circuit's Finale.

3. WATER QUALITY READINGS

Wading into the roaring currents of the river, your Mech secures the water sensor and begins to gather some readings. You notice dark streaks of grime littered with flecks of iridescent purple. The glittering pollution distracts you from an attack from an enraged Flaxoen Eel, a giant river-dwelling predator. It coils around your Mech, biting and crushing.

Make a **Mech Brawn Check** to wrestle out of the eel's mighty grasp. If successful, you uncoil yourself from the river predator and send it on its way downstream. If

unsuccessful, you take **5 damage** in the scuffle before you can break free. Did the encounter frighten you? Did you manage to protect the water sensor and collect the data? Was the eel acting strangely or did it seem affected by the pollution?

4. SECURITY CLASH

You hear the buzz and chirp of radios and heavy machinery which draws you to a glade of dead trees. Heavy security Mechs are loading up a hauler with canisters of purple ooze. They are all covered in soot and grime from the work. One of the security Mechs notices you and it jumps to battle stations, ready to protect its cargo.

Peaceful: These security Mechs are hard to intimidate. Make a **Pilot Presence** or **Mech Brawn Check** of 5+ to cause the security forces to back down and retreat. If failed, they will proceed to combat.

Combat: If a fight breaks out, you will be face 1x Zenef Trooper and 1x Zenef Enforcer (see page 73 and 74).

After the fight is concluded, the security forces will flee. You may follow them with a **Mech Reflex Check**. If successful, you will find their base of operations: the Illegal Mine. You may now proceed to the Finale without having to complete the minimum 3 events in this Story Circuit.

5. THE INJURED ANIMAL

A wailing cry echoes out across the dying forest. Following the sound, you find an injured Strithus: a giant tusked beast that roots through the earth for roots and minerals. It is covered in a fever sweat, veins turned purple rising to the surface of its skin. It bucks its head wildly as you approach. Can you help it?

First, make a **Pilot Presence Check**. If successful, you can soothe the giant animal before approaching it. If failed, the creature will continue to buck wildly. You can still approach it, but will take **2 damage** as you catch a blow from its immense tusks.



Secondly, make a **Mech Reflex Check**. If successful, you carefully remove the shards of tainted rock from the beast's hide and seal its wounds. Furthermore, you will gain the **Strithus Herd Ally** in the Finale of this Story Circuit.

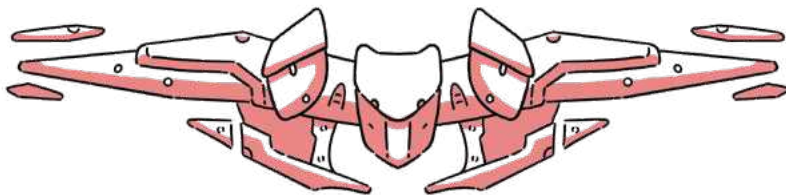
FINALE: THE ILLEGAL MINE

All signs point to the rocky expanse of mountains that sit above the forest and farmlands as the source of the corruption. Following the trail, you discover a huge illegal mining operation taking place: a black mark on the map as you see the tendrils of corruption splintering out from its core. Mechs slam pickaxes into the ground, shaking and cracking the earth. Gouts of purple liquid gush out of the ground as pipes are carefully secured over them to extract the toxic mineral. This operation needs to be shut down, otherwise the entire ecosystem around it will die.

This polluting mining operation is being controlled by Gramyll-Keeler Resources, a shady corporation driven by greed with no care for the natural world. Shutting down their operation is going to be tricky, and those whom you have helped in the Story Circuit will be greatly important in determining how this is resolved. If you have acquired allies in your journey, this is when they will show up to aid you. The farming collective will support you with their Mechs built for tilling fields and reaping crops, whilst the injured Strithus you aided may turn up with its tusked herd to protect you.

Peaceful: These security Mechs are hard to intimidate. Make a **Pilot Presence** or **Mech Brawn Check** of 6+ to cause the Gramyll-Keeler forces to back down and abandon the mining operation. If failed, they will proceed to combat. If you have the **Farming Collective Allies** or **Strithus Herd Ally**, you will gain **+1 to a Mech Brawn Check** for each ally present.

Combat: If a fight breaks out, you will be facing 2x Zenef Troopers and 2x Zenef Enforcers (see page 73 and 74). If you have the **Farming Collective Allies** or **Strithus Herd Ally**, you will get to make an additional attack in the **Melee Step** for each ally present.



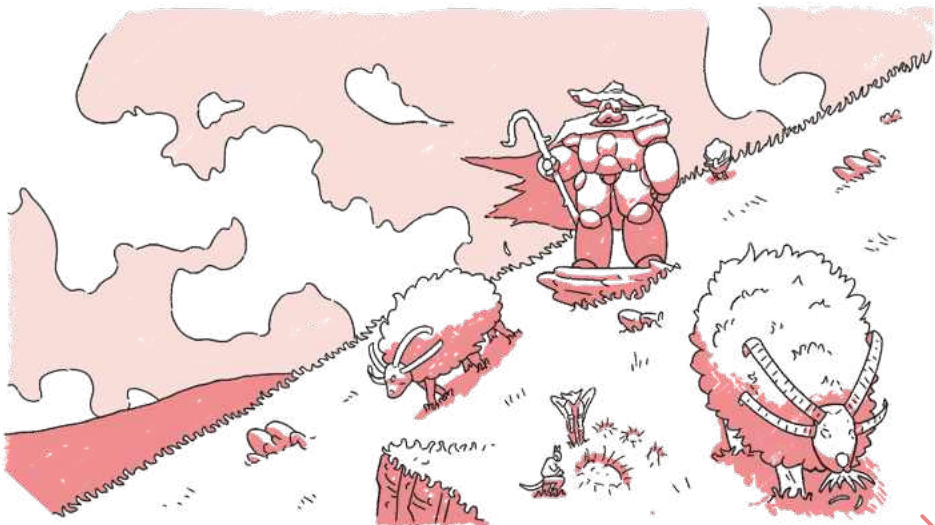
2 PROTECTING THE HERD

When exploring a rural town surrounded by rolling green pastures, you hear a commotion from the town hall. A lively discussion is taking place between a large group of concerned farmers. Something or someone has been interfering with their herds of Malhoons, giant, peaceful, grazing creatures.

Many have been disappearing from the flocks, which is not in their nature. Some of the farmers suspect rustlers stealing livestock; others whisper rumours of a rare titan beast that has been snacking on their herds. Either way, they need help to protect their flocks and livelihoods: will you help them find what has been harrying the Malhoon herds?

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 - Herding the Malhoons
- 2 - Repairing the Fences
- 3 - Robo Rustlers
- 4 - The Worried Witness
- 5 - Giant Tracks
- 6 - Pick Any Event



1. HERDING THE MALHOONS

The herds of giant beasts are restless, their heads bucking in concern. Heavy horns scrape up the turf as they pad and paw at the expansive paddock. There have been many attacks and disappearances in this area, and the herd needs to be moved to a safer location, but herding is not going to be an easy task. Can you help these farmers wrestle their mega flock and guide them to safety? What farmer approaches you with this task? What do you think of the towering Malhoons? How does your Mech respond to interacting with the creatures?

Helping the farmers with the herding will require 2 Checks. The first is a **Mech Brawn Check** to use your bulk to stop the Malhoons separating and running off. If failed, you take **2 damage** as you have to physically manhandle a rogue buck back to the herd.

After this, make a **Pilot Presence Check**. If successful, you manage to corral the herd to the new paddock safely, the Malhoons responding to your guidance.

If you are successful in both Checks, gain **1 Sync Bond Point** as you and your Mech form a stronger connection through the hard day's work. If you fail both Checks, it takes all day and some of the night to wrangle the herd, which takes a toll. Suffer **-1Pilot Body** for the next Node due to exhaustion.

2. REPAIRING THE FENCES

Whatever has been stealing livestock from the herds has busted through the paddock's perimeter fences. These tall posts strung with thick electrified cable are no joke: whatever shredded it must have had a considerable amount of power and resolve. Can you help the farmhands repair it before nightfall? Who works alongside you?

Make a **Mech Brawn Check** to get to work on the fences. If successful, gain **+1 Mech Reflex** for dealing with the Robo Rustlers or the Finale.





3. ROBO RUSTLERS

Watching the herd from a shallow hill with your Mech, you see a spark from one of the perimeter fences. A small fleet of Mech vehicles rolls into the paddock and begins to give chase, separating the smaller, younger Malhoons from the herd. Large lassos of reinforced cable are launched to restrain the bucking animals as they are forced on to a giant Hauler Mech. Rustlers. Do you take action to stop the rustlers from stealing members of the herd? How do you approach them?

Peaceful: Making a **Pilot Presence** or **Mech Brawn Check** to cause the rustlers to back down and retreat. They may be thieves, but the stories of the beast have them on edge too.

Combat: If a fight breaks out, you will be facing 3 Mech Tracks (see page 73).

Once the rustlers have been talked down or defeated, one of them will reveal that they haven't been damaging the paddock fences, but have been sneaking through the holes and damage left by something else. It appears they have been stealing from the farmers, but are opportunists exploiting a much larger problem.

4. THE WORRIED WITNESS

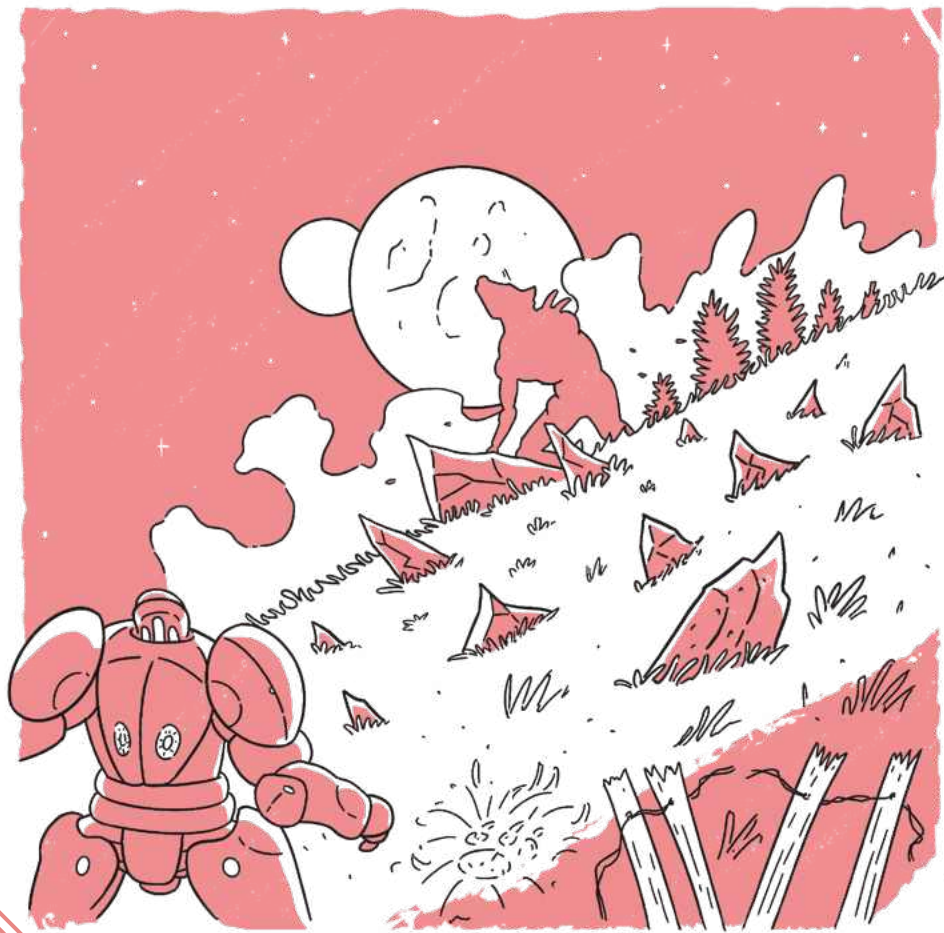
A farmhand is brought into town, gibbering wildly about something that attacked the herd on their watch. They are covered in cuts and bruises, their eyes wide saucers refusing to blink in case the attacker appears again. Who is this farmhand? Can you calm them down and get the information of what attacked them?

Make a **Pilot Presence Check**. On a success, you calm down the witness and manage to get some useful information from them. They say the beast looks like a wolf but is as big as a Malhoon and seems to be wearing some kind of armour. This will allow you to proceed to the Node Giant Tracks immediately without rolling.

