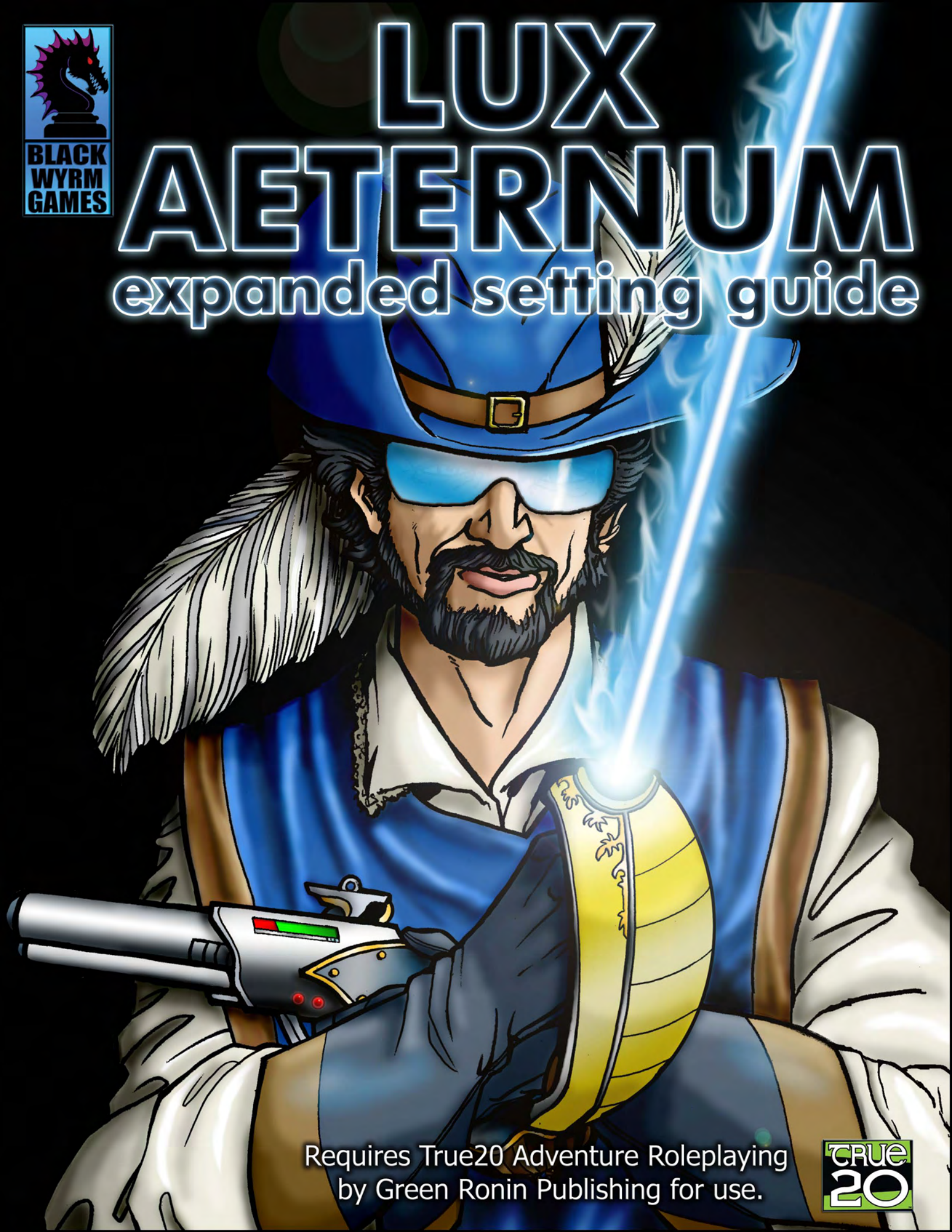




LUX AETERNUM

expanded setting guide



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LUX AETERNUM

expanded setting guide

Designed and written by Ryan Wolfe, Additional writing by Dave Mattingly
Edited by Dave Mattingly, Augmentation Options by Aaron Sullivan
Art by Derrick Thomas, Ryan Wolfe, Eric Rademaker, and Mike Vilardi