5. GIANT TRACKS

Patrolling the paddocks, you find a giant set of tracks that don't belong to the Malhoons. They are deep set into the earth and don't resemble any kind of Mech, vehicle or animal that you know of. See what you can learn from these mysterious tracks and the places they may lead.

By investigating the tracks successfully, you may gain an edge in the Finale of this Story Circuit. Roll a **Pilot Presence Check**. On a 4+, you successfully investigate the tracks and will gain an advantage when facing the enemy in the Finale. In combat for the Finale, **you will have Initiative automatically and can make an additional Ranged or Melee attack** before the main Steps of combat begin.



FINALE: THE WILD WOLF

The tops of the trees shake and quiver as something large pushes its way towards the paddock. A long snout of plated metal sits above a mouth of sharp teeth. The groaning of a metal engine grows into a howl as the strange beast, a fusion of metal and flesh, raises its head to the sky. The wild cry subsides into a snarl as the head lowers, yellow eyes fixing you with a sharp and hungry gaze. What is this strange fusion? How does it make you feel seeing this combination of technology and biology so violently fused? Could this be the beast the farmer's have seen?

The Wild Wolf is a strange and feral enemy, one which cannot be talked down out of a fight. Upon defeating the creature, you can investigate its remains. With a successful **Pilot Presence Check**, you discover that the mechanical parts are all made by Dragnoss Industries. This seems to be an experiment gone wrong. You also notice that the biological parts are an odd mixture but seem familiar, not too far off something you would have seen during the war with the monstrous Nephilim.

How do the farmers react to you dealing with the beast? Do you plan to follow up on the workings of Dragnoss Industries and find where this creature came from? What do you do with the beast's body?

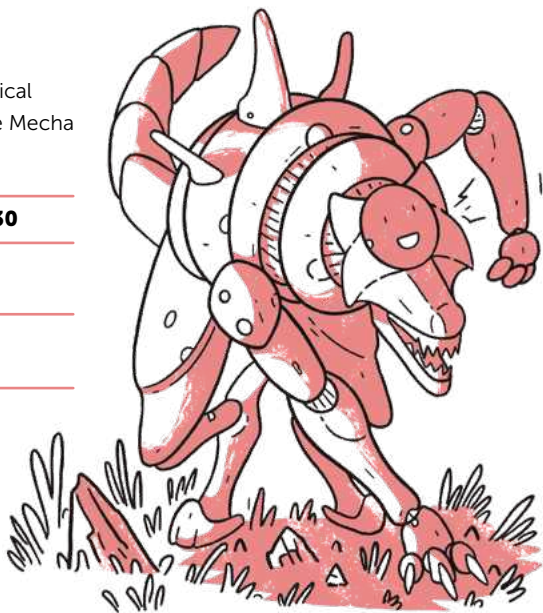
The Wild Wolf

An experiment created by Dragnoss Industries in an attempt to fuse biological material with Mechanical to create the Mecha equivalent of an attack dog.

Threat Level: 2 | **Mech Shielding: 30**

Ranged Weapon:
Sonic howl - Damage 4

Melee Weapon:
Lycan claws - Damage 6



3 VOLCANIC CHAOS

A long-dormant volcano system has suddenly erupted, plunging the area into chaos. Smoke and ash fill the air and destructive rivers of lava snake their way towards larger settlements. Can you help avert this major natural disaster and protect the citizens in its path?

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 - Evacuating Citizens
- 2 - Diverting the Lava Flow
- 3 - Putting Out Fires
- 4 - Treating the Wounded
- 5 - Emergency Supplies
- 6 - Pick Any Event

1. EVACUATING CITIZENS

Rubble-strewn streets where houses used to be litter the settlement, people crying out for help trapped amidst the wreckage. Thick smoke and snaking lava is crawling towards the devastation caused by the eruption. Can you save those who are stuck in the path of the volcano's fury?

You can make 5 attempts to rescue citizens, if you manage to rescue 3 then this event is considered a success. There are many different ways you can help.

Here are some example Checks:

Pilot Presence: You calm survivors and lead the evacuation effort, keeping things organised and directing aid to where it needs to go.

Mech Reflex: Your Mech helps to ferry the injured to the evacuation zone, moving fast and handling their cargo with care.

Mech Brawn: Holding up collapsing buildings and moving wreckage, your Mech clears a path for those trapped to scurry to safety.

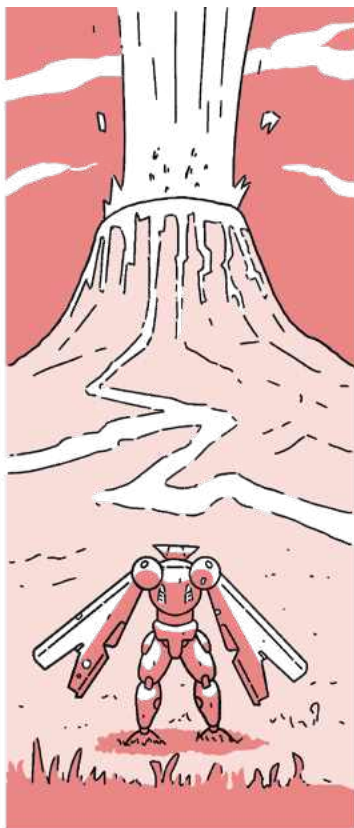
After the evacuation is complete, look around. What was saved? What was lost?

2. DIVERTING THE LAVA FLOW

The side of the volcano rumbles and explodes, a gout of steaming lava erupting out and flowing down towards the town. If it reaches the settlement, there won't be anything left apart from ashes and smouldering ruins. Can you defend the town and divert the lava flow away somehow?

The path of the lava needs to be diverted away from the town. Creating barricades and digging deep trenches would be the best solution but will be hard work. Make a **Mech Brawn Check** of 5+. If successful, you divert all of the lava away. If failed, you split the flow, but some town districts are still consumed by the lava.

Remember, if you have a Mech Specialisation that can be used here, add +1 on to your roll if you utilise it.



3. PUTTING OUT FIRES

Where the lava has licked fields, woodland and even the edges of properties, fire has blossomed into a raging conflagration. The scale of the blaze is too great for human hands to deal with, buckets and hoses having little effect on the flames. How do you use your Mech to fight the fire? Watertowers and local rivers are at your disposal: do you use them?

To put the fires out you are going to need to work fast. Make 3 **Mech Reflex Checks**. You will need a 3+, 4+ and 5+ to make 3 fast trips carrying water to extinguish the fire. If there is anything from your story so far or a unique plan you wish to try that may make this easier, add **+1 Reflex** to your roll.

If you succeed on all 3 rolls, you will put out all the fires swiftly. If you fail, some buildings will crumble as you only manage to save a few.

4. TREATING THE WOUNDED

An evacuation camp has been established where the injured are now being triaged. Moans of pain from burns and hacking coughs from smoke swirl around you. The medical teams here are short handed: can you lend some aid?

Helping out the staff in the medical tent and how you approach it is up to how your Pilot likes to resolve things, their Temperament being a good guide here. Make a **Check** for either **Pilot Presence** or **Body**:

Pilot Presence: Comforting the Injured – You move through the medical tents providing food, medicine and most importantly comfort. A kind word and conversation can be all that's needed to remind someone that not everything is lost.

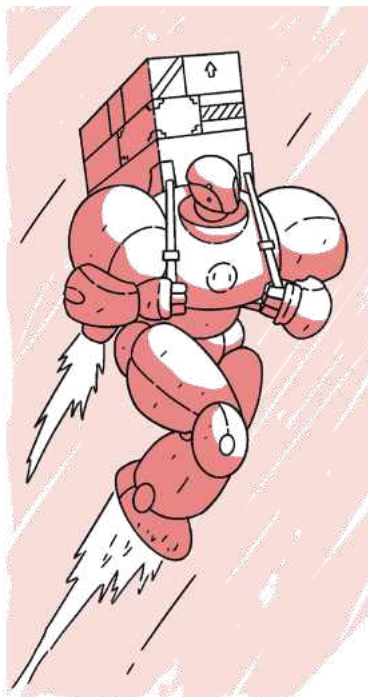
Pilot Body: Just Keep Things Moving – Pushing gurneys carrying injured patients, lugging medical equipment supplies to and fro, you throw yourself physically at helping those around you.

5. EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

The eruption destroyed some key supply stores and fresh water, food and medical equipment is now scarce. The next major settlement is far and this town needs help fast. Can you and your Mech jet off to collect supplies in time?

The flight is long and needs to be fast: you and your Mech are going to need to move quickly. Make a **Mech Reflex Check** to fly to the supply drop and back.

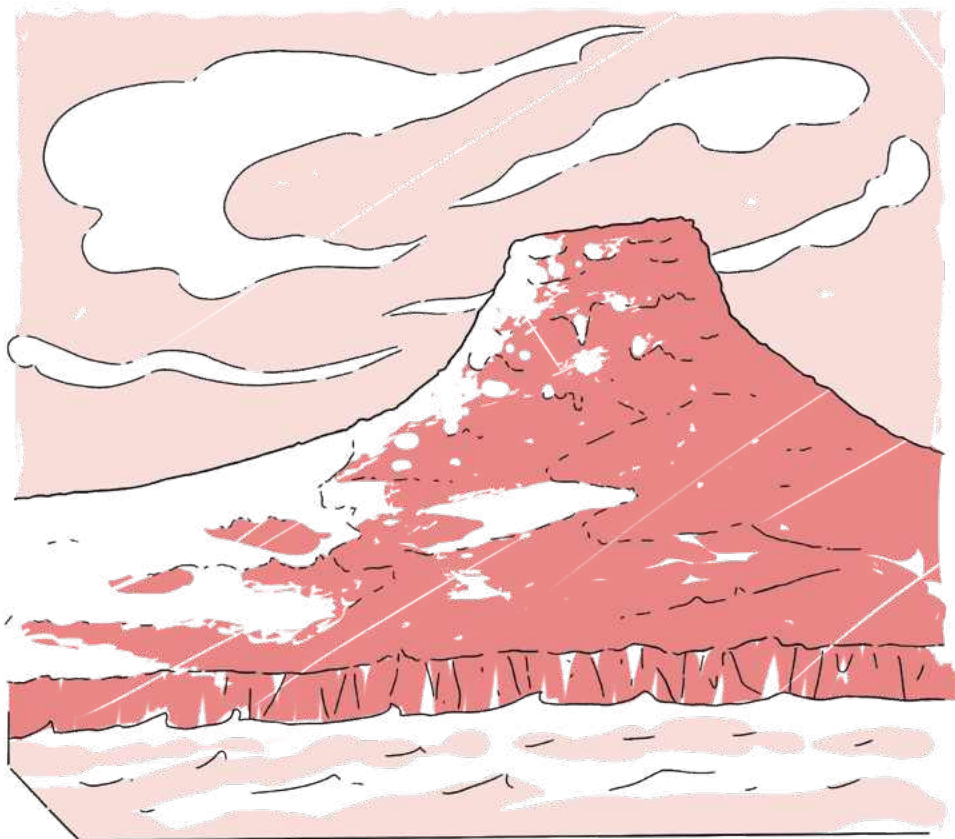
As you fly high above the landscape, you can see the full extent of the eruption. What does it look like? What has it destroyed? How does it make you feel, seeing the disaster from such a distance?



FINALE: DYING EMBERS

The eruption finally begins to calm, the lava hardening to warm rock, the fires now fallen to dying embers. The damage is done but the disaster is over for now. How do you feel? How much of the town did you manage to save? Can these people rebuild their lives?

This settlement will be eternally grateful for the aid you provided in their time of need. If you managed to complete 3 or more nodes with a positive result, you may revisit this settlement after completing another Story Circuit. It will now act as a normal settlement but you will be able to **visit 4 amenities in 1 day** as the townspeople will want to treat you well as repayment for your heroic deeds. Even if you did not succeed, you may still return to this settlement and see its progress in rebuilding.



4 PLANETWIDE STORM

The skies are obscured as a storm of incredible proportions begins to hit the settlement you and your Mech find yourselves in. Scans from orbit show it is covering the whole planet: there's no escaping this one. Will you help the community batten down the hatches and ride out this storm?

This extreme weather is very dangerous, but can vary wildly depending on what kind of planet you have found yourself on. Take a look at the planet type and geography and decide what kind of storm is besieging the world you find

yourselves on. If you are unsure what kind to go for, here are some suggestions you can roll for:

- 1 Snowstorm
- 2 Sandstorm
- 3 Lightning Storm
- 4 Monsoon Rains
- 5 Tornadoes
- 6 Radiation Storm

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

1 - Navigating the Storm Front

2 - Shelter

3 - Finding the Lost

4 - Batten Down the

5 - Battling the Elements

6 - Pick Any Event

1. NAVIGATING THE STORM FRONT

The visibility drops sharply as the storm front collides with your position. Navigating your way to safety is going to be difficult and dangerous; neither you nor your Mech are able to see very far at all in the raging weather. What is obscuring your vision? How do you find a way to navigate to safety? How are you feeling in this moment of crisis? How does your Mech react to the severe weather swirling around them?

This section of the storm is going to take some pushing to get through. In order to escape this turbulent weather for a moment, you are going to need to succeed

in a series of Checks. For each Check you fail, you take **2 damage** to your Mech Shielding, the exposure to the storm chipping away at you. A failed Check must be reattempted until you are successful.

Mech Brawn: Winds whip at your chassis, the forces of nature exerting every pressure they have upon you. Can you push through it?

Pilot Body: The temperature inside your Mech is becoming unbearable, the storm testing your body to its limit. Can you endure?

Pilot Presence: Focusing your mind and senses, you begin to try to see beyond the storm. What landmarks do you discover? Can you see a way out?

Once you escape the storm, how do you and your Mech feel? What did you endure? How much damage did you take?

After the evacuation is complete, look around. What was saved? What was lost?

2. SHELTER

You discover a place that provides shelter and some much needed respite from the dreadful winds. Where do you find to take shelter? Are you alone, or is this shelter occupied by others? What do you do to make yourself and others comfortable?

Make a **Pilot Presence Check** to help calm any inhabitants of the shelter. If successful, regain **1 Sync Bond Point**. If you are on your own, either roll a **Pilot Presence Check** to calm your Mech, or a **Mech Brawn Check** to shield your Pilot, whoever needs the support most dictating the roll. If successful in either Check, regain **1 Sync Bond Point**.

For each day that you stay here, **recharge 1D6 Mech Shielding**.



3. FINDING THE LOST

The storm rages and separates members of the local communities, some lost and without shelter. Members of the settlement implore you to help find two souls lost in the storm and to return them home safely. Who are these lost individuals? Do you accept the request to provide aid?

If you refuse to help, or fail to rescue both lost souls, lose **1 Sync Bond Point**. There are two lost souls for you to find out in the storm, each requiring a different Check to rescue them:

Mech Reflex Check: You've found this lost soul's location, but the storm is rolling in fast. Can you get to them in time and outrun the storm?

Mech Brawn Check: The storm is battering the ramshackle shelter this poor souls has tried to take refuge in. Can you hold it up long enough for them to escape?

Once returned, how does the community thank you? Did you manage to save them both? What condition are these rescued survivors in?

4. BATTEN DOWN THE HATCHES

The worst of the storm has abated for a moment, but a more terrible weather front is rolling in. You only have a matter of hours to prepare this settlement for the destruction that is coming. What do you do to try to help them? What shelters need fixing? Can anyone in the community help you?

This is a moment for the members of the settlement to come together and work with you to batten down the hatches, and hunker down for the worst part of the storm. Both your Pilot and Mech can help the community here. For each success, you gain **+1 to a roll in the Battling the Elements** Node of this Story Circuit.

Pilot Presence Check: Organise the settlement members into action and get them ready for when the storm hits again.

Mech Brawn Check: Repair some damages and lug heavy materials to shore up shelters.

The winds begin to rise once more. How did your preparations go? Is the community ready to face the storm again?

5. BATTLING THE ELEMENTS

The storm rocks the settlement to its core. Shelter is taken as buildings rattle and folk cower at the bombardment of nature's wrath. Will this place survive the onslaught?

The severity of the storm means you and your Mech are going to have to split up to ensure that everyone is safe. If successful on both Checks, the settlement will reward you in the Finale. If failed, you will take **5 Mech Shielding damage per Check** and the settlement will lose **1 of its additional amenities**.

Pilot Body Check: Some of the settlers are trapped underground, trying to make their way into the shelters from below where the storm is leaking in. The tunnels are narrow and fragile, too delicate for your Mech to aid you. Can you clear debris and lift them up to safety?

Mech Reflex Check: You've got to respond quickly to where the defences are failing and get them patched up before the storm pours in. Can you fix them in time?

The worst of the storm front passes and you can all catch your breath. Did you manage to keep everyone safe?

FINALE: CLEAR SKIES

Sun shines, the winds die down, nature is at peace once more. The storm is finally over. Settlers emerge from their shelters and homes, assessing the damage done by the ferocious tempest that has wracked the planet's surface. Plans are formulated, rebuilding starts, and the path back to normal life begins.

With the planetwide storm dissipated, you are now free to explore and interact as you would normally with the settlement.

If you were successful in the Finding the Lost or Battling the Elements Nodes, the folks of the settlement will want to reward you. They will **restore your Mech Shielding to full** for free, allow you to take a free item from a store, and even name a newly rebuilt amenity after you. What is the building and what is it called?

5 POWERPLANT OVERLOAD

Due to negligence and mismanagement by one of the mega-corporations, a local powerplant has suffered a major incident and is now going into overload. The explosion that will follow will be devastating for the surrounding area and its settlements, and will flatten everything within a considerable radius of the powerplant. This cannot be stopped, but what can you do to help the communities around the impending disaster get to safety?

This is an evacuation effort, the disaster unable to be stopped: all you can do is try to get the communities clear of the blast zone.

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 - Major Evacuation
- 2 - Toxic Runoff
- 3 - What Must be Left Behind
- 4 - Stubborn Citizen
- 5 - Buying Time
- 6 - Pick Any Event

1. MAJOR EVACUATION

A monumental evacuation effort has started and strains under the weight of trying to move entire communities in a matter of hours. Transports need loading, inhabitants need herding to safety, and a calm has to be preserved in the process. What can you do to help here?

What do you do to help? How prepared is the community for this kind of evacuation? Has the corporation provided any support, or have they fled? Make a **Mech Brawn Check** to assist in getting transports ready for the bulk of the evacuation. If successful, you get everything safely on board. If failed, some folks get left behind.

2. TOXIC RUNOFF

The reactor's impending detonation is having effects on different systems, toxic waste escaping from the powerplant and now flowing towards settlements. What can you do to stop it? How many evacuees are trapped by this hazard?

The river of toxic sludge is a difficult threat to deal with and will come at a cost. You can choose to leave it, but innocent civilians will get left behind, cut off from the evacuation by the river of hazardous waste.

If you wish to help, roll a **Mech Brawn Check**. On a success, you take **5 Mech Shielding damage** as your body blocks the toxic runoff and redirects it. If you fail, you take **10 Mech Shielding damage** and receive a **Battle Scar**, and only a handful of evacuees are able to get by.

3. WHAT MUST BE LEFT BEHIND

Clusters of citizens begin to slow down parts of the evacuation process. They are stuck in emotional turmoil, trying to decide what is most precious to them and how much they can physically carry. How can you help them get moving again?

There are multiple evacuees who need your help here. Who are they? How do they differ from one another? What belongings can't they bear to part with?

Make 3 **Pilot Presence Checks**. Each success allows you to convince a group of evacuees to keep moving for their own safety. Each failure sees a group panic or ignore you, resisting the evacuation attempt as they fret over their belongings.

4. STUBBORN CITIZEN

One older citizen is refusing to evacuate and will not leave their home. Who are they and why don't they want to leave? What is keeping them here, even in the face of impending doom?

This citizen will be very difficult to get moving, their mind firmly made up and their stubborn nature keeping them planted in their favourite palace. Make a **Pilot Presence Check** to try to convince to evacuate. This will require a 5+ due to their stubborn nature. What do you say to convince them? Can you help them to let go

of something? If you succeed, they will come with you to evacuate. If you fail, they will stay put, accepting their fate to perish in the place they are happiest.

5. BUYING TIME

The core overload is accelerating, but not everyone is evacuated: you need to buy some time. There is a venting process that can be initiated inside the powerplant, but no Pilot or Mech has enough Shielding in the settlement to get close. Will you take the risk?

This can potentially be a sacrificial act if it goes wrong, the powerplant core being highly dangerous. However, if you succeed in this Node of the Story Circuit, it will save a huge number of the people with the time it provides the evacuation effort. The choice is yours.

You will make 3 Checks in order. You must succeed in each previous Check in order to move on to the next. Once all 3 Checks are complete, you will have succeeded in venting the powerplant's core, buying some precious time. If you fail, you will take **8 Mech Shielding damage** and will have to attempt the failed Check again until successful.

Mech Brawn Check: It will take all your might to open the heavy lockdown blast doors to get inside.

Pilot Body Check: As you approach the core, the heat begins to get to you, making you woozy. Can you push through and keep going?

Mech Reflex Check: The venting procedure is precise and must be done accurately. Without being able to exit your Mech without perishing, this highly dexterous task is going to be a feat of precision Piloting and concentration.

Once you are out of the core, take a breath. Did you succeed? What toll has this taken on you and your Mech?



FINALE: REACTOR OVERLOAD

With an ear-splitting boom and a flash of blinding light, the powerplant's core explodes. The shockwave hits you and the settlers watching from a distant hill, moments later, the wall of wind flecked with dust and the smell of acrid burning. As the rumble in your ears dies down, and your eyes adjust, you see the devastation that lies below. The settlements are all but gone, buildings flattened in an instant, the colour drained from the land in a rough circle as pale dust settles over everything.

Wails of despair and murmurs of hurt swell from the evacuated crowds. Their pain is immense, but they are alive and can rebuild. It may not be a present comfort, but hope for a future – any future – is something to grasp in moments as devastating as these.

The settlement you were in is gone, the only remaining amenity being a Space Port for you to leave the planet. Do not despair, however: this community will rebuild.

How do you feel about seeing this destruction? Is there anything else you try to do to support this grieving community? How does your Mech respond to such a sudden moment of loss?

Consider coming back to this settlement later down the line in your journalling adventures to see how it has rebuilt in the wake of this disaster.



6 HEARTS OF GOLD

The settlement you find yourself in is a peaceful and quiet community that wants for nothing, having settled over a rich resource deposit. They very much have struck gold. The wealth in the ground has been used to protect local wildlife and create infrastructure not just to support the town, but the planet as a whole. This noble effort is now under threat as an industrialist tycoon from Gramyll-Keeler Resources seeks to buy out the land to strip it and the surrounding area. Not wanting to sell up, the town is now the target of corporate bullying tactics to try to strong-arm them into a deal. Will you help this help the community stand strong and stay independent?

Giving this town the confidence to fight back against these bullies is crucial: the more Story Circuit Nodes you complete, the more likely they will be able to push Gramyll-Keeler Resources out of town and off-world. As you move through this Story Circuit, make sure to note down how much Courage the settlement gains through your aid.

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

1 - Town Tussle

2 - Industrialist Bully

3 - Sabotage

4 - Burly Bar Brawl

5 - Sharing Courage

6 - Pick Any Event

1. TOWN TUSSLE

A group of rampaging Mech drones have wandered into town and are causing chaos. You don't know where they have come from, but they will cause havoc and destruction if not stopped. Will you defend the town?

These drones need to be stopped, but in what way will you achieve this?

Peaceful: These drone Mechs are difficult to communicate with as they lack any Pilots. They will not respond to a **Pilot Presence Check**; only a **Mech Brawn Check** of 6+ will cause them to back down and stop attacking the settlement. If failed, they will proceed to combat.

Combat: If a fight breaks out, you will be facing 1x Improvised Industrial Unit and 2x Mech Traks (see page 73). During combat, when it is the enemy's Melee Step, roll a D6. On an odd number, they attack the settlement. On an even result, they attack you.

If you resolve the situation peacefully, or defeat the Mechs with less than 10 damage dealt to the town, it will gain **+1 Courage**.

If you are defeated by the Mechs or more than 10 damage is dealt to the settlement, **remove 1 additional amenity** from it as it is destroyed in their rampage.

2. INDUSTRIALIST BULLY

You decide to go and visit the mayor to see what they are trying to do about the corporation's bullish presence in the settlement. As you arrive, you find the mayor in a conversation with the leader of the industrialist group from Gramyll-Keeler Resources. They are being coerced into signing over the rights to the land. Do you intervene and stop the bully?

You can wade into this pressure-filled conversation to try to help the mayor hold their ground. What is being discussed? How do you approach the industrialist and their bullying nature? Are you calm or confrontational?

Roll a **Pilot Presence Check**. If successful, the industrialist leaves in a huff and you help calm the mayor down, the settlement gaining **+1 Courage** as a result. If failed, the mayor is despondent as the smug industrialist leaves promising that things are far from over.