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For king, country, or corporation, heroes take up their sword and pistol and set sail into the void. The terraformed planets of the home system offer adventure and political intrigue aplenty, while the New Worlds hold fame and fortune for those bold enough to lay claim. Whether you are a treasure hunter exploring ancient ruins, a swashbuckling starship captain fighting pirates in the cold depths of space, or an alien mystic seeking to become one with the Light Eternal, your destiny will be forged in this crucible far from home.

Introduction

Lux Aeternum is a cinematic science fiction setting that strives to evoke the romanticized spirit of the 17th Century Age of Exploration – a time of sweeping changes, social upheaval, and limitless opportunity. Action, drama, and grand adventure are key elements to any grand tale to be told in this setting. The absence of faster-than-light travel limits the playing field to a handful of star systems and allows this finite area to be fleshed out with a level of detail and complexity not possible in a galaxy-spanning saga.

The story begins a couple hundred years from now in a small area of space known as Nexus Sector. Here, humankind has been given a second chance – an opportunity to dwell in peace side by side with advanced alien cultures. But things have gone astray... and the dream is fading. This new Eden has become a crucible in which the mettle of these chosen races shall be sorely tested.

Diversity is another vital element in this setting. Levels of technology and sophistication can vary drastically across the face of a single continent, let alone planet. Swords are as common as guns, and starship combat is more often resolved with boarding parties than impersonal shootouts. There are vastly different alien cultures, brought here over the course of centuries, and each has their own vision of the future. Yet the most heated cultural strife is not between different alien species, but between disparate factions of a single race.

Science struggles with religion to define the seemingly mystical powers that can be called upon in this new and wondrous environment. Pre-Victorian humans, established here centuries ago and flourishing, clash with refugees from the war-torn, cyber-dystopia of 23rd Century Earth. Sentient androids struggle to become more than synthetic slaves. Nations posture and prepare to go to war over the resource-laden worlds of a new star system. And beyond the edge of civilized space, a darkness gathers – a vast but unknown power with evil intent.

About This Book

This document is an extended edition of what appears in the *Lux Aeternum* chapter of the *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* book. It is “rules-light” – emphasizing the flavor and story of the setting while relying on the core rule book for mechanics. This document also focuses on the cultures and locations of Nexus Sector, leaving other aspects (creatures, NPCs, expanded equipment and *Ars Lumina*, etc.) for future supplements and the Narrator’s own imagination.

History

The Story Thus Far

By the 23rd Century, Earth had become a cesspool of pollution and nuclear ruin. While the remaining nations and megacorporations fought over the scraps of “Terra Mortis,” humanity clawed its way across the Solar System in search of territory, resources, and any advantage it could find.

Onto this stage of violence and despair came the Xyr – an ancient alien race who promised to deliver humankind from the brink of extinction. Those who would set aside their hatreds, fears, and technologies of death were invited to join in a grand experiment – to join with other intelligent species and humans who had gone ahead centuries before. Together an alliance would be forged – a union of civilizations from scattered planets – a fraternity of species that would one day inherit the galaxy.

To carry humankind to this new Eden the Xyr brought forth a massive interstellar vessel. The seventh of its kind, this ark took aboard a select million who yearned to abandon the cinders of Terra Mortis and take the decade-long journey towards humanity’s second chance.