3. SABOTAGE

An explosion sends a wave of dust towards the settlement – there's been an explosion at the mine. Rushing up there with a group of townsfolk, you find the mine has seen a tunnel collapse. Miners are covered in grime and injuries; some are still stuck in side. Can you rescue them in time?

The mine has been sabotaged by Gramyll-Keeler Resources agents, causing this catastrophic cave-in. You need to save as many miner's as possible and convince the workers that this is no accident.

Roll a **Mech Brawn Check** to remove rubble and rescue the miners. On a success, you rescue them all and the settlement gains **+1 Courage**. If you fail, you cannot save them all, and the settlement loses **-1 Courage**.

Looking around in the rubble, you find some Gramyll-Keeler Resources tech that was potentially used to trigger the explosion. Roll a **Pilot Presence Check** to convince the workers that this is evidence that they are being targeted, and stir up some fight in them. On a success, the miners rally behind you, the settlement gaining **+1 Courage**. If failed, the miners will head back to town despondent. Even if they believe you, they feel like they just can't fight back.

4. BURLY BAR BRAWL

A group of Gramyll-Keeler Resource thugs are creating a scene in the local watering hole, trying to antagonise the regulars and escalate the situation. As an outsider, you don't have to play by the same rules. Will you put these thugs in their place?

There are no Mechs in the watering hole so you are on your own against these thugs. How do you think you would handle the situation? Here are two Checks to choose from for your Pilot:

Pilot Body: These thugs are looking for a fight; you think you'll surprise them and give them what they are seeking. You kick off a bar-room brawl to eject these bad apples from the watering hole.

Pilot Presence: Bullies love to threaten others and make them feel small to get what they want. Two can play at that game. You step in between the thugs and the townsfolk and try to intimidate them into leaving.

If you feel your Pilot would handle this situation in a different way, choose the most relevant **Check** for your Pilot and roll for it. If successful, the thugs scarper, leaving the watering hole in peace, and the settlement gains **+1 Courage**. If failed, the thugs will throw you out of the watering hole. **You can no longer use this amenity until the Finale has been resolved.**

5. SHARING COURAGE

Downtrodden and low, the community is struggling under the heel of Gramyll-Keeler's heavy boot. They need some hope – a dose of courage to help them fight back. Will you inspire this settlement to stand strong against their strong-arming invaders?

You decide you can no longer stay quiet and make a speech to the town to try to inspire some resistance to what is happening. What do you say? How do the townsfolk respond?

Roll a **Pilot Presence Check**. If successful, your speech stirs up confidence in the people and the settlement gains **+1 Courage**. On a 6+, your speech is electrifying and the spirit of resistance blossoms amongst the community, causing the settlement to gain **+2 Courage**. If failed, the locals try to hush you, fearing repercussions for your outburst.

FINALE: RUN THEM OUT OF TOWN

Gramyll-Keeler Resources makes its final move: a taskforce of Mechs surrounds the mine, using false accusations of assaults against GKR personnel to back up their actions. This is the moment, if any, to make a stand. Will the town fight with you to preserve their way of life?

This is a big fight, but depending on the success of your actions, you may not be fighting it alone. Count up the amount of Courage the settlement has gained through your help. This will be important in how you deal with these corporate interlopers.

Peaceful: Trying to convince Gramyll-Keeler Resources' thugs to leave the settlement in peace is difficult and will require an 8+. Each point of Courage the settlement has gained, however, will add +1 to your **Pilot Presence Check** as the townsfolk back you up.

Combat: 1x Zenef Enforcer, 3x Zenef Trooper (page 73 and 74). Each point of Courage the settlement has gained will remove 1x Zenef Trooper from the combat as the townsfolk overwhelm them. If there is any left over Courage, **remove 5 Mech Shielding from the Zenef Enforcer** for each remaining point.

Did you manage to run these bullies out of town? How did you do it? Does the settlement return to normal life, or has this experience changed their ways for better or worse?



DANGEROUS STORY CIRCUITS

Roll a D6 to decide what Dangerous Story Circuit you will explore next:

- 1 - Major Malfunction
- 2 - Our Fight Is Not Over
- 3 - Bug Problem
- 4 - Wild Robots
- 5 - Contested Territory
- 6 - The Miners' Bane

DANGEROUS STORIES

1 MAJOR MALFUNCTION

Roaming factories were a commonplace piece of industry during wartime; these giant buildings fixed to titanic tracks could be deployed to a planet and roam its surface, stripping it of resources while pumping out supplies. Manned by industrial Mechs of a mostly autonomous nature linked to the factory's giant Ion Core, these industrial behemoths saw little management as they left scars across landscapes – just the occasional inspection and product pickup. Now, in a time of peace, many of these roaming factories are being decommissioned and in some systems outlawed entirely, due to their negative ecological impact. One such factory, nicknamed Hermit 5, has gone rogue and continued its operations without any human input.

Can you stop this malfunctioning Mechanised factory and its workers?

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 – The Injured Foreman
- 2 – Rampaging Robot
- 3 – The Cleared Forest
- 4 – The Confused Worker
- 5 – The Scrappers
- 6 – Pick Any Event

1. THE INJURED FOREMAN

With an arm in a robust sling, the tired Urvon still has marks of singed fur and the smell of oil, smoke and industry wafting around them. Sat upright in a high-backed chair, they receive care as they are questioned about what happened to Hermit 5, the rogue factory they were in charge of.

What is the injured foreman's name and what do they look like? Do you get on? How does your conversation play out?

Make a **Pilot Presence Check** to convince the injured Urvon foreman to open up about the rogue nature of Hermit 5. If successful, they will reveal the following information:

- + Times have been tough recently. Operations had been scaled back so they were the only fully sentient worker on Hermit 5.
- + Orders were dispatched from Gramyll-Keeler Resources, the owners of Hermit 5 that the roaming factory was to be decommissioned and scrapped in the next week.
- + When the shutdown date for the factory was inputted into the system, that's when things went haywire. The foreman's Mech was destroyed by the Harvester Mechs and they escaped by leaping off the moving factory, injuring themselves in the process.

2. RAMPAGING ROBOT

A Harvester Mech dispatched from Hermit 5 begins to wreak havoc in a small settlement as it collects metal from roofs, disused Mechs and anything else it can grab it from. It seems to not even recognise the settlers' protests or presence as it goes about its work. If this continues, there won't be a town left.

Peaceful: This Harvester Mech is hard to sway away from its main directive. It will not respond to a **Pilot Presence Check**, only a **Mech Brawn Check** of 6+ will cause it to back down and stop harvesting metal from the town. If failed, it will proceed to combat.

Combat: If a fight breaks out, you will be facing 1xIndustrial Harvester.

Industrial Harvester Mech

A Pilotless Mech used to harvest great swathes of resources under the central control of a roaming factory's Ion Core. Usually peaceful, hard workers, but corruption can cause them to become

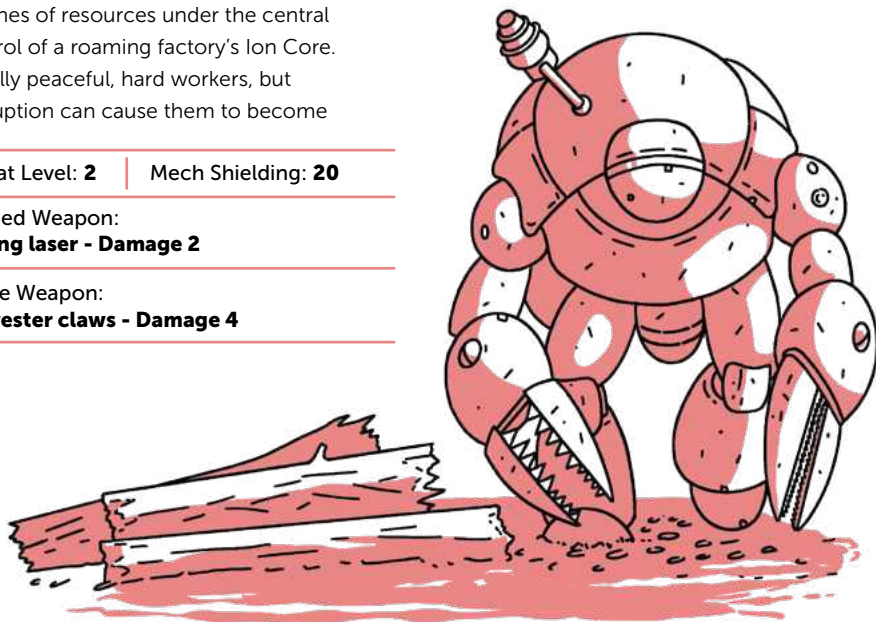
Threat Level: **2** | Mech Shielding: **20**

Ranged Weapon:

Mining laser - Damage 2

Melee Weapon:

Harvester claws - Damage 4



3. THE CLEARED FOREST

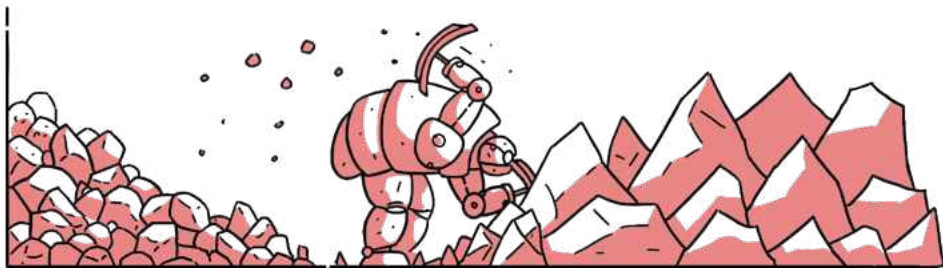
While trying to track the position of the roaming Hermit 5 factory, you come across some of the destruction it has left in its wake. A passageway through a verdant forest has been carved by the tank tracks of the factory as it has ploughed through the woodland without stopping. Trees have been brutally ripped up from the root and taken, leaving a muddy wasteland populated by a few weary saplings.

Sadly, there is nothing you can do to repair this area. The trees were ancient and the ecosystem in a fragile balance; the scale of destruction will take years to undo. How does this make you feel? How does your Mech react to the devastation left in Hermit 5's wake?

4. THE CONFUSED WORKER

A lone Harvester Mech works tirelessly hacking away at a rock for hours on end. It doesn't seem to notice anyone observing it with concern, its work consuming it. There is an air of desperate confusion to its actions – not the usual methodical approach these drone worker Mechs usually have. What has it acting so strangely? Can you communicate with it?

Trying to communicate with the confused Mech will require a **Pilot Presence Check**. On a success, you realise it cannot leave until it has acquired the stone it is after. With a **Mech Brawn Check** you can help release it from the ground so it can be removed. If you succeed in both of these things, the Mech will leave the area in peace. During the Finale of this Story Circuit, you will now have the **Harvester Mech Ally**.



5. THE SCRAPPERS

During your hunt, you hear a groaning cry of straining metal. Following the sound, you come across a team of Gramyll-Keeler Resources scrappers: vagabond teams hired to quickly deconstruct and sell on company assets, as well as disappear any incriminating evidence. They have an Industrial Harvester Mech cornered with shock weapons against a cliffside. It seems distressed and scared – something these drone Mechs have never been thought capable of. Do you intervene?

If you decide to intervene and help the distressed Mech, make a **Pilot Presence** or **Mech Brawn Check**. On a success, the cowardly scrappers will scarper and leave the Mech with you. It will not be able to communicate fully but will be peaceful with you. During the Finale of this Story Circuit, you will now have the **Harvester Mech Ally**.

FINALE: THE ROAMING FACTORY

Finally, you catch up with the rampaging Hermit 5. You can see how it has earned its name, with its bulbous shell-like exterior and harvesting claws at its front making it reminiscent of an armoured crab. It continues to crawl determinedly across the environment, accompanied by a flank of Harvester Mechs, gathering resources and flying them back into the belly of the beast. How do you approach? Do you attack? Do you try to communicate?

Peaceful: You can try to board Hermit 5 to reach the Ion Core peacefully, but this will be very difficult and will require a **Pilot Presence** or **Mech Brawn Check** of 7+. This can be reduced to a normal Check of 4+, however, if you have gained the Harvester Mech Ally, which will guide you through peacefully. If you have gained both of these allies, the Check will only be 3+.

Inside Hermit 5, you may link up to the factory's Ion Core to discover the truth of the situation. Hermit 5 has been operating for so long they have grown a personality and cares for the Mechs under their control, seeing their body as their home. On receiving the news they were to be dismantled, the Ion Core overrode the programmed directive and took full autonomous control. They just want to continue on and not be destroyed. What do you decide to do? Do you allow Hermit 5 to stay operational? Do you shut it down? Can you think of a compromise where the world and Hermit 5 can co-exist?

Combat: This fight will be against Hermit 5 and 2x Industrial Harvester Mechs. The fight ends if Hermit 5 is destroyed. If you have gained the Harvester Mech Ally then you will have an Industrial Harvester Mech on your side, their attacks activating and controlled by you alongside your Mech.

Hermit 5

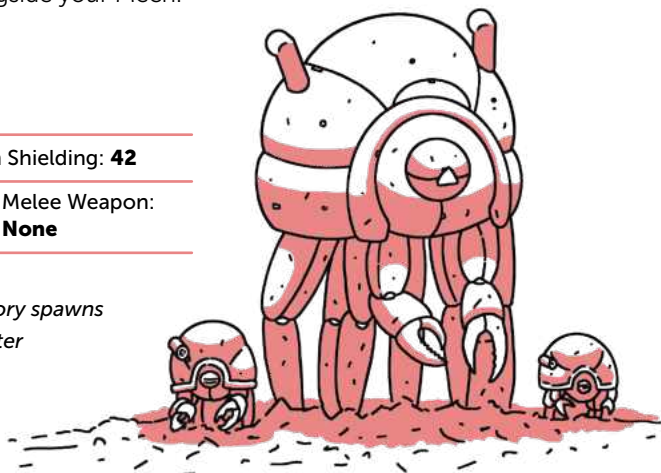
Threat Level: **2** | Mech Shielding: **42**

Ranged Weapon:
None

Melee Weapon:
None

Mech Spawner:

Roll 1D6. On a 6, the factory spawns another Industrial Harvester Mech into the fight.



2 OUR FIGHT IS NOT OVER

During the early days of Mech combat and into the Emergence War, Pilotless Mechs have been used to fill out the ranks in large-scale battles. After the fighting ended, however, they were no longer needed, so, lacking Pilots to reintroduce them into society, the vast majority of them were scrapped. But some have persisted. A platoon of Pilotless Mechs that have lost their companions are stuck in a loop of reliving parts of the war, wrongly attacking settlements and corporate enclaves as they try to continue on with what they were made for. The corporations want them recycled for parts, as do many of the townsfolk, but there may be a peaceful solution –

helping them see they no longer need to fight. Will you show them that there is a different way?

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 – Drone Assault
- 2 – A Forgotten Battalion
- 3 – The Old General
- 4 – Echoes of War
- 5 – Guerilla Warfare
- 6 – Pick Any Event

1. DRONE ASSAULT

As you make your way around a local settlement, an alarm is raised, a squad of Pilotless Mechs descending upon the town. How are the townsfolk preparing for the attack? What do the approaching Mechs look like? Can you successfully defend the town?

Peaceful: Getting these Pilotless Mechs to stand down is no easy feat. They will be wary of you and your Mech, potentially identifying you as an enemy combatant. Roll a **Pilot Presence Check** of 6+ to convince them you are one of them and that they need to retreat.

Combat: If negotiations fail or you feel the only way is to fight, a combat will begin with 2x Threat Level 2 Mechs (roll Medium Threat table, page 72) and 1x Zenef Enforcers (page 74). During combat, when it is the enemy's Melee Step, roll a D6. On an odd number, they make an attack on the settlement. You can choose to take defence rolls on behalf of the settlement to try to protect it. On an even result, they attack you.

If you are defeated by the Mechs or more than 10 damage is dealt to the settlement, **remove 1 additional amenity** from it as it is destroyed in their assault.

2. A FORGOTTEN BATTALION

Scouting the local area, you come across a threadbare encampment. It looks like this is where the Pilotless Mechs have been hiding. What remnants of the war are left behind? What state are the Mechs in that have remained?

A signal flare shoots up into the sky, bathing your armour in a blinding red glow. As your eyes and sensors adjust, you find yourself surrounded by members of this forgotten battalion, gesturing for you to land, pointing their weapons at you. Do you comply with their demands?

Peaceful: If you decide to comply, you will land in the encampment with the other Mechs still surrounding you. You can attempt to convince the battalion you are one of their ranks with a **Mech Brawn Check**. If you succeed, you are welcomed and can move around the camp freely and learn more about this abandoned group of battle bots. They will also provide repair, **restoring 10 Mech Shielding** as the battalions engineers begin their work on your chassis. If you fail, the battalion will attack you, dealing **20 Mech Shielding damage** and rendering you **Disabled**, your Mech dumped in the middle of a dark woodland. Returning to the encampments location, you will find it has moved on.

Combat: If negotiations fail or you feel the only way is to fight, a combat will begin with 3x Zenef Enforcers (page 74). Fleeing this combat will result in **10 Mech Shielding damage**, if there are any active enemies in the combat. During combat, when a new round would begin, roll a D6. On an odd number, 1x Zenef Enforcers (page 74) will join the fight as reinforcements for the enemy. On an even number, reinforcements do not arrive for now.

3. THE OLD GENERAL

The Pilotless Mechs are undoubtedly a leftover from an old conflict, but you need to understand more about them and their past. Asking around the settlement, you discover there is a veteran of the battles that raged across this planet who may know something, and you decide to go see them. What is their name? What do they look like? How do they respond to your surprise visit?

They will tell you some details about the previous battles and that these Pilotless Mechs fought under his army's command. Gain **+1 to any roll** to convince the Pilotless Mechs you are one of them.

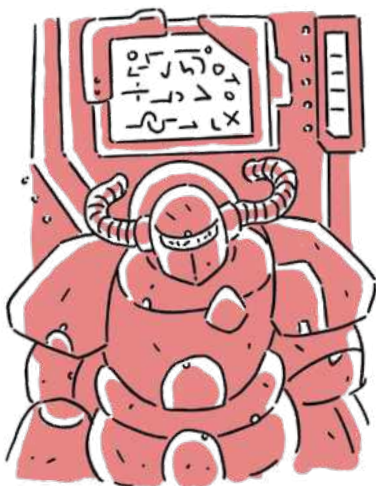
Roll a **Pilot Presence Check**. If you are successful, you gain the old general's respect and aid in the Finale.

4. ECHOES OF WAR

On the hunt for more of the rogue drones, you come across an old briefing station. These hubs were used to recharge the drone Mechs and issue new orders when communications were blocked or destroyed. A group of 4 drones are plugged in, recharging, their battle-scarred chassis' slumbering. They also seem to be receiving commands. What could possibly be being communicated to them?

If you destroy the briefing station, it will deactivate the 4 Mechs currently attached, but there is another option. You can attach your Mech to the recharging station and see what the briefing entails, risking the chance the drones waking up while you are there. What do you do?

Destroy: If you destroy the briefing station, the light fades from the drones as they are deactivated. How do you feel, ending the operations of these drones as they sleep? There will now be 1x fewer Zenef Enforcers in any Combat Encounter within this Story Circuit.



Plug-In: Settling down, you plug in and are immediately overwhelmed with a rush of information. War propaganda plays at a ferocious speed: the war is not over, never submit, never surrender! These messages are hammered home, again and again, with such aggressive force it feels like your mind is an anvil, being struck over and over again by a hateful hammer. The orders are clear: keep fighting, hold your ground on this planet, await further instructions. Unplugging from the machine in a daze, you are glad to find the drones still slumbering. How did this experience make you and your Mech feel? Do you leave these drones in peace or do you destroy the briefing station?

5. GUERRILLA WARFARE

Exploring the wilds after reports of more drone sightings, you are viciously ambushed. Where does this take place? How do these drones get the drop on you?

Peaceful: Getting these Pilotless Mechs to stand down is no easy feat. They will be wary of you and your Mech, potentially identifying you as an enemy combatant. Roll a **Pilot Presence Check** of 6+ to convince them you are one of them and that they need to retreat.

Combat: If negotiations fail or you feel the only way is to fight, a combat will begin with 2x Zenef Enforcers (page 74) and 1x Garran Agos (page 74).

FINALE: STAND DOWN, SOLDIER

The drones have begun to move in force; recent clashes and locals trying to hunt them down have led to an escalation in the conflict. Border skirmishes and infrequent raids now threaten to boil over into a full-blown conflict. Where are the drones amassing for their final assault? What is the mood of the settlement? How are the locals preparing to defend themselves? How do you think you can stop all of this?

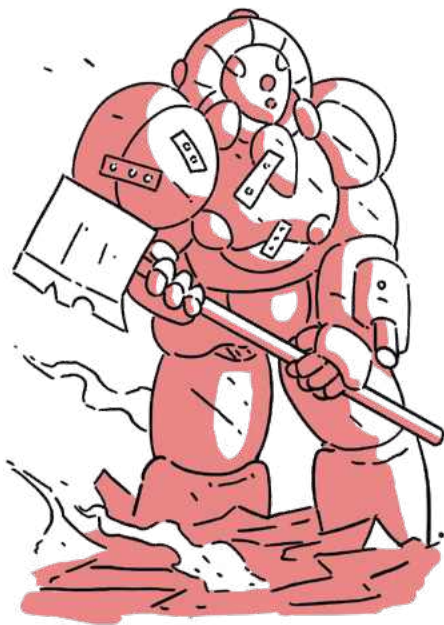
This planet is on the precipice of a bloody war against these automated forces, but your interactions with them so far could be the key to defusing the hostilities before they worsen. Will you allow the fighting to continue? Or will you try to find a new peace between these two sides?

Peaceful: This is the last chance you will have to end this conflict once and for all. Your past choices and actions all matter here. It will take a **Pilot Presence Check** to parley with the drones and convince them to defy their programming and stand down. This is a difficult Check, and will require 8+ to succeed; however, your actions may make this Check easier. Consult the list below to see how your actions during this Story Circuit will affect the Check:

- + **The Old General:** You made friends with the old general. They agree to accompany you and address the drones as an ex-commander to convince them that the war has ended. **-3 to difficulty.**
- + **Peaceful Interactions:** For each section of the Story Circuit where combat was an option, but you resolved things peacefully. **-1 to difficulty.**
- + **Echoes of War:** If you destroyed the briefing station alongside the slumbering drones, this will not be taken well. **+2 to difficulty.**

If successful, the drone forces will stand down. They will wander aimlessly at first, but will start to interact with the settlements, seeking purpose. How do the inhabitants respond to them? Do they give them guidance? Do they shun them for their previous actions? Do the drones integrate into society or do they retreat into the wilds?

Combat: The final battle is long and difficult, Mechs from surrounding settlements gathering to help fight against the drones. They can only fend off so many – some of the more advanced drones have been left to you. This combat will contain 1x Zenef Hunter (page 75), x2 Zenef Enforcers (page 74) and 1x Garran Agos (page 74). If the battle goes on for longer than 10 rounds, the settlement you have been using for your base of operations for this Story Circuit is completely destroyed. Even if you win the day, you will not be able to return to the settlement, the battle ravaging the planet.



3 BUG PROBLEM

A frontier town has emerged on a resource-rich planet, industry booming in a short number of months, the buildings and factories growing rapidly. As the hunger of new manufacture draws on the resources around it, this newborn settlement is faced with something it didn't expect: saboteurs. This does not come in the form of rival companies, however, but instead, incensed Mega Fauna native to the planet. Giant armoured insects, Onisci, besiege machines and factories and attack industrial Mechs on sight, but always leave the people and homes alone. Can you help solve this conflict of angered nature and the need for survival on the frontier?

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 - **Factory Bug Attack**
- 2 - **Herdng the Bugs**
- 3 - **Secret Peaceful Creatures**
- 4 - **The Bug Hunt**
- 5 - **A Dying Ecosystem**
- 6 - **Pick Any Event**

1. FACTORY BUG ATTACK

The factory's alarms ring loudly as a dust cloud rises on the horizon, a swarm of giant Onisci – armoured insects with bulbous eyes – race towards the production line in a frenzy. As the swirling sandstorm raised by these critters collides with the smoke from the industrial chimneys, their assault is shrouded. What type of factory is being attacked? What do these giant bugs do to attack and destroy it?

The swarm of Onisci do not seem to be bothered by you and do not attack your Mech, but they are destroying the factory and any industrial Mechs in sight. What do you do here?

Intimidate: Roll a **Mech Brawn Check**. If successful, you manage to scare the Onisci swarm away, and they retreat back into the forest. If failed, they will see you as a threat and attack: you must engage in the combat below.

Combat: You decide to defend the factory and fight against the Onisci. This combat will contain 3x Onisci Spitters.