But midway between the old home of humanity and the new, something went terribly wrong and the Xyr disappeared from the ark. What exactly happened is a matter of speculation and heated debate. Many claim that some human faction smuggled weapons aboard Ark VII and tried to take control; some suspect that a dark elder race, a rival of the Xyr, may have attacked. Still others are convinced that it is all part of the aliens’ grand scheme to test the mettle of their Chosen. Whatever the reason – the inhabitants of the ark were left to fend for themselves, eventually arriving in Nexus Sector (their new home) without guidance, assistance, or supervision

Three decades have passed and the Xyr have not returned, though many of their automated guardians still go about their appointed duties. Several factions from Earth survived the crossing intact, and have taken root in Nexus Sector – working alongside those who have dwelt here for centuries, both alien and human.

Kingdoms and corporations work to establish their own visions of a perfect society, and the Terra Novan Theocracy has become strong – delving deep into the seemingly-mystical abilities revealed in this new environment. Though some hold to the precepts of peace that were so strongly put forth by the ancient alien race, just as many have broken their vows and fallen back into the habits of avarice and aggressive expansion.

Now conflict is brewing among nations both old and new. Centuries of peace crumble before the inevitability of war. A new trove of uncharted worlds has been discovered around a star at the edge of the Nexus Sector. These worlds are seemingly pristine and home to vast natural resources – resources desperately needed by the home systems if they are to survive the coming conflicts. But voyages to the New Worlds are long and perilous, and dark things lurk at the edge of space – unnamed horrors just realizing that the Xyr no longer protect Nexus Sector or its children.

A “union of civilizations” seems a long way off, but the dream is not yet wholly forgotten. Many opportunities, and many dangers, lie ahead. It will take brave heroes, intrepid explorers, and steadfast leaders to make the dream a reality.



Cultures

There are many different alien races scattered across Nexus Sector. Even though each has several varied and distinct cultures, they are grouped by race for description here.

The Chosen

“The Chosen” is a term used to refer to the Draugmorre, Humans, Kyryk, and V’la as a whole. These races were selected by the Xyr to begin anew in Nexus Sector. There is evidence of other races that were chosen long ago – who came here, dwelt for centuries, and then died out or somehow moved on. The term is not usually used to refer to these precursors, nor does it encompass the E’lanari (who are assumed to be natives). While Synthetics are sometimes lumped in as part of “Humanity,” they are not technically a Chosen race.

The Chosen races are species that were selected by the Xyr to come to Nexus Sector and inhabit the worlds prepared millennia before. Over the centuries, the Xyr have sought out many young civilizations and brought groups here to settle and live in peace. Exactly what happened to these precursors is a mystery, but currently there are four chosen races inhabiting Nexus Sector:

- **Humans** have been brought here at least twice before. Pre-Aztec ruins are all that remain of the first wave. The second group, known as the Founders, is still present and flourishing. The most recent immigrants are the Newcomers – the refugees from 2200 AD. Unique among the races present, humankind also has created synthetic beings, sentient androids who are used as soldiers and slaves.
- The **Draugmorre**, or dragon-men, are winged reptilian humanoids. One brood studies technology while the other delves into the mysteries of the Eternal Song (their version of the Lux Aeternum).
- The **Kyryk**, small and industrious for the first several decades of life, these shelled humanoids later transform into larger, armored warriors with an instinctive drive to protect the clan and destroy its enemies.

- And lastly the enigmatic **V’la** – jellyfish-like invertebrates who can travel on land by commandeering a bipedal host.

There are two major divisions of Draugmorre – those devoted to mysticism (the Brood of Song) and those devoted to science (the Brood of Steel). Humans likewise fall into two very distinct camps – the Founders who were brought from 17th Century Earth and the Newcomers arriving from the ruins of Terra Mortis (Earth 2200 AD).

A Kyryk is born as a small industrious humanoid and later transforms into a large and aggressive defender – “an armadillo that becomes a rhino” is a common human comparison. The V’la are constant in their appearance and have no dramatic divisions within their culture.

Relations

The following are some generalizations about how the Chosen races relate to one another. Individuals vary greatly, so these notes are more to set the background tone of the relations rather than guide how a specific person is supposed to interact.