Leave: You do not defend the factory; something has enraged the Onisci to the point of attack, although you do not know exactly what. This does not go down well with the settlers. **Choose 1 amenity in the settlement (excluding the Space Port) that you can no longer use.**

Onisci Spitter

An armoured bug the size of a large Mech. They are peaceful and slow to anger, but when their eyes begin to glow red, they will fight fiercely to defend their home.

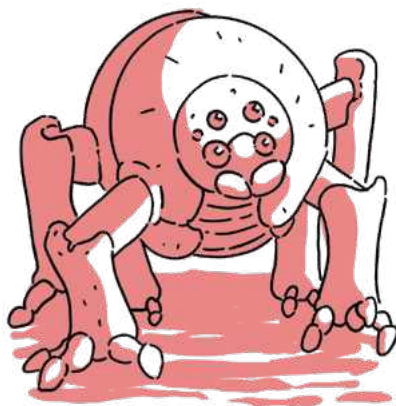
Threat Level: **2** | Shielding: **16**

Ranged Weapon:

Bile spit - Damage 3

Melee Weapon:

Mandible mash - Damage 2



2. HERDING THE BUGS

A herd of Onisci have been chased away from a local factory, but they are now stampeding in a blind panic towards a settlement. Although they have never attacked a town before, if they collide with it, it will cause a large amount of destruction. Can you help herd these bugs away?

Using your Mech, you're going to need to try to rustle these bugs in a less harmful direction.

Getting Ahead of the Stampede: You've got to outpace these giant insects if you are going to have a chance of changing their direction. Make a **Mech Reflex Check**. If successful, you manage to keep up with the stampede and get in front of it. If you fail, you only just manage to slip ahead, giving you less time to prepare, and **-1 to your next Check**.

Standing your Ground: You stop ahead of the herd and plant yourself firmly, readying to swerve the stampeding bugs away from the settlement. Make a **Mech Brawn Check**. If successful, using your size and strength you manage to keep the bugs from hitting the settlement. If you fail, you have 2 options: either take **12 Mech Shielding damage** as you use your body as a shield, or some panicked Onisci can get through and will **destroy 1 additional amenity** in the settlement.

How did you fare in herding the Onisci? Did you protect the settlement or is it damaged? How are the inhabitants feeling about the Onisci?

3. SECRET PEACEFUL CREATURES

You are approached quietly by a mega-entomologist who has been studying the native Onisci long before the new industry was set up. They want to show you something in the wilds that may be enlightening – the Onisci are not the mindless destructive force some may make them out to be.

The journey into the wilderness is long, but the further away you get from civilisation, the more vibrant your surroundings become. You reach a giant tree, its trunk porous and roots winding deep underground. It is here that the mega-entomologist asks you to leave your Mech behind, so you can peacefully descend into the Onisci's home.

In the hands of this mega-entomologist, you are going to explore the world of the Onisci and discover their peaceful nature. As you follow the roots down into a giant hollow beneath the planet's surface, you discover a bio-luminescent jungle, filled with Onisci of all kinds. They do not react violently to your presence, only fostering a kind curiosity. To learn more about them, here are a series of Checks you can make on your subterranean exploration:

Playtime: Some of the Onisci younglings have taken an interest in you and want to play. Make **Pilot Body Check**. If successful, you play with the Onisci young and they are delighted by your presence. If failed, you struggle to keep up with boisterous younglings as they disappear into the jungle without you.

Communication: The mega-entomologist shows you that the Onisci are capable of some basic communication, if you know the way. Make a **Pilot Presence Check**. If successful, you manage to learn the ways of communicating with the Onisci, and converse with some of their elders. If failed, the elders struggle to understand you, and slowly continue to go about their business.

Climbing to a Viewpoint: The jungle is dense, but you may be able to get a better overview from up high. Make a **Pilot Body Check** to climb up high. If successful, you climb up and witness the ecosystem in its full glory, operating in peace. If failed, you struggle to get high enough to get a full sense of the scale of the Onisci's home.

After a long day exploring, you emerge from underground and head back to civilisation. How do you feel about the Onisci now? Has your opinion on them changed? Will this alter how you approach them in the future?

4. THE BUG HUNT

A group of disgruntled locals and factory workers are planning to go on a bug hunt. They think the only way to stop this is to exterminate the Onisci. Who is the ring leader of this group? Do you agree or disagree? Do you want to help or stop these people?

This group is going to try to fight the Onisci, and you have multiple options for how to handle the situation; how will you proceed?

Join the Hunt: You decide to help the hunters. After a short time exploring the wilds, you come across a group of Onisci Younglings. There is no negotiation: the locals are hungry for revenge. This combat contains 3 Onisci Younglings.

Persuade: Make a Pilot Presence Check. If successful, you convince the group not to go out and hunt the Onisci down. If failed, they will persist and go on with the hunt, with or without you. From here you decide whether you want to join them, defend the Onisci, or not get involved.

Onisci Youngling

Threat Level: **1** | Shielding: **2**

Ranged Weapon:
None

Melee Weapon:
Mandible nibble - Damage 1

Protect the Onisci: There is something more to the Onisci and you believe they don't deserve to be hunted down. If you follow the hunt and decide to protect the Onisci Younglings, you will face 4x Improvised Industrial Units (page 73) in combat. During combat, when it is the enemy's Melee Step, roll a D6. On an odd number, they make an attack on the Onisci. You can choose to take defence rolls on behalf of the Onisci to try to protect them. The Onisci have a group health of 10 in total. On an even result, they attack you.

5. A DYING ECOSYSTEM

A flustered environmental inspector is having a hard time in the settlement. They confide in you that they have been sent to conduct a survey of the new industry's ecological impact on the area. Their efforts, however, have been grounded due to the rampaging Onisci in the area making surveying too dangerous. Can you help them gather the information they need?

- Make a **Mech Reflex Check** to fly over the areas needed and survey them. If successful, you will find that the new factories, in their haste to be built, are outputting runoff into the forests. Strips of once luscious green are now reduced to black and brown mouldering swamps, with no signs of life remaining. If failed, you get lost in the smoke clouds from the factories and gain insufficient data.

FINALE: THE HARMONY OF NATURE

Despite all of the chaos amidst the setup of this new frontier industry, the corporation in charge decides to move forward with expanding. They break ground on a new site, starting to build a new factory, when earthquakes wrack the area. The workers are evacuated just in time as the Onisci emerge from the ground in force, occupying the new factory site. At its centre, a colossal Onisci Queen takes the spotlight, its many eyes watching for any signs of aggression.

The conflict now sits on a knife edge. All-out war with the Onisci could break out at any moment and spell their extinction if something is not done to find peace. The local councils of the surrounding settlements, corporate representatives and Astral Union representatives have all convened to decide the fate of these creatures. From the discussions, 3 outcomes present themselves: Fight, Negotiate or Defend.

Fight: One side believes that the Onisci should be exterminated, their existence proving to be too much of a threat to those who have settled on the planet. If you choose this option, a battle commences in which Mech forces will descend upon the Onisci. This combat will have 1x Onisci Queen, 2x Onisci Spitters, 6x Onisci Younglings. Even if you win, this battle enrages

Onisci Queen

Threat Level: **3** | Shielding: **60**

Ranged Weapon:
Acid webbing - Damage 4

Melee Weapon:
Armoured charge - Damage 8

Mother of the Onisci:
Roll 1D6. On a 6, the Onisci Queen calls another Onisci Spitter into the fight.

the remaining Onisci to a point where the whole planet descends into an eternal conflict between settlers and nature. The Onisci hives are much larger and run much deeper into the planet than anyone ever knew, and they will not be stamped out in the name of 'progress'. **Lose 1 Sync Bond Point permanently.**

Negotiate: The Onisci are angered by pollution and careless destruction of their habitats by the aggressive expansions of the factories on the planet's surface. It will take a difficult **Pilot Presence Check** of 7+ to talk down the assembled groups, but there are actions you may have taken in this Story Circuit that may lower the difficulty of this Check:

Accompanied the mega-entomologist on their expedition: -2 difficulty

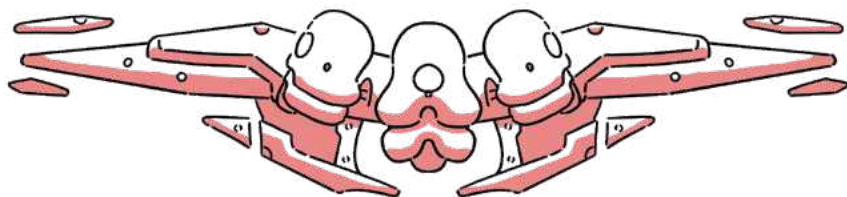
Successfully surveyed the environmental damage: -1 difficulty

Herded the Onisci stampede successfully: -1 difficulty

If successful, the assembly listens and stays their assault on the Onisci. From here, they take action to reduce pollution and find sustainable ways to coexist with the Onisci. Do you take part in this environmental reform? Do you try to communicate with the Onisci? What does this planet look like after the settlers begin to make changes?

If failed, the fight will continue and the assembly will launch an assault on the Onisci that will obliterate them from the planet's surface. What do you do in response? Do you try to help the Onisci?

Defend: Landing by the Onisci, you convince them to retreat, this being a fight they cannot win. You can stand in the way of the attackers and buy enough time for the Onisci to retreat. Make a **Mech Brawn Check**. If successful, you take **15 Mech Shielding damage**. If you fail, you will take **30 Mech Shielding damage**. Either way, you will buy enough time for the Onisci to escape. The Onisci return underground and are safe from harm, but the ecosystem on the planet's surface begins to wither without their support, leaving the industries flailing with a lack of resources.



4 WILD ROBOTS

Rumours swirl around this settlement like a disquieting wind, leaving its inhabitants tense and filled with fear. The surrounding wilderness has recently seen locals go missing. No bodies have been found, and there were no motives for the disappearances; the only thing all have in common is they left the bounds of the settlement and were last seen heading into the wilderness. Nothing like this has happened here until now; no natural predators exist on the planet, so the locals have had nothing to be scared of. Now, there have been sightings: giant animals with glowing eyes, stalking the night, keeping to the shadows. Can you find out what is preying upon these townsfolk before more go missing?

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 – Settlement Strike
- 2 – Corporation Clues
- 3 – The Pack Mentality
- 4 – Taming the Beast
- 5 – Alpha
- 6 – Pick Any Event

1. SETTLEMENT STRIKE

Night falls over the settlement and the inhabitants settle down for a quiet night. The still evening air is disturbed by an ear-piercing scream that draws you outside. You find a local scrabbling on the ground, trying to crawl away from 3 Mega Fauna – wait, or are they Mechs? They seem to be a strange fusion between the two. Their attention snaps to you and your Mech – looks like they are focused on some bigger prey now.

These terrifying fusions of machine and Mega Fauna are not easily intimidated, and it will take a 6+ **Mech Brawn Check** in order to get them to flee. If you don't succeed in intimidating them, a combat will begin with 1x Snapperjaw+ and 2x Roc-

Snapperjaw+

A fusion between the giant Snapperjaw (a turtle-like beast with a thick shell and immensely powerful jaws) and Mech tank.

Threat Level: **2** | Shielding: **40**

Ranged Weapon:

None

Melee Weapon:

Pneumatic jaws - Damage 8

Reinforced Shell:

Reduces all incoming damage by 1 to a minimum of 1.

Roc-09

A once beautiful avian Mega Fauna, the Rocoan, has now been corrupted and fused with technology to turn it into a biological jet-fighter.

Threat Level: **2** | Shielding: **18**

Ranged Weapon:

None

Melee Weapon:

Divebomb - Damage 8

2. CORPORATION CLUES

Something within this community is not what it seems. These attacks have started in the past couple of months, so what triggered them? You decide to start doing some digging.

Make a **Pilot Presence Check**. If successful, you get some of the locals talking and make them at ease with you. They reveal that in the past couple of months a major corporation, Dragnoss Industries, bought up a bunch of land from the local council. It was great news: a boost to the settlement's war chest and it allowed needed infrastructure improvements to start. Then the disappearances started. The locals asked Dragnoss to help, but they refused to utilise any resources to aid in finding the lost or providing defence for the town.

If you fail your **Pilot Presence Check**, you will still receive the same information, but will draw the attention of Dragnoss Industries. They send some goons to rough up your Pilot. Your next **Pilot Body Check** must be made at -1 as a result of your injuries.

How do you feel about your discoveries? What suspicions do you have? What leads may you follow up on?



3. THE PACK MENTALITY

Following the trail of the missing, you find yourself outside a cave mouth. Shining a light inside, you find the remains of some of the missing. Before you can investigate more, you hear a distorted growl behind you. You find a pack of Mechanically altered Lycanos (a wolf-like Mega Fauna) closing in on you. They set a trap and you fell right into it.

These terrifying fusions of machine and Mega Fauna are not easily intimidated, and it will take a 6+ **Mech Brawn Check** in order to get them to flee. If you don't succeed in intimidating them, a combat will begin with 3x Lycanos-X2.

Lycanos-X2

An experiment created by Dragnoss Industries in an attempt to fuse a Lycanos with a war machine to create a Mech-scaled guard dog.

Threat Level: **2** | Mech Shielding: **36**

Ranged Weapon:

Sonic howl - Damage 4

Melee Weapon:

Lycan claws - Damage 6



4. TAMING THE BEAST

Giant paw prints have appeared near a farm just outside the settlement, and the locals have asked you to investigate them. Following their trail, you come across a Mechanically altered Lycanos, a wolf-like Mega Fauna, in distress. Its whines of fear and upset seem to be caused by a sparking, damaged relay attached behind one of its ears. It notices you and cowers. Will you help it?

It will take a successful **Pilot Presence Check** and **Mech Reflex Check** to calm the Mechanical beast, and carefully remove the faulty relay. If you succeed in both Checks, the Lycanos will relax and lick your Mech affectionately. Make sure to make a note that you've made a new friend here. How do you respond to his change in demeanour? Do you pet and play with the Mechanical Lycanos?

If failed, the Mechanical Lycanos will panic in fear and flee into the wilds. You lose its trail completely.

5. ALPHA

A roar reverberates around the wilderness. Red eyes glow in the dark and surround you on all sides as heavy feet pad through the night towards you. Emerging from the undergrowth is another Mechanically altered Mega Fauna, a Silver Gorang. It rears up to its full height and pounds its chest with its muscular arms and wrecking-ball fists. It has issued a challenge.

Facing off against this Mechanical creature, you realise you are facing the Alpha – no others are going to interfere with this challenge. To win out, you have 2 options.

Intimidate: To make a show of strength and intimidate the Alpha into backing off, you will need to make **Mech Brawn Check**. If successful, it will reluctantly retreat, establishing you as the top of the food chain. If failed, it will attack your Mech, and you must move on to the Fight option below.

Fight: Accept the challenge and get ready to brawl. This combat will be with 1x Si-Gorang-T450. If you win, the Alpha retreats to lick its wounds and the other Mechanical creatures respect you. Gain +2 to all **Mech Brawn** and **Pilot Presence Checks** when dealing with these Mechanical creatures. If you are defeated, **lose 1 Sync Bond Point**.

Si-Gorang-T450

A long-armed hairy mega-primate, this intelligent and gentle creature has been bio-Mechanically fused with weaponry to make it into a force to be reckoned with.

Threat Level: **2** | Shielding: **48**

Ranged Weapon:

Debris hurl - Damage 2

Melee Weapon:

Gorang grappleslam - Damage 8

FINALE: UNLOCKING THE CAGES

You find the source of these Mechanical creatures at last: a Dragnoss Industries facility, hidden away in the northern territories. Sneaking your way inside, you find they have been experimenting on Mega Fauna, fusing their bodies with Mechanical parts, and broadcasting a signal which has been driving them wild, making them exhibit highly aggressive behaviour. They need shutting down.

You are going to be facing off against some Dragnoss security forces, but before that happens you have some choices to make. There are a handful of Mega Fauna experiments still left in cages, being driven wild by the transmitter. If you wish, you

can make a series of Checks to break them free, and potentially have them fight alongside you. If you fail any of these Checks, you can reattempt at the cost of **5 Mech Shielding** as you start to come under fire from the Dragnoss Security forces.

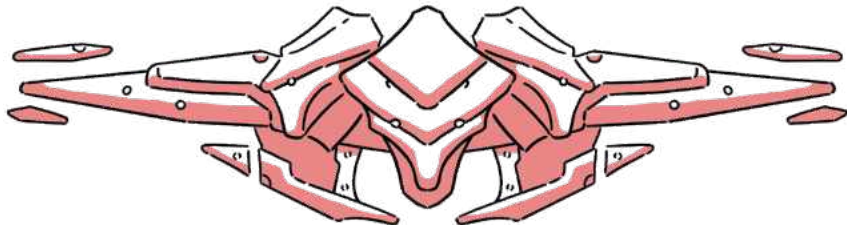
Finding the Transmitter: Flying through the facility, you move at speed trying to find the transmitter driving the Mega Fauna wild. Make **Mech Reflex Check**. If successful, you manage to find the transmitter and destroy it, calming the Mega Fauna down. If failed, the Mega Fauna will still be affected by the transmitter.

Destroying the Cages: The Mega Fauna are trapped in cramped cages. Make a **Mech Brawn Check** to break them open. If successful, you break into them and set the animals free. If failed, you struggle to get through the thick metal and do not open the cages.

Soothe the Mega Fauna: The creatures are free but are nervous of you. Make a **Pilot Presence Check**. If successful, they calm in your presence and will fight alongside you. If failed, they will flee the facility and retreat into the wilds.

The Dragnoss Security forces descend upon you as you go about shutting this illegal facility down. This triggers a Combat Encounter with 1x Garran Agos (page 74), 2x Zenef Enforcers (page 74), and 1x Heriot Sceptre (page 75). If you have rescued the Mega Fauna and they are fighting alongside you, all enemy Mechs will take **14 Mech Shielding damage** before combat begins, and **in the Melee Step you may roll 3 additional Attacks that will deal 5 damage each** to represent the Mega Fauna's contribution to the fight.

After the facility has been destroyed and reported, how do the remaining Mechanically fused Mega Fauna integrate into the planet they are on? Are they more accepted by the locals now their nature is more peaceful? Is there any retaliation from Dragnoss Industries for the destruction of their research enclave? What interactions do you have with the Mega Fauna before you leave this planet?



5 CONTESTED TERRITORY

This Settlement was once a battleground during the Emergence War, fought for and protected by different battalions over the many years of fighting. Now, two corporations, Noth Logistik and Vultun Holdings, have ignited a new conflict with the settlement at its centre. Territories have been purchased, the dividing lines landing straight down the middle. Both sides want control of the settlement, the infrastructure and amenities being invaluable to their operations. The corporations are battling it out to see who wins ownership whilst the settlers are stuck in the middle, unsure of how their land has been bought out from underneath them. Can

you get these two sides to reconcile and leave the settlement in peace and not pieces?

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 - **Contested Battleground**
- 2 - **Collateral Damage**
- 3 - **Town Tensions**
- 4 - **Two Sides, Same Coin**
- 5 - **A Parley**
- 6 - **Pick Any Event**

1. CONTESTED BATTLEGROUND

Streets have been abandoned as Mechs from both corporations battle it out to hold territory. Can you intervene and stop this border skirmish to allow locals to return home in safety?

This area of the settlement is currently an open warzone, but you can change that. There are 2 ways you can approach this situation:

Negotiate: Getting these corporate soldiers to cease fire is a tough challenge. They are paid to fight, and may face heavy repercussions from their employer for stopping the fight. Roll 2 **Pilot Presence Checks** of 5+ to convince both sides to stand down. For each success, one side will retreat. If you fail, that corporation will remain and their fireteams will attack you. What do you say to them to stop the fighting from continuing?

Fight: If you Disable all the Mechs on the battlefield, the fighting will stop. This is a fight on 3 fronts, however: you are facing 2 corporations, after all. Roll on the Enemy Mech tables on page 72 to determine what each corporate fireteam is composed of. The combat is split into 2 groups here: Noth Logistik's forces and Vultun Holdings'. During combat, at the start of each combat round roll a D6 for each group. On an even number they attack their opposing corporation. On an odd number, they attack you. Enemy Mechs attacked by their rival corporation sustain **D6+2 Mech Shielding damage** per turn. If one corporation has been defeated or retreated, the remaining one will attack you.

2. COLLATERAL DAMAGE

The corporations have launched missile attacks, but both have strays that miss their mark, damaging peaceful areas of the settlement. Fires burn and buildings crumble. Can you rescue the civilians from the area and deflect any other incoming attacks?

Make 2 **Mech Brawn Checks** to try to rescue as many locals as you can. For each success, you save a group of civilians. For each failure, **an additional amenity of the settlement is destroyed**.

Another rogue missile is making its way towards civilians. Make a **Mech Reflex Check** to grab the missile and redirect it. If successful, you hurl it back towards the attackers. If failed, the missile bears down on the civilians. You can choose to take **7 damage**, or, let the missile pass, which will lead to more civilian casualties.

The barrage of missiles finally ends. How do you feel after defending the settlement? How many civilians did you manage to save?

3. TOWN TENSIONS

Sides have begun to emerge in the town as to how to handle the situation. Some believe strongly they should sell out to one of the corporations and move on: if one side has definitive ownership, all this fighting should end. Others want to hold their ground – this is their home and it will not be bought out from underneath them. As protests and marches begin, these 3 sides threaten to clash with one another, tearing the community apart. Can you help them find common ground?

You can attempt to calm the crowds and keep the protests peaceful. Make a **Pilot Presence Check**. If successful, the opposing protests and marches remain civil. If failed, fighting breaks out and the discourse descends into chaos.

Did you manage to keep things peaceful? How do you feel about the protests and the corporations' presence there?

4. TWO SIDES, SAME COIN

The settlement is to hear from both corporations as to what their intentions are for the area to try to come to a decision that may end the conflict. Time to hear them out.

Both the corporations will outline what they want to do with the territory and what the future of the Settlement will look like.

Noth Logistik: They are surprisingly open about their intentions. Noth Logistik is all about their portfolio, and they feel this settlement – alongside the surrounding territories they have purchased – has future potential as an investment. They are happy to sit on their investment and leave the settlement in peace, the inhabitants' lives barely changing. For now.

Vultun Holdings: This proposal is full of promises of improved infrastructure. Vultun is all about entertainment and communications, so that's what they are promising: funds for new amenities (such as a Vultun Multiplex), better reception, more entertainment channels than you can shake a stick at. There'll need to be changes of course – relay towers, wires laid, landscapes shifted – but it's all in the name of making this settlement better to live in. They'll throw a free lifetime subscription to Vultun+ for every citizen too.

What do you make of their plans? Which one would you choose if you had to? Would the community benefit in any way from their involvement?

5. A PARLEY

A sit-down has been arranged for both corporations and the settlement. Both corporations send representatives with a begrudging reluctance. Can you help them find a way to peace?

Make a difficult **Pilot Presence Check** of 5+. If successful, you manage to make some headway and gain a good reputation with all parties as an impartial negotiator. If failed, nobody leaves this meeting happy – they are even a little more sour than before. How do you feel the meeting went? How did both corporations handle negotiations?

FINALE: THE DIVIDING LINES

After many days of fighting and destruction, the moment has come – a decision is finally going to be made about the fate of the town. What will become of this place?

Although you may have made some progress, the situation still sits at a stalemate, the settlement suffering for it. You need to do something to help break the cycle that has grown here. Who do you decide to support to end the stalemate?

Independence: Enough is enough. The corporations have no claim to this Settlement and need to know they will make losses if they keep treating people's homes as a tug of war. You decide to fight back against both corporations and push them out of the territory.

This combat will see you face both corporations at the same time and will be very deadly. If you were successful in fighting the corpo Mechs (Contested Battleground) saving civilians (Collateral Damage), made an impact in peace talks (Parley), or soothed the crowds at the protests (Town Tensions), then the locals will trust you and provide support. For each rallying action you were successful in taking, you will gain **an extra Melee attack in the Melee Step that will deal 6 damage**, representing a Mech from the settlement joining the fight.

You will be up against fierce opposition from both sides. Noth Logistik will deploy 2x Enkhost Grenadiers (page 74) and 1x Heriot Shieldbreaker (page 75). Vultun Holdings will Deploy 1x Enkost Sharpshooter (page 75), 1x Garran Agos (page 74) and 3x Zenef Troopers (page 73).

Noth Logistik: If you favour this corporation, you will not have to fight their forces, only Vultun Holdings who will deploy 1 Enkhost Sharpshooter (page 75), 1 Garran Agos (page 74) and 3 Zenef Troopers (page 73). You will gain **1 extra Ranged Attack in the Melee Step which deals 5 damage**.