Founders get on well enough with all of the other Chosen races, though with a bit of an isolationist approach. Much like the renaissance Europe considered the orient, Unity System (which is the home of the Tetrarchy – a coalition of Chosen planets) is looked upon as a source of trade and knowledge, but there is no desire to import the culture or peoples of that area. “Alien” travelers and tourists are welcome in Chrysalis System (home of the Terra Novan Theocracy), but – if the Founders have anything to say – it will always remain firmly under human control.

It is ironic that the group with which Founders get along most poorly are the Newcomers – who are themselves human. Earth and its cultures have changed drastically since the Founders left and so it is very difficult for either group to mesh with the other. There are certainly exceptions, but the rule is that the two groups have a great deal of trouble interacting with, or even understanding the motives of, the other. Synthetics are a particular conundrum, seen as everything from curious constructs to unholy abominations.

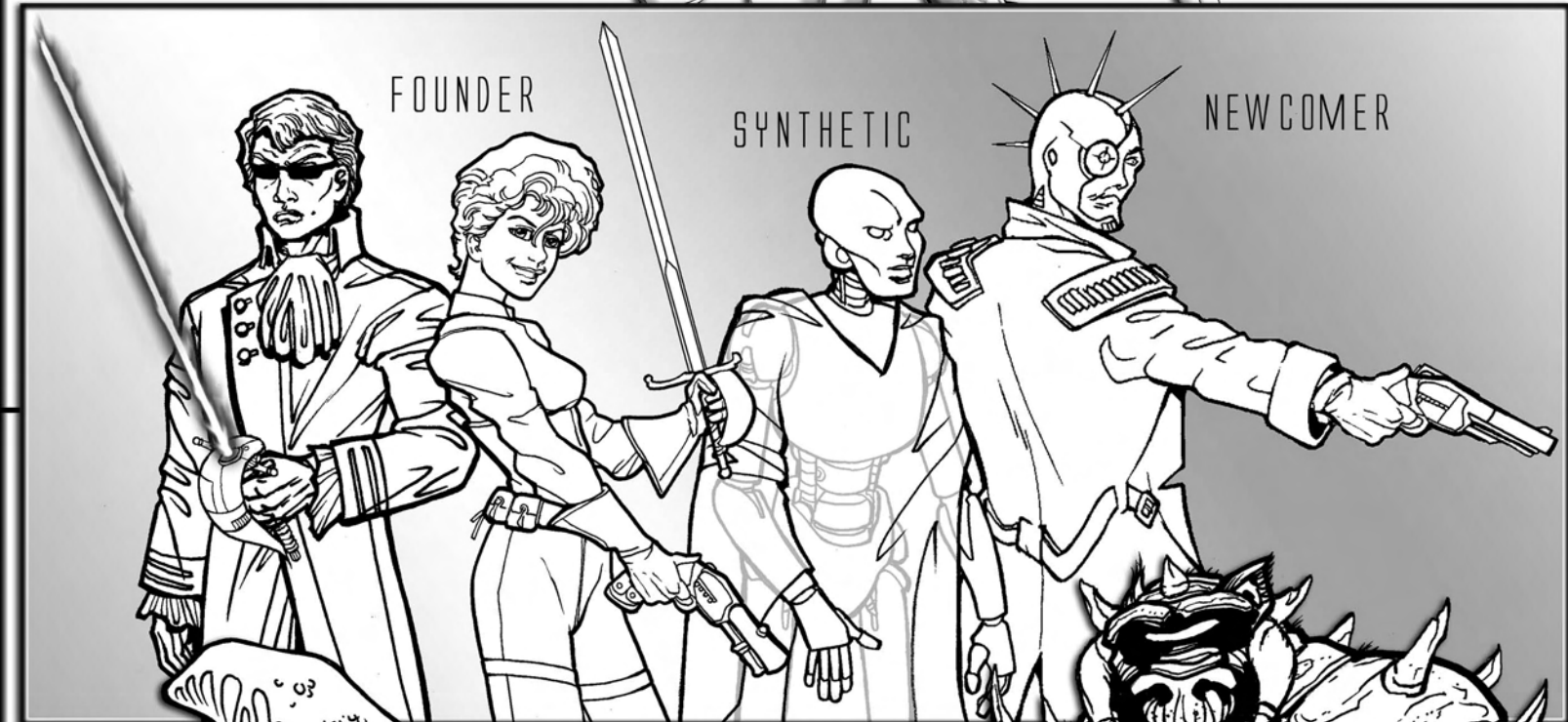
DRAUGMORRE



FOUNDER

SYNTHETIC

NEWCOMER



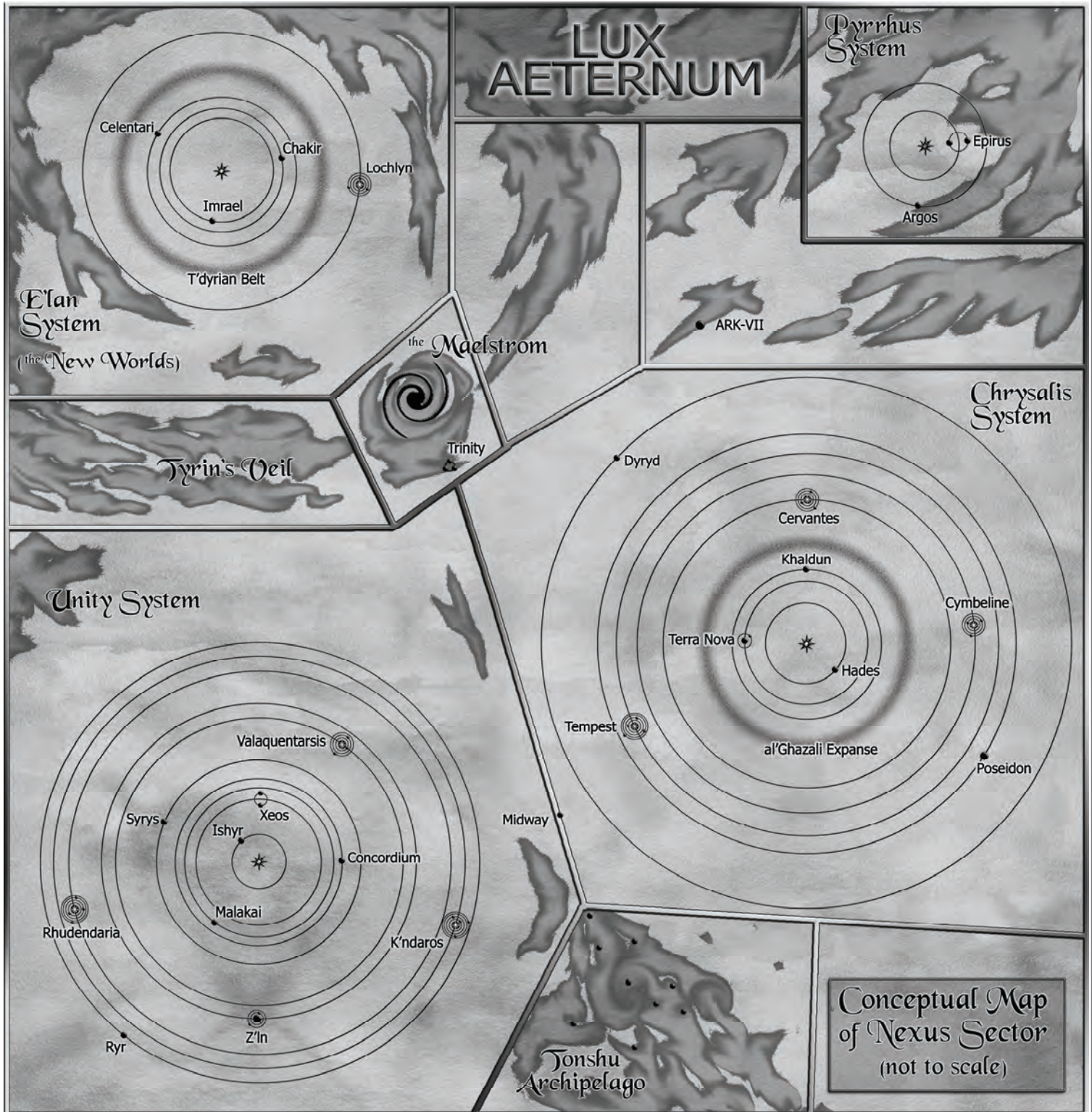
KYRYK



V'LA



Sector Map



Vhal Zeron

FACTION	Brood of Song under the Tetrarchy		
CAPITAL	Broodholm of Vhal		
SURFACE	Jungle and forest		
POP	Heavy (90 – 6 – 4 – 0)		
GRAV	Light	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	27 days