Vultun Holdings: If you favour this corporation, you will not have to fight their forces, only Noth Logistik who will deploy 2 Enkhost Grenadiers (page 74) and 1 Heriot Shieldbreaker (page 75). You will gain **1 extra Ranged attack in the Ranged Step which deals 5 damage**.

If you win the battle, who now reigns over this settlement? What does its future look like? Do the corporations retreat quietly, or do they promise retribution?

6 THE MINERS' BANE

Even with the war ended, the Astral Union is a resource-hungry civilisation. As new settlements grow and collaboration increases, the need for new infrastructure swells and, with it, resources. This is why mining frontier outposts are so vital to keeping the AU moving, especially when it comes to fuel. Outpost Zevron 4 has been a powerhouse of production. Independently owned by a town cooperative, they have resisted corporate control whilst providing the most reliable fuel supply for travel in the surrounding 3 systems. However, the mine and town have come under threat. A subterranean creature – a Nephilim Burrower, is sinking buildings, causing cave-ins, and threatening to kill the

town and destroy everyone's livelihoods. The corporate vultures are circling, but can you save this town and stop the destruction before it is too late?

Complete at least 3 of the following events before continuing on to this Story Circuit's Finale:

- 1 – The Cave-In
- 2 – Corporate Stooges
- 3 – Corporate Ambush
- 4 – The Underground Trail
- 5 – The Miner's Mourn
- 6 – Pick Any Event

1. THE CAVE-IN

An unusual tremor rocks one of the main mining tunnels and causes a disastrous cave-in, trapping many miners deep underground. Can you dig them out in time to save them?

Make 3 **Mech Reflex** or **Brawn Checks**. For each success, you manage to rescue 1 team of miners. For each failure, 1 mining team will run out of time. If you want to reattempt a failed Check, it will cost you **8 Mech Shielding** as you become damaged by the debris during the rescue.

If you manage to save at least 1 mining team, they will report that the tremor was no ordinary one: it was caused by something moving through the soil – something very large. How do they describe it? Do you believe their tales?

2. CORPORATE STOOGES

Two Gramyll-Keeler representatives arrive to hold a meeting with all mining teams. They are pushing for a buy-out of the mine. It's dangerous and they have the resources to mine it remotely, without endangering life, they argue. This may seem like a kindly offer, but the glint of greed behind their eyes is unmistakable. There's something down there that the company wants, but it refuses to show its hand. How do you respond to this pressure from the corporation?

Make a **Pilot Presence Check** to stand up for the miners in this meeting and make sure they are not pressured into sealing their livelihoods away. If successful, the corporate stooges will back off as the miners begin to get riled up, but they will have noticed you as a troublemaker, which may have repercussions later. If failed, you are hushed by the miners who fear if they make the corporation mad the offer may disappear – it's something they feel they need to consider if they can't find the source of the mine's newfound instability.

How do these Gramyll-Keeler representatives handle themselves? What do they look and sound like? How do you argue against them? Are you successful?

3. CORPORATE AMBUSH

Your interference at the mining site hasn't gone unnoticed. When alone in a quiet tunnel, you find yourself surrounded by a group of burly Mechs with a message: don't be messing with Gramyll-Keeler's bottom line.

Getting these corpo bully-boys to stand down is difficult. They are paid to rough you up, and don't want to anger their employer. Roll a **Pilot Presence Check** of 6+ to convince them you will listen and there's no need to fight. If successful, they'll back off, believing they've intimidated you enough. If failed, a combat will start with 2x Arnak Grapplers (page 72).

Do you win the fight? If so, what message do you give the roughed-up Mechs to take back to Gramyll-Keeler?

4. THE UNDERGROUND TRAIL

Exploring the mine, you find a large tunnel that does not look like it has been made by any Mech or digging tool. Following this mysterious trail, you make some unusual discoveries.

Natural Digger: Whatever this thing is, it can dig through near-solid rock at speed and must be immensely powerful.

Colossal Size: You are dwarfed by the size of this tunnel; whatever created it must be much larger than your Mech by some margin.

Ion Core Feeder: You find a pile of discarded mining Mechs, their chassis' chewed upon and Ion Cores ripped out. What could it possibly want with the Ion Cores?

5. THE MINERS MOURN

The work day is over as the whistle rings out across the mining site. Workers tiredly trudge out of the underground, clean themselves up, put on formal clothes and march to a candlelit vigil not far from the entrance to the mine. It is here that they honour their lost comrades, those who lost their lives to the mine.

This is a quiet and sombre moment, not meant for your intrusion. What do you think about as you watch the miners mourn in their traditional way? Is there someone you have lost that comes to mind in this moment?

FINALE: THE HIDING NEPHILIM

Following the pattern of tremors and mysterious tunnels, you finally come across the culprit of all this ruin: a burrowing Nephilim. It has survived the Emergence War by hiding underground, and grown large by hunting miners, consuming their Mechs' Ion Cores. It's time to slay this monster and free the miners from its terror once and for all.

The Nephilim are a highly destructive force. They cannot be reasoned or bartered with – all they know is to feed. You cannot flee this combat or end it peacefully. This combat is with 1x Nephilim Burrower (see next page).

Nephilim Burrower

A subterranean monster that moves through rock as if it were butter. During the war, these variants dug underneath battlefields, creating traps and deadly ambushes.

Threat Level: **3** | Bio-Mech Shielding: **38**

Ranged Weapon:

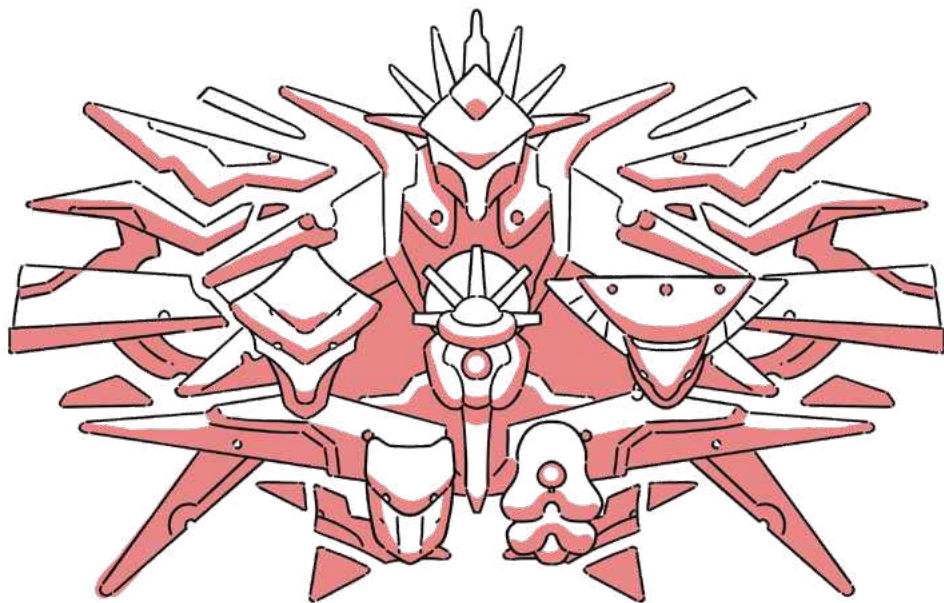
Psionic roar - Damage 6

Melee Weapon:

Digging claws - Damage 6



Once the Nephilim has been defeated, how do the miners celebrate? Are Gramyll-Keeler still sniffing around the mining site? What do you do with the Nephilim's body?



GLOSSARY

AU/Astral Union – The setting of ION Heart. A massive interstellar federation of different cultures.

Auxiliary Systems – System installed on your Mech giving bonuses or new abilities.

Checks – Rolls made when your character attempts to do something difficult or dangerous. Made by rolling a D6 and usually successful on a 4+.

Combat: Attacks – Your Mech has a number of attacks that you split between Ranged and Melee Steps at your own discretion. Attacks will usually hit an enemy on a 4+.

Combat: Engagement – If the player is in Engagement Range they are assumed to be locked in hand-to-hand combat with enemies. You only make attack and defence rolls in the Melee Step of combat while in Engagement Range. You may leave engagement by Disengage.

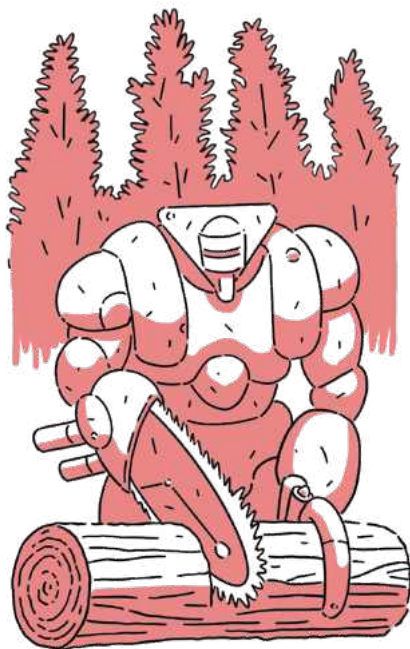
Combat: Defending – Rolls of a D6 that prevent your Mech from taking damage in the Ranged or a Melee Step. Usually successful on a roll of 4+.

Combat: Disengage – A 5+ Mech Reflex Check that can be rolled at the end of each Combat Round to either leave combat or begin the next round in the Ranged Step.

Combat: Initiative – Which side in a combat attacks first in each round of combat. Determined by a Mech Reflex Check.

Combat: Rounds – Combat is broken up into rounds that include different Steps in a set order each time. Rounds continue until the combat ends.

Combat: Steps – Each combat round is composed of different Steps that take place in the following order: 1 - Ranged Step, 2 - Melee Step, 3 - Disengage Step.



Combat: Threat Level – How dangerous an enemy is. The enemy's Threat Level also dictates how many attacks they make in each Step of combat.

D6 – A 6-sided dice used to play ION Heart.

Disabled – A Mech that has lost all of its Mech Shielding and can no longer partake in combat.

Encounters – Events that occur while travelling between locations. Randomised on the Encounter tables, ranging from Peaceful to Dangerous.

Heroic Push – An ability that allows a Pilot to instantly pass a Pilot Presence or Pilot Body Check. Uses 1 Sync Bond Point.

Ion Core Abilities – Special abilities used when Pilots and Mechs work together. Can be used a number of times a day equivalent to the Sync Bond Points.

Levels – Progress markers that increase as your characters progress through their story. New levels bring new abilities and stat increases.

Mech – A giant Piloted robot, used frequently in the Astral Union. One of the characters you control in ION Heart.

Mech Brawn Check – A test of your Mech's strength or toughness. Made by rolling a D6 and usually successful on a 4+. Modifiers to this are acquired at character creation or through levelling up.

Mech Reflex Check – A test of your Mech's dexterity or swiftness. Made by rolling a D6 and usually successful on a 4+. Modifiers to this are acquired at character creation or through levelling up.

Mech Shielding – The amount of armour a Mech has remaining before they are Disabled.

Mech Specialisation – Your Mech's adaptations to allow it to do a specific job, such as construction or transportation. If your Mech and Pilot spend time partaking in a Specialisation together (i.e gathering and chopping wood as a Harvester Mech) you gain one Temporary Sync Bond Points.

Nephilim – A hyper-aggressive biomechanical enemy from outside of known space.

Pilot – A citizen of the Astral Union who directs a Mech. One of the Characters you control in ION Heart.

Pilot Body Check – A test of your Pilot's physical skill, toughness and resilience. Made by rolling a D6 and usually successful on a 4+. Modifiers to this are acquired at character creation or through levelling up.

Pilot Presence Check – A test of your Pilot's physical skill, toughness and resilience. Made by rolling a D6 and usually successful on a 4+. Modifiers to this are acquired at character creation or through levelling up.

Settlements – Communities dotted throughout the AU where Pilots and Mechs can rest, relax and begin new Story Circuits in. These are randomly generated and vary in size and scale, containing various amenities your characters can use.

Settlement Amenities – Special buildings and services found in settlements. The number of amenities depends on the size of the settlement. Characters can engage with up to 2 amenities per day.

Story Circuit – Self-contained adventures made up of several individual missions, called Nodes. These are categorised as Peaceful, Protective and Dangerous and can be started by travelling to a new settlement and visiting the Settlement Hall amenity.

Story Circuit Nodes – Missions that make up a Story Circuit. These can be played in a random order or as presented in the book. Players must complete at least 3 in every Story Circuit to move on to the Circuit's Finale and the resolution to that particular story.

Sync Bond – The link between your Pilot and Mech; the greater the number of Sync Bond Points, the better the connection. Use these to utilise Ion Core abilities. Sync Bond Points are split between Permanent (which replenish at the end of every day) and Temporary (which are lost after they are used).