This is the oldest capital of the Draugmorrian brood – the place where the first dragonmen were settled in Nexus Sector. Ancient cities drift over deep jungles and primordial forests crisscrossed by wide rivers. The webbing of warm seas is shallow but gives rise to some impressive waves in the light gravity.

The capital city, largest of the floating citadels, is the Broodholm of Vhal. This burg of gleaming metal has towering ornate spires on the upper surface and beautifully wrought carvings and runic script covering most visible surfaces.

The world does not naturally form these floating burs (as on the Draugmorrian homeworld) but the most powerful elementalists use their arts to craft molten steel which, when cooled, can be held aloft using subtle magics and the gravitic grid webbing the mantle of Vhal Zeron. Given the scarcity of such resources, a citadel of steel is a mark of prestige unmatched in Draugmorrian culture.

Long ago the Xyr adjusted the gravity of this moon to about half Earth normal, which matches the Draugmorrian homeworld and allows the inhabitants to fly unassisted. Those who dwell long on Vhal Zeron may find the ‘normal’ gravity found on most other worlds in the sector uncomfortable.



SEAL OF THE BROOD OF SONG AND
THE TWELVE LESSER BROODS OF VHAL ZERON

This world has long been in the grip of the Brood of Song and so mysticism is dominant over technology. There are many arcane schools and secret cabals operating on the steamy world, and a dozen minor broods who are vassals of the Brood of Song. As with any large gathering of Draugmorre, political scheming and contests of dominance are in abundance. Such conflict here is usually conducted covertly and focuses more on loss of prestige than loss of life.

The Brood of Song is also the “Draugmorrian state” in the Tetrarchy, with the brood Queen serving as Tetrarch when needed. The Brood of Steel has been excluded from holding political office in the Tetrarchy until they join with the Brood of Song – forming a single state. At present, they have no intention of merging.

Other Areas of Interest

In addition to the worlds and moons in the Crucible systems, there are a few other important areas that bear mentioning.

Tonshu Archipelago

Between Unity and Chrysalis lies the Tonshu Archipelago – a wide nebula and debris field of interstellar material. One of the few places outside of the New Worlds that has not been extensively harvested already, it is now the home of the Tokoshima Empire. Ten city-sized space stations, plus many smaller outposts and asteroid colonies, lie scattered across the resource-rich nebulae.

The Imperial Palace is in Azuchi – a large asteroid with a hollow, crystal-lined, interior (a gigantic geode) while the business capital is a lavish complex known as Momoyama, which is an independent district of the city-station of Takamatsu. With each city a semi-independent prefecture, the empire can field considerable economic clout and a sizable fleet. Though small in relative population and scattered across a large area of open space, it is a nation to be reckoned with.

The Tokoshima Empire is a conglomeration of Newcomer Japanese megacorporations that have formed a nation. There is an Emperor, but he answers to a board of directors. Daimyo and their samurai rule over oppressed wage slaves. Politically, there are three major factions in the empire. These have taken the names Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and Ieyasu, with the current Emperor being part of the Ieyasu faction. Beneath the feudal corporate strata lies a strong cyber-subculture and an organized network of criminal operations and pirates known as the Nuwokou Ronin.



The Tonshu Consortium (and alliance of megacorps) is the leading creator of robots and Synthetic beings. They are used as slave labor and soldiers and are also exported – almost exclusively to Newcomer enclaves. For example, York3 on war-torn Xeos Two, is always on the lookout for a new brand of “deathbot” to put into the field.

This is also the only place in the Crucible that engages in the large-scale development of nanotechnology. It is a science well known on Terra Mortis but not initially carried to Nexus Sector. While there were certainly scientist who understood parts of the process well, no people, programs, or documents were brought that could replicate the technology alone. Only in the Archipelago have the parts been put back together to form a complete industry. Not only is nanotech being used in Tonshu industry and weapons programs, but “nanomages” are stating to appear even outside of the Archipelago.

Conclusion

This ends our discussion of the people and places of Nexus Sector. Though there has been time for only a brief tour of the crucible, we hope that this framework will serve to get you started crafting your own legends and daring tales.

Even though the descriptions are brief, it is important to keep in mind that even a small world has a huge number of interesting places upon it. This is not a setting where each world should be just a single location. Imagine a typical fantasy campaign. It can run for years and never leave a single continent. While the worlds of Nexus Sector may not be THAT dense with interesting places to visit, every planet or moon should have more than just one memorable cantina or cloud city.

Treat traveling from planet to planet like you would going from one country to another in a fantasy game, and traveling to a new system like crossing a great

ocean in a sailing ship. They should be major events rather than just cut scenes. When treated in this manner, the four stellar systems of Nexus Sector can yield more ‘playing area’ than an entire galaxy of stereotyped “one terrain, one location” planets.

Remember – it’s all about action, adventure, and drama. This is a vast and diverse stage with a lot going on at every level of society. Just about anything can be found one place or another, and just about anything can happen.

The stakes are high – a lot to be lost, but even more to be gained. There is ample opportunity for the bold to take a stand and make a change. Fame and fortune await. Now is the time to set sail across the void and find your destiny. But turmoil and chaos loom. Shadows gather on the horizon. It will take true heroes to wield the eternal light and drive back the enveloping darkness.



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For king, country, or corporation, adventurers take up their sword and pistol and set sail into the void. The terraformed planets of the home system offer adventure and political intrigue aplenty, while the New Worlds hold fame and fortune for those bold enough to lay claim. Whether you are a treasure hunter exploring ancient ruins, a swashbuckling starship captain fighting pirates in the cold depths of space, or an alien mystic seeking to become one with the Light Eternal, your destiny will be forged in this crucible far from home.

Lux Aeternum is a cinematic space opera setting with a huge diversity of cultures, locations, and opportunities for adventure. Humans from the cyber-dystopia of 22nd century Earth are given a second chance - carried to a far off star system where they can begin anew. Here they find other humans brought from Europe's great age of exploration. After developing along separate paths for centuries, the views of these fellow humans are now as alien as the non-human races already present. And something has gone terribly wrong. The benevolent elder race that formed this Eden has disappeared. As tensions mount and the Chosen gird for war, an ancient evil prepares for invasion.

Swords & pulse guns, spells & cybertech, warhorses & starships - just about anything can be found in Nexus Sector where humans, aliens, and even sentient androids strive towards their disparate goals. The stakes are high - a lot to be lost, but even more to be gained. There is ample opportunity for the bold to take a stand and shape the future of humankind and her allies. Fame and fortune await. But turmoil and chaos loom. Shadows gather on the horizon. It will take true heroes to become paragons of the everlasting light and drive back the enveloping darkness.

This guide includes and expands upon the setting material initially presented in the *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* book.

